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'I Saw America Changed Through Music': An Examination of  
the American Collecting Tradition

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## Abstract

This thesis is concerned with the history of folk music collecting in America and seeks to demonstrate the overriding importance of the political, socio – cultural, intellectual, and technological contexts on this work of folk music collecting. It does so via an examination the work of five of the principal folk music collectors in America in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries: Francis Child, Cecil Sharp, John Lomax, Alan Lomax, and Harry Smith, arguing that the work of each of them was impacted by various contexts which were central to their theories of folk music, their collecting methodologies, and what they did with the material they collected. Each of these collectors, whose work was governed by the context in which they were working, introduced transformations in the theory, practice, and output of folk music collecting. These transformations are held to represent the American collecting tradition, and are in fact what define the American collecting tradition and allow it to continue developing as a discipline from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries.

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# Chapter 1: Introduction to the American Collecting Tradition

## 1.1: Introduction

This thesis will examine the history of folk music collecting in America, focusing on the work of five collectors: Francis Child (1825 – 1896), Cecil Sharp (1859 – 1924), John Lomax (1867 – 1948), Alan Lomax (1915 – 2002), and Harry Smith (1923 – 1991). The period of collecting work explored herein effectively begins with the publication of Child's first collection *English and Scottish Ballads* in eight volumes between 1857 and 1858. This period ends with the commercial release of Smith's collection *Anthology of American Folk Music* in 1952. However, much of the discussion will also feature important figures in the history of folk music whose work falls outside the 1850s – 1950s period.

This study is a significant development in the continuing discussion of the work of those who collect folk music in America. It is one of the few examinations of folk music collectors which aims to bring together the most important contributors to the practice and scrutinise their work in detail. It is also one of the only discussions of collecting in America which argues that this tradition was characterised by a series of transformations in the beliefs, methodologies, and output of the collectors, all of which was determined by the social, cultural, political, and technological context in which they were working. Much of the thesis builds on the work of the most important contributors to the study of folk music history in America, such as Robert Cantwell and Roger D Abrahams. In addition, it uses the work of some of the most important commentators on modern European and American history, including Isaiah Berlin, T.J. Jackson Lears, and Peter Burke, to bring into the discussion influential cultural movements like Romanticism and Antimodernism. These cultural history sources are brought together in an examination of the American collecting tradition which marks an important move forward in the study of the cultural arbiters who helped to define American folk music in the twentieth – century.

The essential points of this thesis are:

- Each of the five collectors studied in this thesis introduced important new developments to the American collecting tradition. These included substantial



changes in their understanding and public presentation of folk music, methods of collecting, and ultimately the collections they produced.

- The American collecting tradition is defined by this series of transformations, which have enabled it to develop from a field of study based on textual scholarship, to an ethnographic practice tied in with fieldwork, sound recording, and eventually filmmaking.
- Ultimately, the transformations that define the American collecting tradition have been brought about by the changing context in which the collectors were working. Each of the five collectors studied in this thesis was heavily influenced by social, cultural, political, and technological factors of the period in which they worked, and these factors will be articulated and discussed throughout this thesis.

The reason these five collectors have been selected for discussion is their work is generally considered the most important in the history of folk music collecting. Benjamin Filene and John Szwed both preface their studies by observing the importance of Child and Sharp. Filene refers to Child as ‘the progenitor of the American folk song movement,’ and comments that, ‘At the turn of the twentieth century, when American scholars began to become interested in the songs *Americans* sang, their frame of reference was almost completely determined by the canon Child had established.’<sup>1</sup> Child’s work established a standard for folk music scholarship in America, yet he was drawing on prominent European sources for his model such as the Grimm brothers, Jakob (1785 – 1863) and Wilhelm (1786 – 1859), Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744 – 1803), and other participants in the Romantic Movement which experienced its most active period in the eighteenth century. Isaiah Berlin refers to this as the,

...largest recent movement to transform the lives and the thought of the Western World. It seems to me to be the greatest single shift in the consciousness of the West that has occurred, and all the other shifts which have occurred in the course

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<sup>1</sup> Filene, Benjamin. 2000. *Romancing the Folk: Public Memory & American Roots Music*. University of North Carolina Press. pp. 12 – 15.

of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries appear to me in comparison less important, and at any rate deeply influenced by it.<sup>2</sup>

It is from this movement that Child was drawing many of the rudiments of his work, often as channelled through Herder. Berlin identifies an important precept of Herder's work, which also represented aspects of the Romantic Movement, and can also be seen in the work of Child,

One of the fundamental functions of human beings was to express, to speak, and therefore that whatever a man did expressed his full nature; and if it did not express his full nature, it was because he maimed himself, or restrained himself, or laid some kind of leash upon his energies.<sup>3</sup>

This indicates a part of the context in which Child was working, which encompassed the Romantic Movement, and the textual scholarship and philosophy of language explored by Herder and the Grimm brothers. These are particularly important because of the bearing they have on the history of the folklore discipline, as does Child's interest in the work of the Grimm brothers, whose collection *Kinder – und Hausmärchen* marked an important step in the development of folklore and collecting. Regina Bendix notes the importance of this collection (cited as KMH), and of another shift in the intellectual context which governed the collection,

Their introduction to the second edition of the *KHM* (1819) reflects the changing mentality of this decade, capturing the transition from the Herderian, Romantic search for the purifying voice of the folk to the nostalgic, pessimistic, and class – conscious view of the scholar who hopes to capture the remnants of unspoiled humanity.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Berlin, Isaiah. 1999. *The Roots of Romanticism: The A. W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts*. Princeton University Press. pp. 1 – 2.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 58.

<sup>4</sup> Bendix, Regina. 1997. *In Search of Authenticity: The Formation of Folklore Studies*. University of Wisconsin Press. p. 51.

This is a brief introduction to the context in which Child was working, which is discussed throughout the thesis.

Szwed notes the significance of Sharp's interest in the folk song as a musical object, which was a notable development from the 'Child canon',

...there was one collector who was interested in ballads as songs, not poems. Cecil Sharp was a musician, not a literary scholar, and for years he collected both the words and the music of songs live from singers in the field...<sup>5</sup>

This is regarded as a significant development in the history of folk music collecting, since previous collections had largely focused on the text of a song and its status as a literary object. Sharp was one of the earliest collectors who was interested in songs being performed, and his collection *English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians* reflected this musical interest. These developments cannot be separated from Sharp's continued commitment to folklore – based education, which in turn arose from his conservative socialism and Fabian view of social progress. As with Child, it is important to note that Sharp's ideas and work did not emerge from a vacuum but, as Daniel J. Walkowitz notes, came from his background in early-twentieth century English socialism,

Fabian socialists and progressive social reformers played major roles in the development of the English folk dance movement on both sides of the Atlantic early in the century, and interviews and surveys document the central place of left – liberals reared in the mid-century second folk revival in the more recent history.<sup>6</sup>

The Fabian belief in social progress through education is partly what drove Sharp to collect and transcribe hundreds of songs and song variants, and to publish his collections and to formulate a curriculum of folk song and dance. This could be seen as a transformation of the Romantic impulse which prompted some of Child's work, and also the nostalgic ideas which

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<sup>5</sup> Szwed, John. 2010. *The Man Who Recorded the World: A Biography of Alan Lomax*. William Heinemann, London. p. 144.

<sup>6</sup> Walkowitz, Daniel J. 2010. *City Folk: English Country Dance and the Politics of the Folk in Modern America*. New York University Press. p. 6.

Bendix identifies in the later work of the Grimms. However, it could also be seen as an Antimodernist attempt to reintroduce aspects of the traditional past into the present. This indicates the importance of considerations of context, not only of intellectual frameworks like those mentioned, but also how they impact on emerging disciplinary frameworks like the developing discipline of folklore. In addition, as Walkowitz points out, it is also necessary not to restrict the study of these contextual determiners as discrete movements,

The characterisation of the folk as antimodern, however, though not wrong, misses the mark. Not only does it ignore these people's cosmopolitan outlook and commitment to "progress," but it replicates the historical tendency to see modernism and antimodernism as binaries, rather than as intermeshing tendencies.<sup>7</sup>

This speaks directly to the argument of this thesis that the collecting tradition is about transformations based on a number of contextual factors.

The work of John Lomax draws from both Child and Sharp, but it is his determination to document indigenous American folk music which makes him especially important. Richard Peterson calls attention to John Lomax's contribution to the creation of the archetypal cowboy image, 'The 1910 anthology *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads* was the first widely distributed, full – length publication that featured the image of cowboy as *singer*.<sup>8</sup> Jerrold Hirsch also observes the importance of this development, 'John Lomax was a romantic nationalist who maintained that American folklore was the creative response of diverse American folk groups to their New World experience, not a vanishing remnant of Old World traditions.'<sup>9</sup> John and Alan Lomax together were the first collectors to make effective and prodigious use of portable recording technology, something which is indicated by their reports to Congress. Both John and Alan, at different times, had responsibility for the activities of the Archive of American Folksong in the Library of Congress, and provided annual reports on their progress. John Lomax's first report from

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid. p. 3.

<sup>8</sup> Peterson, Richard A. 1997. *Creating Country Music: Fabricating Authenticity*. University of Chicago Press. p. 82.

<sup>9</sup> Hirsch, Jerrold. 1992. 'Modernity, Nostalgia, and Southern Folklore Studies: The Case of John Lomax'. *Journal of American Folklore*. 105/416. p. 183.

1933 notes that during a summer's work they recorded 100 songs on 40 discs of aluminium and celluloid disks.<sup>10</sup> Nine years later Alan Lomax's report demonstrated the extent to which the Archive of American Folksong had grown, 'In all there were acquired 1,268 field records (twelve and sixteen – inch) from North and South America, representing some three hundred hours of recordings...'<sup>11</sup> For Hirsch to claim that John Lomax was exhibiting Romantic Nationalist tendencies again shows that the Romantic Movement was potentially still at play in the work of collectors in the early to mid – twentieth century. It also supports Walkowitz's point about the intermingling of intellectual frameworks in folklore, since John Lomax was also very much a part of the antimodernism movement, which was voiced by certain teachers at Harvard whilst John was a graduate student there, 1906 – 1907. Lomax's work, particularly 'Cowboy Songs', was also heavily influenced by the 'Strenuous Life' movement, which could also be found in Harvard teachers, students, and alumni. Philosopher William James, a professor at Harvard, vociferously espoused this movement as Kim Townsend records, "'There is a strange thinness and femininity hovering all over America," he wrote, "so different from the stoutness and masculinity of land and air and everything in Switzerland and England."<sup>12</sup> It is unsurprising, given this complaint from James, that Lomax's *Cowboy Songs* invokes the same kind of Anglo – Saxon masculinity in its depiction of the cowboy. Lomax was also influenced by the life and writings of Theodore Roosevelt, who wrote the introduction to *Cowboy Songs* and who devoted much of his life to exemplifying the 'Strenuous Life',

In the course of his voluminous writings...Roosevelt traced the evolution of this manly figure through historical stages that began in Roman times, through the usual array of races that culminated with the Anglo – Saxon, and through various classes that he neatly separated out of the mix of men he encountered in the West.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Lomax, John A. 1933. *Annual Report of the Librarian of Congress*. United States Government Printing Office, Washington. p. 99.

<sup>11</sup> Lomax, Alan. 1942. *Annual Report of the Librarian of Congress*. United States Government Printing Office, Washington. pp. 114 – 115.

<sup>12</sup> Townsend, Kim. 1996. *Manhood at Harvard: William James and Others*. Norton, London. p. 72.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, p. 263.

These ideas continued to influence Lomax in his later career which focused increasingly on field recordings of African – American musical forms, and this too was influenced by a strain of antimodernism which feared for the future of this music in the face of cultural homogeneity and the elimination of regional differences.

Alan Lomax is regarded by some commentators as the single most important collector of folk music in American history, who has visible influence in contemporary folk, blues, jazz and other popular music forms. Szwed's biography of Lomax argues for this broad influence, 'While Alan's public influence reached its peak between 1940 and 1960, when he was the single greatest force in bringing folk songs to American awareness, it continues today in any number of cultural domains...'<sup>14</sup> He certainly had the longest involvement with folk music collecting among the collectors discussed in this thesis, with a career that lasted almost seventy years. From his initial experiences recording music with his father in the early 1930s to his death in 2002, Lomax worked contiguously on folk music in North and South America and Europe. In practical terms it is difficult to separate Alan Lomax's early work from that of his father, but even in the 1930s Alan seemed to be motivated by a different impulse from his father's Antimodernism and Strenuous Life ideals, though he was not completely invulnerable to them. Szwed notes one of Alan's recollections of a formative recording experience, 'That experience totally changed my life. I saw what I had to do. My job was to try and get as much of these views, these feelings, this unheard majority onto the centre of the stage.'<sup>15</sup> This signposts another important transformation in the American collecting tradition, the move to a more politically active form of folksong collecting, and a recognition of the potential of folk music to bring about social change. The context for some of the work of Alan Lomax was the New Deal, and the spirit of socialist reform it represented. As Lomax later commented,

The New Deal was the time the American Revolution began again...there were tens of thousands of us in that city, all related to the problem and given a go – ahead signal, do something. It was made possible by the New Deal. We had the ear of the common man. All intellectuals were involved; everybody was in it. The

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<sup>14</sup> Szwed, John. 2010. *The Man Who Recorded the World: A Biography of Alan Lomax*. William Heinemann, London. p. 391.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, p. 37.

Roosevelts were marvellous orchestrators. We unionised America, we set the base for integration, we set it free from European snobbery.<sup>16</sup>

Throughout the 1930s and 40s Alan was involved with numerous left – leaning groups, some of them musical collaborations, which helped to organise work for folk musicians, played at union gatherings, and advanced Alan’s idea of getting the voice of the folk heard as loudly and broadly as possible. His later work was informed by psychoanalysis, and the idea that there are cultural constants which result in folk music, but also by the other sciences related to folklore, such as anthropology. Despite this broadening of his intellectual framework in the second half of the twentieth – century, his aims remained rooted in providing a voice for the people, despite opposition or dismissal,

At gatherings where he tried to win over some of the young scholars who were now committed to an extreme form of cultural relativism and narrowly defined research projects, they often found his old – school passion to defend the forgotten people of the world a bit embarrassing...<sup>17</sup>

It is arguable that Lomax’s career had to adapt to the greatest number of contextual changes, from the New Deal, to McCarthyism, to the Folk Revival, and the proliferation of radio, television, LPs, and advances in recording technology, to changing attitudes to folk music, which in Lomax’s own lifetime had moved from Antimodernism to the emergence of ethnomusicology as the field of folk music study.

Smith’s work with folk music was brief by comparison, only lasting from the early 1940s until the release of *Anthology of American Folk Music* in 1952. Despite this limited time spent collecting, Smith’s 1952 collection is often cited as one of the most important folk collections of the twentieth century. Musician John Fahey attests to this importance in the notes accompanying the 1997 re – release of *Anthology of American Folk Music*<sup>18</sup> and although Fahey perhaps overstates the importance of Smith’s collection, it is clear that *Anthology of American Folk Music* was very important to musicians. Musician Dave van Ronk

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid, p. 106.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, p. 383

<sup>18</sup> Fahey, John. 1997. ‘Essay on the *Anthology of American Folk Music*’. *Anthology of American Folk Music*. Smithsonian Folkways Recordings.

contends that, 'The first surrealist manifesto of folk music was the Harry Smith Anthology...Harry took these old records and put them together. His choice of material and the juxtaposition showed a unique, and surreal, vision of America.'<sup>19</sup> Irrespective of the impact of his collection, Smith in fact had more in common with the Beatnik scene in 1950s Greenwich Village than he had with the other folk music collectors studied in this thesis. Smith collected records throughout the 1940s, mostly from junk shops, and as he recalled, record shops which were going out of business.<sup>20</sup> His meeting with Moses Asch of Folkways records, which specialised in folk and esoteric music, produced the idea for the *Anthology*, which Smith worked on largely himself, editing his collection, writing accompanying notes, and designing the packaging. While the resulting collection clearly draws from Alan Lomax's 1942 book *List of American Folk Songs on Commercial Records*, it has more in common with Smith's own avant – garde painting and filmmaking than with preceding collections like those of Child, Sharp, and John Lomax. However, this is another transformation in the collecting tradition, in which the context of Greenwich Village in the 1950s and, as Rick Beard and Leslie Cohen Berlowitz describe, the 'sense of youthfulness...among visual artists in Greenwich Village, particularly the abstract expressionists and their successors, in the period after World War II,'<sup>21</sup> have influenced Smith to produce a collection which is more an avant – garde art object than a typical collection of folksongs. Smith's determination to use recordings which sounded especially strange, either unusual songs or unusual variants, shows the influence of the avant – garde in Greenwich Village even clearer.

## 1.2: Thesis Argument

The main argument of this thesis is that the work of the American collectors, what will be called the American collecting tradition, was defined by a series of transformations in the way this work was done. These transformations are the most important aspect of the American collecting tradition, because they determine why the collecting is done, how it is done, and the resulting output from the collecting. Ultimately, these transformations are

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<sup>19</sup> The Holy Modal Rounders. 1999. 'The Holy Modal Rounders 1&2'. Fantasy Records, Berkeley California.

<sup>20</sup> Singh, Rani, ed. 1999. *Think of the Self Speaking: Harry Smith – Selected Interviews*. Elbow/Cityful Press, Seattle. p. 73

<sup>21</sup> Beard, Rick, and Berlowitz, Leslie Cohen. 1993. *Greenwich Village: Culture and Counterculture*. Rutgers University Press. p. 323



not only important for the collectors, but for the general understanding of folk music. The telling importance of the context in which the work was done shows in, for example, John Lomax's *Cowboy Songs* where the ideas of 'Strenuous Life' and Antimodernism have been at work in the image of the American cowboy. John Lomax had moved on from the collections published by Child, to a type of folksong book which was formed partly from fieldwork transcriptions of songs, and was based on an extant, though dwindling, part of modern society. This transformation from Child's textual scholarship to Lomax's partially fieldwork – based approach is a product of Lomax's interest in a type of folksong which was still being sung in some areas, and required locating and collecting so it could be printed. Those are the transformations in method and output, and they have been determined by Lomax's Antimodernist leanings, which drove him to document a tradition which was being threatened by changes in farming, including industrialisation, and by what was viewed by some as the loss of certain human characteristics. In Roosevelt's writings,

...out of all the newcomers to the West – cowboys, hunters, settlers, trappers – he focused on the cowboys and, in doing so, erased all ethnic differences between them. "Although there are among them wild spirits from every land, yet [they] soon become undistinguishable from their American companions," he wrote in *Hunting Trips of a Ranchman*. They were all "sinewy, hardy, self – reliant...daring and adventurous." At the same time, he transformed earlier images of them as uncouth and sometimes brutal "herders" into that of "the grim pioneer of our race."<sup>22</sup>

Roosevelt also issued a 'warning that Anglo – Saxons were on the road to "race suicide."<sup>23</sup> It was images like those created by Roosevelt of the robust pioneer, and the urgent warning that this type of man was being marginalised and rendered extinct, which motivated Lomax to introduce a fieldwork transformation into the American collecting tradition. Another significant transformation Lomax introduced, which was built on by his subsequent work, and the work of Alan Lomax, was the attention paid to folk music which was uniquely

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<sup>22</sup> Townsend, Kim. 1996. *Manhood at Harvard: William James and Others*. Norton, London. p. 263.

<sup>23</sup> Lears, T.J. Jackson. 1994. *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880 – 1920*. University of Chicago Press. p. 30.

American. Child, roughly fifty years before Lomax, had chosen to focus his collecting solely on English and Scottish ‘popular ballads’, and as far as possible as they had existed in preceding centuries. Sharp, in his work in the Southern Appalachian Mountains from 1914 – 1918, also looked for songs which British in origin, and ignored certain types of American music. Lomax was one of the first collectors whose Antimodernist impulse prompted him to search for music created in America, and emerged from an embodiment of the ‘Strenuous Life’ who was uniquely American. This is where the collector’s ideas of what constitutes folk music are clearly influenced by the context in which they work, and in Lomax’s case this context of changes in rural culture, and the intellectual movements he first encountered at Harvard, made him conceive of folk music as something representative of an earlier time, and often of a more masculine lifestyle, but which was under threat in modern society. This example of John Lomax highlights how the argument of this thesis is articulated, and through discussing the work of the five collectors, this thesis demonstrates that the American collecting tradition is defined by a series of transformations.

The following sections will give a brief overview of some of these transformations in the American collecting tradition, and show how each collector’s work represented another transformation in the American collecting tradition. Child’s *English and Scottish Popular Ballads* was intended to function as a comprehensive reference work for use by other literature scholars, and by his own admission, ‘It was not my wish to begin to print *The English and Scottish Ballads* until this unrestricted title should be justified by my having at command every valuable copy and every known ballad.’<sup>24</sup> Harker prefaces his extensive critique of Child with the comment, ‘To many people, Child’s *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads* has the immobility of a monument. Its sheer bulk, wealth of detail, and apparently exhaustive critical apparatus do, indeed, present a formidable appearance...’<sup>25</sup> The collection was very influential following its publication in ten volumes between 1882 and 1898, and much of the work done on folk music in America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was based on it. Supporters of Child assert that,

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<sup>24</sup> Filene, Benjamin. 2000. *Romancing the Folk: Public Memory & American Roots Music*. University of North Carolina Press. p. 14.

<sup>25</sup> Harker, Dave. 1981. ‘Francis James Child and the ‘Ballad Consensus’’. *Folk Music Journal*. 4/2. p. 146.

the commonplace dismissals of Child's work not only do an injustice to a 'vital scholar whose ideas laid the foundations for an American theory of folklore' (Bell 1988: 307); who 'wrought the foundations' of the major Harvard tradition of oral literary studies (Bynum 1974:242); who incidentally 'laid the foundation stone of modern understanding' of Chaucer's language (Brewer 1978: 122); and who exerted influence not only as author and editor, but as correspondent, as a source of encouragement and inspiration, far beyond the English – speaking world. Not only this, but such dismissals overlook the point that the 'Child ballad' does exist, and is important.<sup>26</sup>

Much of the early work of the *Journal of American Folklore*, which was first published in 1888, was concerned with collecting Child ballads or their variations from singers in America. Filene observes that,

These early collectors, although drawing on the Appalachians, were very much in the Child tradition of British song scholarship...To these collectors, Child's work provided a frame of reference, a set of goals, and scholarly legitimation for the songs they were gathering...Most of the early collectors travelled the mountains as much to document Child's canon as to learn about Appalachian culture.<sup>27</sup>

Although much of the influence of Child's collection was on university teachers and researchers or those with a scholarly interest in folk music, *Ballads* eventually achieved exposure to a wider audience through its academic status. Gillian Mitchell, in her study of the North American and Canadian folk revivals, suggests that much of the revival interest in the southern states comes from Child, 'It is, therefore, to the followers of...Child that the special interest in the South, an interest which would prove so central to folk music studies and revivals throughout the twentieth century, can directly be traced.'<sup>28</sup> The argument of this thesis is that Child's collecting emerged from the intersection where related disciplines

<sup>26</sup> Cheesman, Tom, and Rieuwerts, Sigrid. 1997. *Ballads into Books: The Legacies of Francis James Child*. Peter Lang Publishers, Berne. pp. 11 – 12.

<sup>27</sup> Filene, Benjamin. 2000. *Romancing the Folk: Public Memory & American Roots Music*. University of North Carolina Press. p. 16.

<sup>28</sup> Mitchell, Gillian. 2007. *The North American Folk Music Revival: Nation and Identity in the United States and Canada, 1945 – 1980*. Ashgate Publishing Ltd., Hampshire. p. 29.

met, and this conflation of disciplines has its background in post – enlightenment Germany. Herder and the Grimm brothers were primarily philologists, who were interested in language as it developed among communities. This also naturally encompassed an interest in the language of the German people, but as Berlin observes, Herder was not a vehement nationalist of a certain type,

Herder was certainly not a nationalist in the sense of believing that there was some kind of deep impalpable essence to do with blood or race – all he believed was that human groups grew in some plant – like or some animal – like fashion...<sup>29</sup>

In this sense, Herder certainly had a scientific interest in language, and studied it as an expression of a particular group or community. Herder connected this idea of communal language to the universal desire of human beings to express themselves.<sup>30</sup> In Herder's view, the communal language was not the only aspect of culture which was common to a particular group: folksongs were also expressions of 'full nature' which communicated within a group, 'Take, for example, folk song. If a folk song speaks to you, they said, it is because the people who made it were Germans like yourself, and they spoke to you, who belong with them in the same society...'<sup>31</sup> Although Herder had one foot in the romantic tradition, his exploration of philosophy of language showed a more scientific approach to the humanities which the Grimm brothers also used, as Bendix notes, '...their works and correspondence illustrate a growing disenchantment with Romantic exuberance and an increasing concern with using systematic means to document a truer, hence more authentic past.'<sup>32</sup> This was a significant part of the intellectual context in which Child was working: he adopted certain theories of the Romantic Movement, such as (Johann) Friedrich Schiller's idea of a golden age of human unity, before, '...something appalling happened: division of labour, inequality, civilisation – in short, culture occurred...'<sup>33</sup> He also based his work on that of the Grimm brothers, whose *Kinder – und Hausmärchen* collection had moved on from the

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<sup>29</sup> Berlin, Isaiah. 1999. *The Roots of Romanticism: The A. W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts*. Princeton University Press. p. 61.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, p. 58.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, p. 59.

<sup>32</sup> Bendix, Regina. 1997. *In Search of Authenticity: The Formation of Folklore Studies*. University of Wisconsin Press. p. 50.

<sup>33</sup> Berlin, Isaiah. 1999. *The Roots of Romanticism: The A. W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts*. Princeton University Press. p. 85.

Romantic Movement in some areas, and raised new issues which persisted in Child's work, which Bendix calls attention to,

The texts are *externally* authentic, verified by the internal honesty of the people who transmit the texts. While the people's honesty cannot necessarily be preserved, the textual authenticity of the tales and poetry can be; in this regard the Grimms foreshadow the practical paradoxes of the search for authenticity.<sup>34</sup>

Although the technological advance of modern printing was not new to Child's period, despite developments it had undoubtedly made, the paradox of using this technology to document an oral tradition is an issue that carried on from the Grimms work through to Child's. However, it is the context of assiduous textual scholarship that determined Child's methods of working, and Child's transformation of the American collecting was effectively to begin it as a discipline of textual scholarship, with aspects of the Romantic Movement, the scientific approach to the humanities (*wissenschaft*), and the history of German *Volkskunde*. Child's transformations and these contextual determiners are discussed throughout the thesis.

Sharp's ultimate aim with his collecting work was to assist in the continued performance of folk music, especially through primary – level education. His belief in the importance of education was rooted in the principles of Fabianism, which advocated education as a means of social progress, and was very much at work in early twentieth – century England, where the movement had its origins, and also where Sharp's formative experiences with folk music occurred. Walkowitz discusses at length the forces associated with Sharp's involvement in teaching folk traditions, and contends that although the focus on tradition may appear to look backwards, the Fabian Progressivism at the heart of these efforts was not regressive,

The dislocations and culture of protest associated with Progressivism triggered what historians have called a "modernist historical crisis," "the yearning for orderly, scientific solutions" to the chaos of industrial protest and disorderly bodies. In this

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<sup>34</sup> Bendix, Regina. 1997. *In Search of Authenticity: The Formation of Folklore Studies*. University of Wisconsin Press. p. 54.

regard, although folk dances looked back to “peasant” origins and are easy to pigeonhole as antimodern, folk dance enthusiasts embraced folk dancing as a critical element in educational reform and as integral to the development of physical culture for building the race.<sup>35</sup>

Sharp’s transformation of the precedents established in Germany, and continued by Child, was to seek living examples of the tradition with which he intended to educate the white English and American middle – classes as to their ‘race heritage’. Although collecting based on fieldwork was nothing new, having been explored by prominent collectors like William Motherwell for his 1827 collection *Minstrelsy Ancient and Modern*, Sharp’s determination to discover remnants of what he understood to be traditional music was one of his most significant developments. Bendix, in her study which discusses some of the transformations examined in this thesis, comments on the issues arising from collecting, ‘Declaring a particular form of expressive culture as dead or dying limits the number of authentic items, but it promotes the search for not yet discovered and hence authentic folklore.’<sup>36</sup> Walkowitz shows that the influence of Fabianism and Progressivism, combined with Sharp’s collections of ‘authentic’ but dying traditions, produced a peculiarly contradictory educational program,

in a remarkable class transmutation, he took “tradition” from the “peasantry,” dressed it up, and trained “respectable” elite women to teach immigrants from “peasant” backgrounds in settlement houses the “proper” form that supposedly conveyed the innate spirit of the country folk.<sup>37</sup>

Although these criticisms of Sharp’s attitude to folk music or dance are valid, the history of folklore and collecting is based on such appropriations, and even sanitising of traditional material. The Romantic Movement demonstrated a similar tendency for appropriating material from the folk, such as the public promotion of John Clare, the ‘Northamptonshire

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<sup>35</sup> Walkowitz, Daniel J. 2010. *City Folk: English Country Dance and the Politics of the Folk in Modern America*. New York University Press. p.55.

<sup>36</sup> Bendix, Regina. 1997. *In Search of Authenticity: The Formation of Folklore Studies*. University of Wisconsin Press. p. 9.

<sup>37</sup> Walkowitz, Daniel J. 2010. *City Folk: English Country Dance and the Politics of the Folk in Modern America*. New York University Press. p.19.

Peasant Poet', whose work was lauded in the early nineteenth – century as an example of rural poetry.

Sharp's understanding of the creation of folk music was similar to Child's popular ballad which, 'will always be an expression of the mind and heart of the people as an individual, and never of the personality of individual men.'<sup>38</sup> He believed that 'authentic' folk music emerged from the 'native and aboriginal inhabitants' of a country and,

Their own music, if they have any, will be the outcome of a purely natural instinct. If they have none, then we can be sure that the educated music of that country will be an artificial product, an alien importation, and comparatively worthless.<sup>39</sup>

Sharp's aim with his teaching plans was to cultivate this 'purely natural instinct' in the type of community which seemingly created folk music. The type of community that was idealised was apparently found during his collecting in the Appalachian Mountains,

Indeed, so remote and shut off from outside influence were, until quite recently, these sequestered mountain valleys that the inhabitants have for a hundred years or more been completely isolated and cut off from all traffic with the rest of the world.<sup>40</sup>

These were the communities Sharp believed would benefit most from a form of education which cultivated the 'natural instinct' to sing folk songs. His biographer and assistant Maud Karpeles (1885 – 1976) records the comments of a teacher in Pine Mountain Settlement School in Harlan County, Kentucky,

Mr. Sharp summed up for Pine Mountain much that till then had been implicitly taken for granted. That he found there the right soil in which to plant again the

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<sup>38</sup> Child, Francis. 1900. 'Ballad Poetry'. *Johnson's Universal Cyclopaedia*. D. Appleton and Company, New York.

<sup>39</sup> Sharp, Cecil J. 1907. *English Folk Song: Some Conclusions*. London, Simpkin & Co. Ltd. p. 1.

<sup>40</sup> Sharp, Cecil J. 1917. *English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians*. New York, G.P. Putnam and Sons. p. iv.

native crop of songs and dances made us realise our responsibility as never before and we have never since let the heritage of the children die out.<sup>41</sup>

The situation in America made Sharp even more anxious about the correct way to educate children in folk music, and Karpeles comments that, 'Cecil Sharp found nearly everywhere an overweening belief in the power of education coupled with a depreciation of the instinctive faculties.'<sup>42</sup>

The fundamental element in the continuation of folk music, according to Sharp, was the 'natural instinct' or 'instinctive faculties' which, in the kind of situation Sharp found in certain American communities, inevitably produced folk music. However, this examination also identifies another trend which links the American collectors not only in their conception of folk music, but also in their contribution to its continuation. He was concerned about the effect that popular music forms were having on 'authentic' folk music, and believed in many cases folk music was being supplanted by popular music. This kind of popular music was having the same effect as standardised education, Sharp felt, in suppressing the 'instinctive faculties' and inhibiting the continued performance of folk music. This is important because it means that not only were certain American collectors working to reintroduce folk music to a broad audience, but also in their opinion it had to be done as quickly as possible before folk music disappeared. In fact, Sharp believed that it was already too late to fully recover what had already been lost, 'We have in this country been strangely apathetic in the matter of our peasant songs. Fortunately there is still time to repair in some measure our past neglect, but of course we cannot now reap a full harvest.'<sup>43</sup> This indicates the urgency he felt was needed to compensate for the losses to popular music. The issue of folk music existing in opposition to popular music is discussed throughout this thesis, as is the connected issue of progress being the antithesis of tradition. As Harker comments on Child's theories, "Civilisation", in other words, is *defined* as being antagonistic to 'tradition'.<sup>44</sup> Filene comments on this trend in the work of Sharp, noting that,

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<sup>41</sup> Karpeles, Maud. 1967. *Cecil Sharp: His Life and Work*. Routledge Ltd., London. p. 162.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. p. 134.

<sup>43</sup> Sharp, Cecil J. 1907. 'Folk Song Collecting'. *Musical Times*. 48/767. p. 18.

<sup>44</sup> Harker, Dave. 1981. 'Francis James Child and the 'Ballad Consensus''. *Folk Music Journal*. 4/2. p. 150.



At times Sharp made the mountaineers' closeness to nature sound less like subsistence poverty than like an ascetic philosophy. He surmised that many people "set the standard of bodily and material comfort perilously low, in order, presumably, that they may have the more leisure and so extract the maximum enjoyment out of life."<sup>45</sup>

Again, this is an important part of the history of the folklore discipline, and although Sharp may not have been directly exposed to the 'Strenuous Life' ideals found at Harvard, the idea of poverty explored by William James is clearly similar to Sharp's, 'In the context of his lecture on saintliness, he proposed poverty as a solution, not a war on poverty, but poverty itself, for "poverty indeed *is* the strenuous life."<sup>46</sup> Sharp's transformation of the American collecting tradition was his work with folk traditions which remained alive, although as he saw it they were in decline, and his output from this collecting was dictated heavily by the context of Fabian Progressivism and to a certain extent the Antimodernism of the early twentieth – century.

John and Alan Lomax both endeavoured to promote their work through publication, radio and television, and using the collections they had assembled for the Archive of American Folksong. John Lomax's first annual report to Congress as Honorary Curator of the Archive of American Folksong demonstrates this interest in education, 'The plan of the Library of Congress to make permanent records of these Negro folk songs for the use of students of music is entirely feasible and worthy of unstinted support.'<sup>47</sup> Lomax also aimed to make the collection of the Archive as comprehensive as possible so it could function as a centre for the study of folk music.

More and more it becomes apparent that a central office, functioning actively all the year round, is a necessary part of the plan, if the great body of American folk tunes is to be brought together in a reasonable time. By cooperating with individual collectors now scattered all over the United States, with companies still

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<sup>45</sup> Filene, Benjamin. 2000. *Romancing the Folk: Public Memory & American Roots Music*. University of North Carolina Press. p. 24.

<sup>46</sup> Townsend, Kim. 1996. *Manhood at Harvard: William James and Others*. Norton, London. p. 171.

<sup>47</sup> Lomax, John A. 1933. *Annual Report of the Librarian of Congress*. United States Government Printing Office, Washington. p. 99.

making commercial records of folk singers, and with individual singers yet in demand over the radio, in due course, a noteworthy collection is possible.<sup>48</sup>

The folk music books produced by the Lomaxes were part of an overall attempt to popularise the recording and collecting work they had done, and books like John Lomax's *Adventures of a Ballad Hunter* focused more on the collecting work than the music. The Lomaxes also produced books which were very similar to Sharp's *English Folksongs from the Southern Appalachians* in their style. *American Ballads and Folk Songs*, *Folk Song U.S.A.*, and *Our Singing Country: A Second Volume of American Ballads and Folk Songs* were basically song – books in the style of Sharp's American collection. However, they also had an educational component to their content which was largely devoted to informing the public that America had its own folk song traditions. The preface to *Our Singing Country* indicates this aim of informing the public about folk music, 'The function of this book is to let American folk – singers have their say with the readers.'<sup>49</sup>

It is shown in this thesis that Alan Lomax made an even greater effort to educate and inform the public regarding American folk music, especially with his radio and television programs. Filene draws attention to an Archive of American Folksong initiative called the Radio Research Project. He states, 'This project...was designed to use radio to open up the library's resources to the American populace. In the span of thirteen months, the project produced fifty educational programs...that aired over both local and national networks.'<sup>50</sup> Gregory suggests that Alan Lomax's most important work took place outside academia, '...few would deny the immense contribution he made to the study of American traditional music between 1933 and 1949, through his wide – ranging activity as a field – collector, editor, archivist, teacher and broadcaster.'<sup>51</sup> After pointing out that his later anthropological theories were heavily criticised, Gregory asserts that, 'His work as a song collector and as a broadcaster may therefore prove to be his most enduring legacy.'<sup>52</sup> Lomax continued

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<sup>48</sup> Lomax, John A. 1935. *Annual Report of the Librarian of Congress*. United States Government Printing Office, Washington. pp. 161 – 162.

<sup>49</sup> Lomax, Alan, and Lomax, John A. 1941. *Our Singing Country: A Second Volume of American Ballads and Folk Songs*. MacMillan Press, New York.

<sup>50</sup> Filene, Benjamin. 2000. *Romancing the Folk: Public Memory & American Roots Music*. University of North Carolina Press. p. 145.

<sup>51</sup> Gregory, E. David. 2002. 'Lomax in London: Alan Lomax, the BBC, and the Folk Song Revival in England, 1950 – 1958'. *Folk Music Journal*. 8/2. p. 136.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

making radio programs into the 50s and 60s folk revival and releasing some commercial albums, all of which were attempts to disseminate folk music as broadly as possible. Instead of concentrating on one single collection which would make available the entirety of his work, Lomax combined radio and television programs, publications, and albums, with continued recording trips, and the collection and public dissemination of this material became his entire career. It is important to remember that Alan Lomax's earlier experiences of working with folk music were during the New Deal era, when educational projects using folklore were encouraged, and Alan's socialist politics married well with the liberal reforms of the Roosevelt administration. During World War Two, Alan focused much of his effort on wartime educational programs for the radio, often with the backing of the Librarian of Congress at the time, Archibald MacLeish, such as, 'a series of ten programs called *America in the Summer of 1941* that would create "a new function for radio: that of letting the people explain themselves and their lives to the entire nation."' <sup>53</sup> Particularly during the 1930s and 40s, Alan's work was driven by the same impulse that motivated other participants in what Robert Cantwell has called the 'folksong movement', 'the phrase I use to refer to the politically motivated singing of folksongs between, roughly, the emergence of the popular front in 1935 and the Wallace presidential campaign of 1948' <sup>54</sup> Cantwell also cites David Evans' idea of a folk revival of four stages, noting that, 'In the second stage, Evans says, during the heyday of the Popular Front, folk music came to replace the revolutionary chorus as a device for raising class consciousness in America, allying itself to the labour and antifascist movements.' <sup>55</sup> Lomax's interest in 'raising class consciousness' was tied in with his idea of providing a voice for folksingers, and the rural working classes generally, through the promotion of the music they sang. Lomax's work with groups like People's Songs, and his Priority Ramblers, was geared towards supporting folk musicians, unions and labour groups, and highlighting the importance of American folk music as a cultural resource. This thesis discusses the notion that, because of this context of socialist protest, and the promotion of the downtrodden and ignored in American society, Alan's collecting work introduced the most substantial series of transformations into the collecting tradition, with his theories of folk music, collecting methods, and output developing

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<sup>53</sup> Szwed, John. 2010. *The Man Who Recorded the World: A Biography of Alan Lomax*. William Heinemann, London. p. 179.

<sup>54</sup> Cantwell, Robert. 1996. *When We Were Good: The Folk Revival*. Harvard University Press. p. 21.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid*, p. 34.

considerably during his career, and it was the persistent desire to use folk music as a weapon of social change that engendered these transformations.

This study shows that, in addition to Smith's obvious influence from postwar avant – garde art in the creation of the *Anthology*, Smith also took ideas from the collectors who preceded him pertaining to the history of recorded folk music, which recordings he should be using for his collection, and how the recordings could be arranged. Neil Rosenberg comments that, 'Smith's understanding was shaped in part by published folk music books...'<sup>56</sup> and considering the extent to which Smith references Child in the *Anthology* it is clear Smith was influenced by *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*. If Rosenberg's comments are taken to be accurate, Smith was also influenced by the depiction of folk music in Sharp's *English Folksongs from the Southern Appalachians*, and John Lomax's *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads*. Both of these collections are used as reference works for the *Anthology*, and the extent to which Smith used these earlier collections prompted him to remark, 'The needs of folk music are met by nothing more than reprints of earlier books on the subject.'<sup>57</sup>

The examination of Smith follows on from Rosenberg's contention that his understanding was shaped by prior work on the subject. This includes the books of Sharp, Child, and the Lomaxes, but also by the commercially released folk collections compiled by Alan and John Lomax. In a 1969 interview with John Cohen, Smith was asked where he had first heard the Carter Family,

I would think from that mimeographed list that the Library of Congress issued around 1937, *American Folksongs on Commercially Available Records*. Shortly after that, two Carter Family Records, "Worried Man Blues" and "East Virginia Blues" were reissued on the album *Smokey Mountain Ballads*. That album would come to stores that wouldn't ordinarily have Carter Family records.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Rosenberg, Neil V. 1997. *A Booklet of Essays, Appreciations, and Annotations Pertaining to the Anthology of American Folk Music*. Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, Washington D.C.

<sup>57</sup> Singh, Rani, ed. 1999. *Think of the Self Speaking: Harry Smith – Selected Interviews*. Elbow/Cityful Press, Seattle. p. 80.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 72 – 73.

The list Smith refers to was compiled by Alan Lomax for the Archive of American Folksong and published in 1942, titled *List of American Folk Songs on Commercial Records*. Lomax introduces the book,

After listening to three thousand odd commercial records of white and Negro songs and tunes from the South, I have compiled this list of three hundred and fifty representative titles in order that the interested musician or student of American society may explore this unknown body of Americana with readiness.<sup>59</sup>

All of the artists featured on Smith's *Anthology* appear on Lomax's list and many of the songs as well. The interest Lomax showed in commercial records gave some legitimacy to them as folk music, which may have encouraged Smith in his record collecting. Clearly Smith used Lomax's list as a source for determining who the best recording musicians were, and may have edited his collection based on this, or sought out more records included in Lomax's book. Given Smith's comments, it is possible that he began collecting Carter Family records after seeing them included by Lomax. Compilation records such as *Smokey Mountain Ballads* which Smith cited in his interview demonstrated the efficacy of commercial releases as a means of disseminating folk music. This thesis demonstrates that Smith was taking cues from all of the most prominent American collectors and using this to construct the *Anthology*. This thesis shows that while Smith took ideas from Alan Lomax about the type of records he should be using, and from Child, Sharp, and John Lomax to a lesser extent, mainly to do with cross – referencing, the Beatnik culture and the Avant – Garde art scene was his biggest influence. It dictated many of Smith's design decisions for the packaging of the *Anthology*, with perhaps the most important piece being an illustration of the Celestial Monochord, a kind of divine tuning device, adapted from seventeenth – century scientist and mystic Robert Fludd. Cantwell refers to the importance of Fludd's conceit for Smith's collection,

Robert Fludd had developed out of the old art of memory pertinent to the study of eloquence a so – called memory theatre...whose aim was to present the entire

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<sup>59</sup> Lomax, Alan. 1942. *List of American Folk Songs on Commercial Records*. United States Government Printing Office, Washington.

cosmos of knowledge in the form of alchemical, astrological, and cabalistic symbols arranged in particular sequences on the terraces of a small circular amphitheatre.<sup>60</sup>

This became the centrepiece of Smith's Avant – Garde layout, which surrounded the notes with strange illustrations of disembodied pointing hands and adverts for musical instruments, reinforcing the feeling of unfamiliarity and strangeness produced by the music. Also, it is important not to discount the contextual importance of Folkways at the time, and Moe Asch, who was a considerable impetus behind the creation of the *Anthology*. Folkways specialised in releasing esoteric music, often motivated by Asch's goals of giving a voice to relatively obscure areas of American culture. Cantwell notes that Smith's ideas in the notes to the *Anthology* are aligned with Asch's, 'Not surprisingly perhaps, his own interests seem to reflect Asch's fascination with the place of audio technology in cultural change.'<sup>61</sup> Smith's transformations of the collecting tradition was to take precedents established by earlier collectors and reshape them into an Avant – Garde art object which emphasised the strangeness of the music, and a hub of Smith's attempts to delineate the connections he saw between different aspects of American culture. Smith's *Anthology* was also heavily impacted by the technological context in which it was made, specifically the advent of the LP, and the issues surrounding Smith's use of the LP are discussed later in the thesis. The following section details the structure of the thesis, and how the argument will be laid out.

### 1.3: Thesis Structure

The chapters of will be arranged according to the governing aspects of the work of the American collectors. Each chapter will be used to demonstrate the series of transformations that occur throughout the American collecting tradition, and to argue that these transformations are what have allowed the collecting of folk music to continue from the eighteenth to the twentieth century. In addition, each chapter will discuss the context in which these transformations occurred, and will argue that these contextual factors are largely responsible for these transformations, and that the collecting tradition has

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<sup>60</sup> Cantwell, Robert. 1996. *When We Were Good: The Folk Revival*. Harvard University Press. p. 205

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.* p. 196.

repeatedly adapted to social, cultural, political, and technological changes because of the work of its most prominent participants.

Chapter 2 discusses the conceptions of folk music which determined the work of the American collectors. It examines the conceptions of folk music propounded by the early European collectors, and shows how these ideas developed throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It then demonstrates how these European predecessors influenced the work of the American collectors, beginning with Child and his fascination with Herder and the Grimms, and his collaboration with European contemporaries like Svend Grundtvig. It shows how the Romantic Movement governed much of the work of the European collectors, and how this influenced Child, but also how departures from Romantic ideals also impacted on his work. It will discuss the ideas of what constitutes folk music from Sharp, the Lomaxes, and Smith, and demonstrate the transformations that took place in these ideas, and how these were affected by things like Antimodernism, Fabianism, the New Deal and the Cultural Front, and postwar Avant – Garde art.

The next chapter examines the collecting techniques of the American collectors. It begins by discussing what makes a collector, and what makes a collection, using the collecting theories outlined in chapter 1. It then studies the collecting techniques of the European collectors who preceded the American collectors. Chapter 3 discusses the varied collecting techniques of the American collectors, and also demonstrates some of the shared techniques common among the American collectors. Again, the argument is that there has been a consistent series of transformations in the area of collecting methods, which were brought on often by technological advances, but also by changes in the intellectual framework that governed collecting practices. For instance, in the lifetime of John Lomax collecting folk music moved from literary studies and textual scholarship to a scientific practice associated with anthropology, and practiced as such by, amongst others, Zora Neale Hurston and Margaret Mead, both of whom were sometime associates of Alan Lomax. John Lomax was also involved in the change from transcription – based fieldwork, to the use of portable recording technology, in a transformation which had intellectual grounding, but was also brought about by technological changes.

The fourth chapter looks at the collections produced by the American collectors, and additional work they have done with the material they collected, prefaced with a discussion of collection conventions established by the European precedents. Following this, there is

an examination of the various collections produced by the American collectors, and a discussion of the similarities and differences between these collections. The argument continues that the output of the collectors in the American tradition is marked by transformations, again largely due to shifts in the intellectual grounding of collecting, and technological changes, but also due to cultural and political factors. For instance, Alan Lomax's work in radio was partly prompted by the spread of radio itself, and the availability of recordings he had made for the Library of Congress, and partly by the government endorsement of projects related to folk music in the 1930s. Also the collections of recordings he issued were brought about by the advances in the manufacturing of 78rpm discs, and eventually LP records.

Finally, chapter 5 ties together the discussion of transformations in the collecting tradition and the contextual determiners by concisely demonstrating the link between the eighteenth – century Romantic Movement and the Beat Movement in the early 1950s, and the printed collections of the nineteenth century and Alan Lomax's LP collections of songs in the 1950s and 60s. The link is their part in the transformations which define the American collecting tradition. Chapter 5 will conclude with a more extensive discussion of the 1950s and 60s American folk revival, and look at how important the context in which Child, Sharp, the Lomaxes, and Smith were working was for how folk music was seen by the musicians and aficionados of the revival. It will ultimately demonstrate that the transformations in theories of folk music, collecting methods, and collections and other output, were one of the most important aspects of how the public would come to see American folk music.

The next section provides a brief introduction to some of the most important discussion points European collectors whose work and theories impacted on the collectors in the American tradition.

#### 1.4: European Collecting Precedents

Herder's conception of the culture of the people is very important for subsequent work on folk music and culture. Filene identifies Herder as 'the most influential proponent of the



new cultural outlook,' and claims, 'Herder's ideas influenced a generation of intellectuals'<sup>62</sup>. Herder's ideas emerged from the existing German Romantic Movement, which itself was a revolt against the rationality of the Enlightenment. There was also a certain degree of anxiety over national identity involved with this revolt, and Berlin attributes this emerging disillusionment with culture and intellectualism to Germany's fractious political makeup and its humiliation by France in the Thirty Years War.<sup>63</sup> In this spirit of national anxiety and the exaltation of the natural expression of the self, Herder promoted his idea,

...that each human group must strive after that which lies in its bones, which is part of its tradition. Each man belongs to the group he belongs to; his business as a human being is to speak the truth as it appears to him...<sup>64</sup>

Herder also advanced a notion of a clearest possible understanding of culture and tradition based on consideration of the context in which it exists. As Berlin observes, this may be the beginning of historicism, which would be very influential in the work of Child and the development of folklore studies.<sup>65</sup> Bendix attests to the importance of Herder in the development of folklore, arguing that, 'Herder's philosophical and literary legacy inspired countless philosophical, literary, and social experiments. In Germany his efforts in folksong collection were continued in the works of prominent poets; the nascent popular press also drew inspiration from him.'<sup>66</sup> This situates Herder very clearly in the Romantic context, in which Romantic poetry drew from numerous sources in an attempt to express the fundamental voice of humanity. Herder's 1778 *Volklieder* collection was not the earliest collection of its kind, but its pioneering emphasis on the poetry of the 'Volk' suggests the contribution Herder's scholarship made to the folklore discipline.

Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm's famous collection *Children's and Household Tales* (*Kinder – und Hausmärchen*, first published 1812) is a significant advance in the scientific study of folk culture, as Dégh argues in her article, 'the comparative method they initiated

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<sup>62</sup> Filene, Benjamin. 2000. *Romancing the Folk: Public Memory & American Roots Music*. University of North Carolina Press. p. 10.

<sup>63</sup> Berlin, Isaiah. 1999. *The Roots of Romanticism: The A. W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts*. Princeton University Press. p. 36.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid. p. 66.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid. p. 62.

<sup>66</sup> Bendix, Regina. 1997. *In Search of Authenticity: The Formation of Folklore Studies*. University of Wisconsin Press. p. 42.

opened a new chapter in philology. They established a new discipline: the science of folklore...evidently *Household Tales* was originally intended for the scholarly reader.<sup>67</sup> It is arguable whether the Grimms definitively established the 'science of folklore', but they clearly had moved on to a certain extent from the Romantic search for the natural expression of the self, and were more interested in the systematic study of the language and culture their own country. Bendix connects the work of the Grimms to their contemporary Carl Lachmann, who '...attempted to "objectively" construct a genealogy of handwritten manuscripts, and working backward through time he hoped to lay bare the oldest text; soon he included medieval German texts in his endeavours.'<sup>68</sup> Bendix also concedes that, 'Lachmann's inspiration and drive, like the Grimms', stemmed from Romantic impulses, and his ultimate goal was to make available in as pure a form as possible the sublime poetry of a past age.<sup>69</sup> Considering Child's fascination with the Grimms, it is clear how his work emerged as a conflation of pedantic manuscript scholarship and the Romantic impulse Bendix describes to document poetry from a previous era.

One of the earliest examples of folk music collecting which features in this thesis is Thomas Percy's (1729 – 1811) *Reliques of English Poetry*, published in 1765. This work established many conventions for literary folk song collections, including a general preface presenting the collector's theories on folklore, an introductory commentary for each song, and footnotes explaining unfamiliar words or phrases.<sup>70</sup> Perhaps the most troubling aspect of Percy's collection, for the literary scholars in whose field folk poetry fell, was the editing Percy had done on the songs in his collection which was sometimes seen as tantamount to vandalism, certainly in the case of Child.<sup>71</sup> Bendix argues that Child's collection accrued praise from his contemporaries because he appeared to have resisted the urge to 'tinker' with his texts, 'To his literate contemporaries, ever freshly scandalised by the Ossian "forgery" and the editorial tinkering in Percy's *Reliques*, the scholarly organisation and arguments Child's edition was convincing proof of the authenticity of the edition's contents.'<sup>72</sup> Percy's work

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<sup>67</sup> Dégh, Linda. 1979. 'Grimm's *Household Tales* and its Place in the Household: The Social Relevance of a Controversial Classic.' *Western Folklore*. 38/2. p. 83.

<sup>68</sup> Bendix, Regina. 1997. *In Search of Authenticity: The Formation of Folklore Studies*. University of Wisconsin Press. p. 60.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid*, p. 64.

<sup>70</sup> Percy, Thomas. 1765. *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*. J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd., London.

<sup>71</sup> Palmer, Roy. 1996. "Veritable Dunghills": Professor Child and the Broadside'. *Folk Music Journal*. 7/2. p. 157.

<sup>72</sup> Bendix, Regina. 1997. *In Search of Authenticity: The Formation of Folklore Studies*. University of Wisconsin Press. p. 87.

was a popular source of reference, even for Child, but it may also have contributed to the strict textual scholarship of the Grimms and Child. Early precedents such as these form the foundation on which the practice of folk music collecting in America is based.

### 1.5: American Folk Revivalists

The thesis also discusses the work of people involved in folk music which occurs after Smith's 1952 collection was released, and while Alan Lomax was still very active in his work with folk music. Much of what is discussed is principally based in folk song performance, and is closely associated with the American folk revival movement of the late 1950s to the mid – 1960s. Many of the most prominent performers of the folk revival were influenced by the five collectors who are the subject of this thesis. For example, folk musician Bob Dylan has been such a prolific borrower of songs and musical styles over his career that many of his influences are clearly signposted. Szwed calls attention to the influence Alan Lomax had on Dylan's career in the early 1960s, 'Bob Dylan... was an occasional visitor to Alan's apartment, where he met many of these singers and heard them perform at Alan's twice – monthly parties – "spiritual experiences" Dylan called them – and where he learned their songs and performance styles firsthand.'<sup>73</sup> Commentators have also asserted the importance of Smith's *Anthology* collection as an influence on Dylan, citing numerous examples of Dylan performing and recording songs taken from Smith's collection. Piazza suggests that performers, including Dylan,

...used the anthology as a trove of material to mine, and transmute. Bob Dylan is certainly the best example of this; his earliest performances were full of material taken from the anthology. Echoes of lyrics from anthology songs continued to appear in Mr. Dylan's later works. On his most recent disk, "World Gone Wrong" (1993), he performs several tunes that appear on the anthology.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Szwed, John. 2010. *The Man Who Recorded the World: A Biography of Alan Lomax*. William Heinemann, London. p. 338.

<sup>74</sup> Piazza, Tom. 1997. 'A Folk Music That Awakened a Generation'. *The New York Times*. 24<sup>th</sup> August 1997.

Dylan's performance persona was also taken from folk music he was familiar with, and in his self-titled debut album (1962) he evoked Woody Guthrie in his performance style, his introductions to songs, and in tribute songs like *Song to Woody*. Cantwell argues that the revival movement was 'restorative' and this can be seen in Dylan's evocation of Guthrie,

...the folk revival was neither reactionary nor revolutionary, though it borrowed the signs of other such movements to express its sense of difference from the parent culture; it was, instead, conservative or, more precisely, restorative, kind of nonviolent cultural disobedience dedicated to picking up the threads of a forgotten legacy to reweave them into history...<sup>75</sup>

This kind of disobedience and restorative activity characterised much of Dylan's earlier work, and many of his albums have a strong topical leaning, such as his 1964 album *The Times They Are a - changin'*. The song *The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll* depicts the murder (ultimately convicted as manslaughter and assault) of Baltimore waitress Hattie Carroll by William Zanzinger (Zanzinger in the song), and the subsequent trial and conviction. The song highlights race inequalities in society and the justice system, and was written and recorded in the context of the civil rights movement. Although Dylan's topical leaning changed in the 1970s and 80s, he continued to subsist on the 'restorative' trend of the folk revival, and in his later albums he recorded many versions of traditional American folk songs.

Another central revival figure, Pete Seeger, enjoyed some of his formative experiences with folk music while working as Alan Lomax's assistant in 1939.<sup>76</sup> Filene notes that Seeger's work in folk music derives a great deal from Alan Lomax's influence, 'Given the pivotal role Alan Lomax played in introducing Seeger to folk music, it is not surprising that much of Seeger's work as a folk stylist was an extension of Lomax's efforts as a collector and promoter.'<sup>77</sup> It is important not to underestimate the role that Seeger played in the revival, since he was involved in many of the revival movement's most important breakthroughs.

<sup>75</sup> Cantwell, Robert. 1996. *When We Were Good: The Folk Revival*. Harvard University Press. p. 326.

<sup>76</sup> Szwed, John. 2010. *The Man Who Recorded the World: A Biography of Alan Lomax*. William Heinemann, London. p. 144.

<sup>77</sup> Filene, Benjamin. 2000. *Romancing the Folk: Public Memory & American Roots Music*. University of North Carolina Press. p. 190.

For instance, Seeger began the folk music group The Weavers in the late 1940s, and as Cantwell points out, 'In 1950 Seeger's folksong quartet, the Weavers, made Leadbelly's "Goodnight, Irene" the most popular song of the year...'<sup>78</sup> making Seeger one of the most important people in triggering the interest that created the revival. Seeger was also active throughout the 50s and 60s revival movement, becoming a central figure in the organisation of the Newport Festivals, even helping prevent them from being halted when the 1961 jazz festival ended in drunken property damage.<sup>79</sup> He continued performing throughout this period, and much like Alan Lomax, helped promote other musicians and encouraged them to perform for revivalist audiences. However, a political climate which also sometimes interrupted the career of Alan Lomax interfered with Seeger's performance of folk music in the 1950s: what Cantwell describes as 'cold – war anticommunism'. As Cantwell points out, in the same year that 'The Weavers' recorded the most popular song of the year, '*Red Channels: Communist Influence on Radio and Television* cited Pete Seeger thirteen times and terminated the Weavers' career. Show – business blacklisting drove folksinging underground for most of the decade.'<sup>80</sup> Cantwell goes on to comment that, 'What is to me most intriguing about the dissolution in the early fifties of the "folksong movement," ...is that it was induced by cold – war anticommunism...' McCarthyism and anticommunism is yet another important contextual factor which governed much of the work on folk song in America, and also necessitated Alan Lomax's period collecting Europe, which profoundly affected his theories on folk music.

Smith had a particular influence on more peripheral figures in the folk revival, such as fiddle player Peter Stampfel. Stampfel was part of revival group *The Holy Modal Rounders* who specialised in playing traditional and self – composed songs in a raucous style. The first two albums released by *The Holy Modal Rounders* include six songs taken directly from the *Anthology*. Stampfel commented on the extent of Harry Smith's influence, 'If God were a DJ he'd be Harry Smith. Have I told you that these records changed my life – and the lives of thousands of others – forever? I've taken a number of songs from them and given them new

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<sup>78</sup> Cantwell, Robert. 1996. *When We Were Good: The Folk Revival*. Harvard University Press. p. 7.

<sup>79</sup> Szwed, John. 2010. *The Man Who Recorded the World: A Biography of Alan Lomax*. William Heinemann, London. p. 347.

<sup>80</sup> Cantwell, Robert. 1996. *When We Were Good: The Folk Revival*. Harvard University Press. p. 8.

words.”<sup>81</sup> Whilst it is harder to demonstrate the direct influence of the three earlier collectors, Child, Sharp, and John Lomax, on the performers of the folk revival, their indirect influence through various routes is important to note.

## 1.6: Important Concepts

This study uses the work of various important writers to ground its discussion of the American collecting tradition, and their ideas will be introduced in this section. Isaiah Berlin’s *The Roots of Romanticism* is integral to the discussions of historical and intellectual context in this thesis, particularly when looking at the work of Child and Sharp, and also contributes to the understanding of the term Romantic, and the Romantic Movement. Berlin offers numerous observations on the origins of Romanticism, and its underlying principles, one of which is especially pertinent to the folk collectors,

it is the familiar, the sense of one’s unique tradition, joy in the smiling aspect of everyday nature, and the accustomed sights and sounds of contented, simple, rural folk – the sane and happy wisdom of rosy – cheeked sons of the soil.<sup>82</sup>

Romanticism in this case has clear implications for the work of Child and Sharp, particularly with its emphasis on tradition, and the understanding of the uncomplicated lives of the ‘simple, rural folk’. Berlin’s interpretation of the rationality of the Enlightenment demonstrates to what extent the Romantic Movement was a revolt against this, and he argues that many Enlightenment thinkers believed all questions could be answered and,

The answer is not to be obtained by revelation, for different men’s revelations appear to contradict each other. It is not to be obtained by tradition, because tradition can be shown to be often misleading and false. It is not to be obtained

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<sup>81</sup> Stampfel, Peter. 1997. *A Booklet of Essays, Appreciations, and Annotations Pertaining to the Anthology of American Folk Music*. Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, Washington D.C.

<sup>82</sup> Berlin, Isaiah. 1999. *The Roots of Romanticism: The A. W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts*. Princeton University Press. p. 17.

by dogma, it is not to be obtained by the individual self – inspection of men of a privileged type...<sup>83</sup>

As Berlin demonstrates, Romanticism posited that tradition was one of the most important aspects of human identity, and it could be said that the Romantic Movement abandoned the search for answers that characterised the Enlightenment. The Romantic preoccupation with nature, and the worship of nature as something free and vital, goes against what was, ‘...the official doctrine of the eighteenth century, namely that you discover the method in nature herself.’<sup>84</sup> Berlin also relates the tenets of the Romantic Movement to an idealisation of the ‘noble savage’, who embodies the free expression of nature valued by the Romantics, but also notes that,

Of course, if you think you can actually become a noble savage, if you think that you can actually transform yourself into a simple native of some unsophisticated country, living a very primitive life, then the magic is gone. But none of them did. The whole point of the romantic vision of the noble savage was that he was unattainable.<sup>85</sup>

Berlin’s analysis of the Romantic Movement is essential for the understanding of context which governs the argument of this thesis. His interpretation of Romanticism as the most significant recent movement in the Western World has considerable implications for the American collecting tradition. The influence of Romanticism can even be seen in the 50s and 60s folk revival, in which many of the participants held the ‘romantic vision of the noble savage’ as their understanding of the idealised folk singer, although certain revivalists did believe they could become a ‘noble savage’, thus breaking the limit set by the eighteenth – century romanticists.

Regina Bendix discusses the Romantic Movement specifically in terms of the origins of the folklore discipline, and argues, as Berlin does, that its emphasis on tradition is one of

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid. p. 22.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid. p. 27.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid. p. 135.

the distinguishing factors which impacted on folklore studies. Bendix, again like Berlin, also qualifies the extent to which Romanticism was a revolt away from the Enlightenment,

...this quest took the form of a poetic – rather than political – revolt, which became known as *Empfindsamkeit* (responsiveness to sentiment) – the search for feeling reified in the poetic and artistic. This search was not the radical countermovement it purported to be since the very ideas and images that it employed derive from the spectrum of discursive and reflexive modes that are facilitated by the “reason” from which one is trying to escape.<sup>86</sup>

Bendix draws attention to an important facet of the intellectual contexts of the collecting tradition, and the transformations within: despite the often fundamental disagreement between successive innovations, they necessarily follow on from those that preceded them. In this instance, the Romantic Movement is fed by the reason of the Enlightenment, and in the work of the Grimms and Child it is possible to see what Bendix refers to as the transition from the Romantic interest in the cleansing culture of the folk, to the nineteenth century focus on preserving the remnants of this folk culture.<sup>87</sup> The meaning of the term ‘romanticised’ in this thesis is based on the ideals of the Romantic Movement, as elucidated by Berlin and Bendix, and refers to the conception of something as possessing Romantic characteristics. For example, Cecil Sharp, according to Walkowitz, ‘...romanticised English village life and wrongly characterised it as peasant...’<sup>88</sup> and there were instances when Alan Lomax, working with his father, ‘...was annoyed by what he saw as his father’s excessive romanticism...’<sup>89</sup> Romanticism often surfaced in the work of the collectors of this thesis, most often in their understanding of the folk who had created the music. There was a tendency to conceive of the folk as living embodiments of traditional values, and to view their lifestyles in a similar manner. However, there was always some foundation of fact in

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<sup>86</sup> Bendix, Regina. 1997. *In Search of Authenticity: The Formation of Folklore Studies*. University of Wisconsin Press. p. 29.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid. p. 51.

<sup>88</sup> Walkowitz, Daniel J. 2010. *City Folk: English Country Dance and the Politics of the Folk in Modern America*. New York University Press. p.122.

<sup>89</sup> Szwed, John. 2010. *The Man Who Recorded the World: A Biography of Alan Lomax*. William Heinemann, London. p. 42.



this characterisation, and this romanticising tendency has always been part of the study of folk music.

In addition to this, Bendix also locates the notion of authenticity within the Romantic Movement, and cites Rousseau as one of the originators of the interest in authenticity,

Rousseau's philosophy, formulated in the mid – eighteenth century, contained the most influential formations of the shift from sincerity to authenticity...by contrast, Rousseau's ideal authentic person remains unaffected by opinion and lives in a paradisiacal state of innocence.<sup>90</sup>

The pursuit of authenticity in tradition is one of the most central motivations of folk music collecting and the discipline of folklore and for each of the collectors studied in this thesis it at least impacted on their work in some way. Bendix discusses the German 'Volk' as being rooted in an exalted past, and contrasts this with the American 'common man',

The construct of the American "common man" markedly differs, then, from the German *Volk* construct. The *Volk* was rooted in an idealised past, encumbered by the complexities of historical influences, and it could be redeemed only by those who, by virtue of their learning and class, had gained insight into its aesthetic and social value. The American "common man," by contrast lived authentically out of necessity.<sup>91</sup>

In the American collecting tradition these constructs were brought together through the work of Child and Sharp, who drew on the German 'Volk' to a large degree in their ideas of the folk, and the work of the Lomaxes which focused on the American 'common man' as found in tenant farmers, itinerant labourers, and even the American cowboy. What both these constructs have in common is their promotion of this person as authentic, meaning genuinely possessing the characteristics of the 'Volk' or the 'common man'.

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<sup>90</sup> Bendix, Regina. 1997. *In Search of Authenticity: The Formation of Folklore Studies*. University of Wisconsin Press. p. 16.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.* p. 74.

The concept of 'authenticity' can also be found in the work of Peterson, and his study *Creating Country Music: Fabricating Authenticity* deals with early precedents for country music and examines the devices used to market this music. He outlines his understanding of 'authenticity' in the introduction to *Creating Country Music: Fabricating Authenticity*,

The ironic phrase "fabricating authenticity" is used here to highlight the fact that authenticity is not inherent in the object or event that is designated authentic but is a socially agreed – upon construct in which the past is to a degree misremembered.<sup>92</sup>

This conception of 'authenticity' is discussed in relation to the work of the American collectors. Peterson's idea of 'fabricated authenticity' is counter to many ideas of the American collectors, most of whom believed that 'authenticity' could be inherent in a song. Child, Sharp, and the Lomaxes believed that 'authenticity' was present in the object and could be identified by the collector. He goes on to argue that country music emerged from similar, though separate, origins to blues and jazz but has developed along a different route. It is argued that jazz has been institutionalised through performance and tuition as 'art music', and blues has been adopted by the music industry and become 'commercial folk music'.<sup>93</sup> Peterson uses these labels to delineate the differences in country music, and poses the question, 'How is it that country music has become an element of commercial popular music rather than follow the path of jazz or the blues to become a kind of art music or commercial folk music?'<sup>94</sup> His notions of 'commercial popular music' and 'commercial folk music' are important for the thesis discussion, as is the suggestion regarding country music, 'preserving the music as a commercial market form "in the middle" without being "absorbed" into popular music, "elevated" into art, or "ossified" as a folk music.'<sup>95</sup> The terms Peterson uses to describe the process of alignment with musical fields do correspond with much of the work done by the American collectors.

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<sup>92</sup> Peterson, Richard A. 1997. *Creating Country Music: Fabricating Authenticity*. University of Chicago Press. p.

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid. p. 6.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid. p. 7.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

However, Peterson readily accepts the process of commercialisation as being important to the survival of country music, and regarding the proliferation of the phonograph he states, ‘Such media transmission was the death knell of authentic country music, some would argue, but it was the basis of the music’s survival and growth over the rest of the twentieth century as an authentic voice for millions of people.’<sup>96</sup> Much of the prevailing thought of the American collectors is opposed to this view of technology and popularisation, and this thesis discusses such opposing views. Musical traditions such as folk music are characterised as a ‘renewable resource’ which can supply performers with material to satisfy audience demands. This contention is connected with Peterson’s notion of ‘fabricated authenticity’ in which songs can be manufactured if they are convincingly ‘authentic’. He quotes Porterfield describing the recordings of Jimmie Rodgers and the Carter Family, ‘either they dredged up old, half – forgotten relics of the past, or they composed original songs that sounded like the old ones – music that connected with the past and extended the tradition.’<sup>97</sup> Again, this conflicts with the opinions of most of the American collectors, who believed that authenticity could not be manufactured but was intrinsic to the song. Whether this ‘authenticity’ was manufactured or illusory is immaterial: the concept was integral to the work of the collectors in the American collecting tradition, and many of the transformations of this tradition, particularly the transformation from textual scholarship, to fieldwork and transcription, to recording onto discs, were motivated by the desire to preserve the folksong object as authentically as possible. Consequently, authenticity in this thesis will refer to an object, person, or condition (e.g. lifestyle, historical period) which is believed to be genuine and not fake.

Authenticity also appears in T.J. Jackson Lears’ discussion of Antimodernism, and it is an idea of authenticity which has carried over from the Romantic Movement and impacted on Antimodernism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Lears describes the pursuit of authenticity as a move away from Protestantism, ‘By exalting “authentic” experience as an end in itself, antimodern impulses reinforced the shift from a Protestant ethos of salvation through self – denial to a therapeutic ideal of self – fulfilment in *this* world

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid. p. 12.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid. p. 35.

through exuberant health and intense experience.<sup>98</sup> Lears' idea of Antimodernism encompasses authenticity as part of the notion of 'real experience' which was central to Antimodernist thought. If modern society was regarded as hollow and stultifying, the authentic experience was seen as the antidote to this. Lears refers to the conditions of modern society as being seen as 'overcivilisation',

To many late Victorians the depth of emotional life seemed shallower, the contours of spiritual life softer, than ever before. These perceptions were intensified by the softening of material conditions of life...the recoil from pain, whether physical or spiritual, was a symptom of overcivilisation.<sup>99</sup>

The response to this was, as Lears observes, a martial culture of authentic experience,

The militarist obsession with authenticity, like other cults of risk – taking, became a circular and self – defeating quest for intense experience – a characteristic mode of adjustment to a secular culture of consumption. Reacting against therapeutic self – absorption, the cult of martial experience proved unable to transcend it.<sup>100</sup>

This trend of seeking authenticity as a response to what is seen as a suffocating modern culture could be regarded as a repeat of the Romantic interest in authenticity as a response to the Enlightenment. The important thing to note is that these very important transformations in the intellectual context played a large part in dictating the work of the collectors in this thesis.

The primary focus of Lears' study, the Antimodernism movement, is another important concept for this thesis. It is clear from the previous discussion that Antimodernism was a reaction against Victorian society, which was seen as secular and over – privileged, but Lears points out that Antimodernism is not necessarily regressive,

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<sup>98</sup> Lears, T.J. Jackson. 1994. *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880 – 1920*. University of Chicago Press. p. xvi.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.* p. 45.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.* p. 138.

Neither in Europe nor in America was that antimodern impulse wholly regressive. On the contrary, far from encouraging escapist nostalgia, anti – modern sentiments not only promoted eloquent protest against the limits of liberalism but also helped to shape new modes of cultural authority for the oncoming twentieth century.<sup>101</sup>

Lears makes the important point that movements or tendencies such as Antimodernism, which seem to favour looking back to the past as a means of escaping the present, do not have to be fundamentally regressive because they can determine the dominant thought of the period or subsequent periods. The same can be said of the American collecting tradition, which favours music from earlier periods, even if it is music still being performed, but uses this music to make an impact in the current period and folk music in the future. Lears' interpretation of Antimodernism is a movement that valued authenticity in experience, the idealised simple rural lifestyle, and robustness in morality and social life. This was in contrast to the Victorian tendencies of artifice, industrialised society, and an impression of over – privilege.

Kim Townsend explores many of the same ideas of Antimodernism as Lears, as they appeared in the lives and work of Harvard professors, students, and prominent alumni. Townsend argues that many of the Harvard professors were interested in instilling the same principles into their students,

For all the differences in their ideas and beliefs, in the personal and pedagogical styles, they were all intent on converting youths into the kind of gentlemen who could meet the challenges of a world that had suddenly become large and complex and all but godless.<sup>102</sup>

Antimodernism is at work in this type of tuition, but Townsend focuses on the idea of manhood, and the emergence of the term 'masculinity', as the heart of these trends at Harvard. The notion of manhood developed at Harvard was tightly connected to the idea of race heritage, which was based on the idealised Anglo – Saxon. For instance, George

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid. p. 6.

<sup>102</sup> Townsend, Kim. 1996. *Manhood at Harvard: William James and Others*. Norton, London. p. 83.

Santayana, professor of philosophy at Harvard, was concerned with what to base the idea of manhood on, and, 'Like many of his contemporaries, he looked to England for inspiration, and like theirs the ideals he imagined for the students were shaped by his understanding of what constituted true manhood.'<sup>103</sup> This idea of Anglo – Saxon heritage persisting in America influenced John Lomax and Cecil Sharp, who were both interested in the way Anglo – Saxon folk traditions had survived in America. In addition, in the case of Sharp, in his writings there was a clear interest in the Anglo – Saxon 'race heritage', which has certain similarities with ideas of manhood at Harvard. Townsend argues that,

Insofar as ideal manhood was represented as active, healthy, and gentlemanly – which in turn usually meant of higher station and having something called "Anglo – Saxon" origins – then not only women, and not only the passive, sickly types, but also those whose racial or national origins were obviously *not* "Anglo – Saxon" would be thought of as less than ideal men.<sup>104</sup>

Harvard's 'masculinity' also revolved around the idea of the 'strenuous life': the lifestyle of robust work, moral fortitude, and physical cultivation which characterised the ideal man at the turn of the century. Harvard alumnus Theodore Roosevelt followed the principle of the 'strenuous life' as completely as possible, and Townsend notes, 'It goes without saying, too, that Roosevelt's cultivation of manly strength was accompanied by unquestioned and uncompromised devotion to ideals of physical purity.'<sup>105</sup> Harvard 'masculinity' and the pursuit of the 'strenuous life' are essentially Antimodern impulses: a reaction against the pampered Victorian life, and also partly against the perceived feminisation of American culture, and Townsend refers to, 'worries about the possible feminisation of America's young men.'<sup>106</sup> This was especially pertinent in John Lomax's life, when many women had entered the workplace during the First World War to replace the men shipped out to Europe, and when the Women's Movement continued gathering momentum. Townsend remarks that, 'Between the end of the Civil War and the beginning of the First World War, nothing challenged men's conception of themselves and their place in the world more than

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid. p. 118.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid. pp. 195 – 196.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid. p. 258.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid. p. 139.

the women's movement...'<sup>107</sup> Sharp was also concerned by the growing Suffrage Movement in England, and how this would impact on his programs for education in folk song and dance, as Walkowitz notes,

During an era of suffrage militancy for which Sharp had no tolerance, English Country Dance offered women leadership positions and public roles, but from a particular class position and in deference to a male idol. At the same time, Sharp vanquished other leaders with alternative embodiments of the dance, especially if they were strong women. Thus, Sharp and his followers advanced a white, Anglo – Saxon cultural hegemony, but it was also a deeply gendered and class story with which future generations of dancers would have to engage.<sup>108</sup>

The Antimodern impulse, therefore, is also linked to the Women's Movement, and its reaction was to idealise 'masculinity' and the activities in which women had traditionally not participated, like hunting and sports.

Burke's *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* is also used, since it is one of the most important modern studies of popular culture. The study of popular culture is integral to the discussion regarding the disparity between popular culture and folk culture. Burke outlines important problematic issues in the prologue to *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* which are also addressed in this study. Firstly, he provides his own definition of the term culture, noting first the problems associated with such a term,

The definition adopted here is 'a system of shared meanings, attitudes and values, and the symbolic forms (performances, artefacts) in which they are expressed or embodied'. Culture in this sense is part of a total way of life but not identical with it.<sup>109</sup>

Burke notes that much of the discussion in *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* is based on the work of folklorists, 'Much of the material to be discussed in this book has long been

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid. p. 200.

<sup>108</sup> Walkowitz, Daniel J. 2010. *City Folk: English Country Dance and the Politics of the Folk in Modern America*. New York University Press. p. 8.

<sup>109</sup> Burke, Peter. 1978. *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*. Ashgate Publishing, Surrey. p. viii

studied by specialists in European folklore.<sup>110</sup> This indicates the link between the study and the work of Herder, the Grimms, and Child, and the importance of Burke's work in counterbalancing the views of these early folk collectors. This work draws attention to the problems of using a term like 'popular culture', 'An objection that has frequently been made is that the term 'popular culture' gives a false impression of homogeneity.'<sup>111</sup> The assumption of cultural homogeneity is an issue which arises in the work of the American collectors, especially regarding the assumption of cultural isolation. John Lomax's notion of homogeneity is a useful benchmark for the other American collectors, in which he conceived of the Appalachian Mountains as places of poverty and isolation, but also cultural homogeneity.<sup>112</sup> These established debates outlined by Burke comprise the foundation of much of the thesis discussion. *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* conflates 'folk culture' and 'popular culture', discussing them as terms referring to the same phenomenon. Burke articulates the difference Herder saw between folk poetry and art poetry, 'only folksong retains the moral effectiveness of early poetry because it circulates orally, is recited to music, and performs practical functions, whereas the poetry of the educated is poetry for the eye, cut off from music, frivolous rather than functional.'<sup>113</sup> He does not make the distinction between folk culture and popular culture which influenced the work of later American collectors. As John Lomax claimed, 'Commercial music via the radio, the movies and the slot phonograph is usurping the place of traditional and homemade music.'<sup>114</sup> Alan Lomax makes this distinction even more explicit in his work, claiming in Southern Indiana in 1938 that folk music was, 'having little effect against the rush of popular mechanised music.'<sup>115</sup> Clearly some of the American collectors equated popular culture with technology, and this thesis discusses the distinction between popular culture and folk culture. Burke's use of the term 'popular culture' to describe something which many American collectors would refer to as 'folk culture' is a significant discussion point of this study.

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid. p. xiv

<sup>111</sup> Ibid. p. 7

<sup>112</sup> Lomax, John A. 1938. *Annual Report of the Librarian of Congress*. United States Government Printing Office, Washington. p. 184.

<sup>113</sup> Burke, Peter. 1978. *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*. Ashgate Publishing, Surrey. p. 24.

<sup>114</sup> Lomax, John A. 1938. *Annual Report of the Librarian of Congress*. United States Government Printing Office, Washington. p. 184.

<sup>115</sup> Lomax, Alan. 1938. *Journal of the Ohio and Indiana Collection*, March 26 – April 16, 1938. American Folklife Centre.



The next chapter looks at the manifold definitions of folk music which have developed from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries, and the impact they have had on the collecting tradition, and consequently the public understanding of American folk music.

## Chapter 2: Defining Folk Music

### 2.1: Introduction

This chapter begins by looking at the definitions of European collectors who preceded and to differing extents influenced the American collectors: Herder, Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm, Motherwell, and Percy. The differences between these early conceptions of folk music is explored to show the transformations underway in European folklore based on the changing intellectual, political, social, and technological contexts of the period. Also, this chapter will discuss the theories of other important European philosophers, philologists, and writers to further demonstrate the importance of radical changes in the intellectual and political context in which they were working, and also how some of their ideas affected the European collectors. The chapter goes on to discuss the definitions of the American collectors, and how these are linked through the American collecting tradition. The argument of this chapter is that the theories which underpin the American collecting tradition are characterised by a series of transformations, in the successive notions of what constitutes folk music, where it comes from, and who sings it. Many aspects of the theories of folk music have their roots in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and certain transformations are the result of reactions to these earlier precedents, such as Sharp's re-evaluation of the theories of the Grimms. However, the most important factors in determining the transformations in folk music theory are the intellectual, political, socio-cultural, and technological contexts in which the collectors were working. These are the influences which have the biggest impact on the way the collectors conceive of folk music, which ultimately affects every other aspect of their work.

### 2.2: Class Interactions and 'Country' Interests

Many early examples of interest in folk music exhibit a preference for the term 'ballad' as a generic term to describe the style of traditional song favoured by the lower classes. This distinguished it from the classical music preferred by the upper and educated classes, and

from purely religious music, to which it was sometimes seen as acutely antithetical. Burke notes Herder's attitudes towards what he called *Kultur der Gelehrten*, or learned culture, 'the poetry of the educated is poetry for the eye, cut off from music, frivolous rather than functional.'<sup>116</sup> This is an example of Herder's theory of folk music as communicative art, which is created without artifice and serves the purpose of communicating something among a likeminded group of people. It is worth noting that in the eighteenth – century there appeared to be little connection between Ballads and Volkslieder. The terms were not originally entangled in the same subject, and it seems that ballads only came to be seen as a type of folk song in the late nineteenth – century and early twentieth – century. For example: William Motherwell's 1827 collection *Minstrelsy Ancient and Modern* did not use the term 'folk' at any point, preferring to use 'ballad' to refer to the songs, or simply describing them as 'popular poetry'. However, this is largely due to the songs being studied from a literary perspective, and as such they were treated as a type of poetry.

One of the earliest collections of folk songs was published in 1723 and is titled *A Collection of Old Ballads*. It was edited anonymously, and as Filene points out the editor, 'directly stressed its antiquarian nature, emphasising in the work's subtitle that the ballads were *Corrected from the best and most Ancient Copies Extant*.'<sup>117</sup> The connotations of the term ballad have changed since the eighteenth century, primarily through the work of Child, although it still referred to a narrative poem set to music. It was distinguishable from the country dances regularly enjoyed by the upper classes in the eighteenth century, featuring prominently in novels such as *Pride and Prejudice*,

Bye the bye, Charles, are you really serious in meditating a dance at Netherfield?  
– I would advise you, before you determine on it, to consult the wishes of the present party; I am much mistaken if there are not some among us to whom a ball would be rather a punishment than a pleasure.<sup>118</sup>

The interest in both dancing and ballads originated from a fascination with 'country' pursuits among the upper classes in the eighteenth century, and this accounts for the

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<sup>116</sup> Burke, Peter. 1978. *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*. Ashgate Publishing, Surrey. p. 24.

<sup>117</sup> Filene, Benjamin. 2000. *Romancing the Folk: Public Memory & American Roots Music*. University of North Carolina Press. p. 10.

<sup>118</sup> Austen, Jane. 1972. *Pride and Prejudice*. Penguin Books. p. 100.

popularity of the 1723 collection *A Collection of Old Ballads* which became, 'among the most popular books of the 1720s.'<sup>119</sup> This fashion was not without a significant social foundation, and like many instances of intense interest in the country and the rural folk, emerged from concerns about the present. Raymond Williams sees this as a recurring historical trend, with repetitions of many of the same ideas,

On the country has gathered the idea of a natural way of life: of peace, innocence and simple virtue. On the city has gathered the idea of an achieved centre: of learning, communication, light. Powerful hostile associations have also developed: on the city as a place of noise, worldliness and ambition; on the country as a place of backwardness, ignorance, limitation. A contrast between country and city, as fundamental ways of life, reaches back into classical times.<sup>120</sup>

Williams describes the idealisation of the country as a response to the issues of the present, and also connects the conception of the country to a desire for a simpler past,

...the idea of an ordered and happier past set against the disturbance and disorder of the present. An idealisation, based on a temporary situation and on a deep desire for stability, served to cover and to evade the actual and bitter contradictions of the time.<sup>121</sup>

The Regency period, during which much of this interest in the country emerged, was a period of social and political change in which the city became a centre of incipient industrial transformation, while in the country Enclosure Acts made increasing amounts of common land unavailable for the working classes to farm, catch game etc. This created an apparent division between the modern city beginning its industrial change, and the country which had been still existing under an essentially feudal system, although in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the feudal system of common land was being changed to land

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<sup>119</sup> Filene, Benjamin. 2000. *Romancing the Folk: Public Memory & American Roots Music*. University of North Carolina Press. p. 10.

<sup>120</sup> Williams, Raymond. 1985. *The Country and the City*. Hogarth, London. p. 1.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.* p. 45.

ownership due to Enclosure Acts. Williams suggests that this division could be regarded as a kind of social failure,

there is a sense in which the idea of the enclosures, localised to just that period in which the Industrial Revolution was beginning, can shift our attention from the real history and become an element of that very powerful myth of modern England in which the transition from a rural to an industrial society is seen as a kind of fall, the true cause and origin of our social suffering and disorder.<sup>122</sup>

Williams also connects this to a loss of community in the modern city, which is far removed from the type of community that once existed in the country,

The growth of towns and especially of cities and a metropolis; the increasing division and complexity of labour; the altered and critical relations between and within social classes: in changes like these any assumptions of a knowable community – a whole community, wholly knowable – became harder and harder to sustain.<sup>123</sup>

Consequently, the interest in the country during the Regency period, and as it appears in *Pride and Prejudice*, emerged from a dissatisfaction with the beginnings of the industrial city and the seeming dissolution of a fundamentally feudal society. The country still represented this idealised society, and the popularity of country dances and books like 'A Collection of Old Ballads' could be seen as attempts to revisit such a society. This is another instance of a fascination with what could be seen as 'folk' culture which comes from the social and political context of the period.

The fact that this is a historically recurring interest suggests an underlying cause which is peculiar to those social classes who do not see themselves as 'folk'. This recurring interest appears to emerge from a fascination with the lifestyle of the 'folk', and its seeming difference from the middle and upper – class lifestyle of the period. Pearce, in her study of collecting in the 'European tradition' notes this trend of outsider interest in collecting,

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid. p. 96.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid. p. 165.

Material culture does not only create images which reflect and therefore explain the nature of inwardness within its own terms: it also creates images which support inwardness through comparisons with traditions which are within the system but seen, by the system itself, to be alien to it...this sense of alienation has had its impact upon collecting, as upon every other aspect of life.<sup>124</sup>

Folk music is a clear example of one of these 'alien traditions' identified by Pearce: something which is essentially part of the same culture as that in which the collector lives, but is seen as distinct because of its associations with the rural working classes. Pearce's theory of collecting argues that such interest in 'alien traditions' is often used to somewhat misrepresent these traditions,

A few years ago an exhibition called *Vasna: An Indian Village* toured major venues in Britain. It aimed to show daily life in a typical Indian village as it is loved today, and it did so through the medium of realistic constructions of houses and facades...but the overall effect was to create not a view of ordinary people, the friends and families of those settled in Britain, living ordinary lives, but a kind of Merrie India, of traditional timelessness. There is perpetuated the sense of difference and distance, against which...contemporary British material can be contrasted and the 'normalities' of life and material design be reaffirmed.<sup>125</sup>

Ultimately, a lot of collecting work involves similar misrepresentation, and the emphasis on tradition set against modern life. Certainly collections like Lomax's *Cowboy Songs*, and Sharp's *English Folk Songs*, engage in similar misrepresentation to the Indian village exhibition. These collections depict the songs as part of a rural tradition, which has survived outside modern society, and highlight the differences between the two. As Lomax stated in his introduction to *Cowboy Songs*,

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<sup>124</sup> Pearce, Susan M. 1995. *On Collecting: An Investigation into Collecting in the European Tradition*. Routledge Press, London. pp. 323 – 324.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.* p. 325.

The big ranches of the West are now being cut up into small farms. The nester has come, and come to stay. Gone is the buffalo, the Indian warwhoop, the free grass of the open plain; even the stinging lizard, the horned frog, the centipede, the prairie dog, the rattlesnake, are fast disappearing.<sup>126</sup>

Depictions like these are more than simple misrepresentations of a subject: they are demonstrations of the context in which the collector was working. Misrepresentation here could be seen as romanticisation, which in the case of Lomax was the romanticisation which was an element of Antimodernism, and the evocation of the life of the cowboy. The evocation of a romanticised rural idyll is at work in this segment of Lomax's writing, but it is also partly based on his own observations of the shift from cattle – droving to twentieth – century agricultural practices. Like many instances of romanticisation, or misrepresentation, it has a basis in fact, and this factual context, as well as the intellectual background, informs the idea of rural tradition. It would be reductive to simply cite these as instances of wilful misrepresentation of a subject.

In terms of collecting theory, much of the American collecting tradition is based on a very similar trend to Pearce's 'alien tradition': the presentation of folk music as a tradition of the people, but different from the middle – class popular culture of the time.

In the case of Herder and the late eighteenth century period in which he worked, the enlightenment had introduced a form of secular rationalism as the prevailing scholarly trend, and Herder operated against this trend. This was seen as a movement away from cultural elitism, as Burke points out,

The main aesthetic reason was what might be called the revolt against 'art'. 'Artificial' (like 'polished') became a pejorative term, and 'artless' (like 'wild') a term of praise...the appeal of the exotic was that it was wild, natural, and free from the rules of classicism.<sup>127</sup>

In a rough echo of this, the 1929 market crash and subsequent depression created disillusionment with American society which prompted the public to look away from the

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<sup>126</sup> Lomax, John A. 1910. *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads*. New York, MacMillan Press.

<sup>127</sup> Burke, Peter. 1978. *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*. Ashgate Publishing, Surrey. pp. 31 – 32.

modern and urban to a certain extent. Filene argues for the existence of, ‘the “outsider populism” of the period – a tendency in the thirties to locate America’s strength and vibrancy in the margins of society.’<sup>128</sup> He goes on to argue that, ‘In this atmosphere, middle – class Americans were drawn to people who seemed to exist outside the modern industrial world, able to survive independent of its inhumane economy and not lulled by its superficial luxuries.’<sup>129</sup> The same underlying trend could be seen as motivating much of the 1950s and 60s American folk music revival, which was largely a reaction against the prevailing cultural trends of the 1950s. Mitchell, in her study *The North American Folk Music Revival*, asserts that,

It is significant that those who gravitated towards folk music were white, largely urban or suburban, middle – class youth, estranged by privilege from the immigrant roots of parents and grandparents. Many had grown up in a culture which valued standardisation of culture and values, and which downplayed any sense of diversity or tradition.<sup>130</sup>

Clearly the issue with homogeneity in popular culture has troubled the middle and upper – classes from the eighteenth century onwards and this has resulted in brief but intense periods of interest in folk music. Much of this interest has been heightened by the work of the American folk music collectors, who themselves were generally involved in the same type of outsider interest in folk music. As discussed previously, the fact that those who studied folk music were middle – class is part of the fundamental social processes which created the idea of the ‘folk’. The interaction between the middle – classes and working – class rural society created an idea of culture and tradition on which subsequent theories and practices relating to folk music were based. The transformations of this idea of culture and tradition from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries are part of such class interactions, and are also instances of the transformations which define the study of folklore. The middle

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<sup>128</sup> Filene, Benjamin. 2000. *Romancing the Folk: Public Memory & American Roots Music*. University of North Carolina Press. p. 64.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid. p. 65.

<sup>130</sup> Mitchell, Gillian. 2007. *The North American Folk Music Revival: Nation and Identity in the United States and Canada, 1945 – 1980*. Ashgate Publishing Ltd., Hampshire. p. 68.



– class view of folk music is not simply a recurring trend, but an essential part of these transformations.

### 2.3: Herder and the Origins of ‘Folk Music’

Some collectors relevant to this thesis did not use the term ‘folk music’ at all to describe the music they collected, *Child’s English and Scottish Popular Ballads* being the obvious example. Also, some recent commentators such as Filene hesitate to use the term to title their discussion because, “‘folk music’ ceases to have much use as a descriptive term, since what I am trying to understand is the contradictory meanings Americans have given it over the years.”<sup>131</sup> For collectors like Sharp, the term is extremely useful and needs to remain this way,

Unhappily it is used in two senses. Scientific writers restrict its meaning to the song created by the unlettered classes. Others, however, use it to denote not only the peasant songs, but all popular songs as well, irrespective of origin, *i.e.* in the wider and looser sense in which it is sometimes used in Germany. This is to destroy the value of a very useful expression, and to rob scientists of a word of great value.<sup>132</sup>

The term ‘folk music’ has certainly been externally imposed by those who study the subject, and is not necessarily self – applied by any of the ‘folk’ themselves. As Filene argues,

rural whites and African Americans had been playing their traditional music since long before the 1900s, but they had done so, for the most part, out of the view of the middle and upper classes: outsiders had shown little interest in their culture, and, correspondingly, the rural musicians had had no reason yet to think of themselves as “the folk” or of their music as “folk” music.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Filene, Benjamin. 2000. *Romancing the Folk: Public Memory & American Roots Music*. University of North Carolina Press. p. 5.

<sup>132</sup> Sharp, Cecil J. 1907. *English Folk Song: Some Conclusions*. London, Simpkin & Co. Ltd. p. 2.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.* p. 9.

Burke observes something similar happening in Germany in the 'late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries' regarding external imposition of the 'folk' label,

Craftsmen and peasants were no doubt surprised to find their homes invaded by men and women with middle – class clothes and accents who insisted they sing traditional songs or tell traditional stories. New terms are as good a guide as any to the rise of new ideas, and this was a time when a whole cluster of new terms came into use, especially in Germany.<sup>134</sup>

Burke goes on to identify Herder's pioneering use of the term '*volkslieder*' to refer to the songs of the rural working classes, and associated terms which describe other traditional forms within rural working class communities.<sup>135</sup> The most important point for this discussion, identified by Burke and Filene, is the middle – class interest in folk music and their imposition of ideas onto 'the folk'. This could be said to characterise the work of each of the American collectors, since they were all looking at this culture and these songs as middle – class outsiders, and imposed their own ideas onto the people and their music. Sharp, in a 1907 article for the *Musical Times*, described a similar act of 'invasion',

It is worth remarking, by the way, as an instance of the good manners of the country folk, that I have never once been asked on these occasions what my business was. They are apparently quite satisfied to receive a stranger, offer him hospitality, and treat him as a welcome visitor without displaying any curiosity as to the purpose of his visit.<sup>136</sup>

Mitchell identifies the same situation occurring during the 1950s and 60s folk revival, where middle class young people would go looking for folk musicians and the 'folk', inspired by collectors like the Lomaxes.<sup>137</sup> Again, this is not only a recurring trend among the middle –

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<sup>134</sup> Burke, Peter. 1978. *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*. Ashgate Publishing, Surrey. p. 23.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Sharp, Cecil J. 1907. 'Folk Song Collecting'. *Musical Times*. 48/767. p. 17.

<sup>137</sup> Mitchell, Gillian. 2007. *The North American Folk Music Revival: Nation and Identity in the United States and Canada, 1945 – 1980*. Ashgate Publishing Ltd., Hampshire. p. 33.

classes; it is the basis of the idea of the 'folk' and of 'folk music'. As discussed previously, the rudiments of the idea of the folk began with a fascination with the remaining aspects of feudal culture in England, and this fascination was very much part of the middle – class cultural outlook of the Regency period. Although Filene quite rightly notes that the 'folk' did not consider themselves 'folk', this requires some background to explain, and was not simply middle – class condescension. The Regency interest in 'country' culture developed into the Romantic interest in the authentic expression of nature which, as Williams points out, was exemplified by poets like John Clare:

...the culmination, in broken genius, of the movement which we can trace from a century before him: the separation of Nature from the facts of the labour that is creating it, and then the breaking of Nature, in altered and now intolerable relations between men.<sup>138</sup>

From the Romantic Movement came the scholarly study of folk music, and from this came the work of the Lomaxes and the modern discipline of folklore. The 'folk' is a middle – class idea, and this social distinction is integral to the development of the term. Therefore to speak of a 'middle – class outsider' trend does not fully credit the origins of the concept of the 'folk'.

The earliest coherent definition of folk music put forward by a folk collector is that of Herder, whom both Filene and Burke cite as the originator of many important ideas in the study of folk music. As mentioned previously, Filene presents Herder as an opponent of the Enlightenment emphasis on scientific rigour and rational discourse, and also connects this with notions of natural and artificial which seemingly distinguished folk music from other forms of cultural expression.<sup>139</sup> It is essential to note that this attitude did not originate with Herder, and did not emerge without precedents. Berlin cites eighteenth – century philosopher Johann Georg Hamann as one of the main originators of the idea that, 'What men wanted was for all their faculties to play in the richest and most violent possible

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<sup>138</sup> Williams, Raymond. 1985. *The Country and the City*. Hogarth, London. p. 141.

<sup>139</sup> Filene, Benjamin. 2000. *Romancing the Folk: Public Memory & American Roots Music*. University of North Carolina Press. p. 10.

fashion.’<sup>140</sup> Also, although Berlin claims Rousseau’s role in the beginning of the Romantic Movement is sometimes exaggerated, some of his ideas clearly prefigure some Romantic principles,

We live in a corrupt society; we live in a bad, hypocritical society, where men lie to each other and murder each other and are false to each other. It is possible to discover the truth. The truth is to be discovered not by means of sophistication or Cartesian logic but by looking within the simple uncorrupt human being, the noble savage...<sup>141</sup>

Although Rousseau and Hamann were not Romanticists, Herder’s reaction against the reason of the Enlightenment, and against artifice, had a background certain ideas they promulgated. Rousseau and Hamann, among others, helped set up the intellectual context in which Herder was working.

It is interesting to observe that even in this eighteenth century notion of folk culture, Herder was looking to the past rather than the present, and conceiving of folk culture as having more inherent value than the contemporary culture. This echoes Peterson’s idea of a ‘misremembered past’ and as he points out,

This tailoring of collective memory to serve the needs of the present has been studied by a number of researchers, and as they show, the process can take several forms depending on who has the power to enforce their distinctive interpretation of the past.<sup>142</sup>

Peterson suggests that the consumers of these folk music collections are also complicit in the manufacturing of authenticity, referring to the common conception of folk music history as ‘collective memory’. Herder’s *Volkslieder* collection furnished this ‘collective memory’ with artefacts which contribute to the seeming cultural homogeneity of folk music history.

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<sup>140</sup> Berlin, Isaiah. 1999. *The Roots of Romanticism: The A. W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts*. Princeton University Press. p. 42.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid. pp. 52 – 53.

<sup>142</sup> Peterson, Richard A. 1997. *Creating Country Music: Fabricating Authenticity*. University of Chicago Press. pp. 3 – 4.

One of the things which had the greatest influence on the collective public memory is the definition of folk music put forward by the collector. These traits continue to be present in the ideas of every American collector, and some have argued that a collection like Harry Smith's is designed to subvert the contemporary culture, 'The songs, in common with other folk and traditional material, had real content and wide – ranging subject matter, in contrast to virtually all of the popular music of the era...'<sup>143</sup> Marcus suggests this is a reaction against what he terms 'Americanism',

...the *Anthology of American Folk Music* was a seductive detour away from what, in the 1950s, was not known as America but as Americanism. That meant the consumer society, as advertised on TV; it meant vigilance against all enemies of society, and a determination never to appear as one...<sup>144</sup>

John Lomax depicted the enviable existence of the singing cowboy as belonging to the past, and aspects of modern culture had destroyed this lifestyle. It is clear the real or imagined idea of a simpler rural lifestyle was part of the motivation for collecting, and part of a common definition of folk music. The idea of a simple rural lifestyle intruded in Herder's philosophical work too, and was depicted as being happy because of its simplicity, 'Even the farmer will live content in the manner allowed by his unrefined traits etc. I have not the brilliant misery etc. You have what you need.'<sup>145</sup>

It is initially unclear if Herder turned to folk culture to enable his 'escape', or if his existing interest in folk culture made him conceive of his opposition as escape. Burke discusses the other participants in this German folk culture movement including the Grimms and Goethe, and comes to the following conclusions,

It is because of the breadth of the movement that it seems reasonable to speak of the discovery of the people or the discovery of popular culture as taking place in this period; Herder did in fact use the phrase 'popular culture' (*Kultur des Volkes*),

<sup>143</sup> Russell, Ian, and Atkinson, David. 2004. *Folk Song: Tradition, Revival and Re – creation*. The Elphinstone Institute, University of Aberdeen. p. 92.

<sup>144</sup> Marcus, Greil. 1997. *A Booklet of Essays, Appreciations, and Annotations Pertaining to the Anthology of American Folk Music*. Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, Washington D.C.

<sup>145</sup> Forster, Michael N. 2002. *Johann Gottfried von Herder: Philosophical Writings*. Cambridge University Press. pp. 25 – 26.

contrasting it with 'learned culture' (*Kultur der Gelehrten*). Antiquaries had described popular customs before, or had collected broadside ballads. What is new in Herder and the Grimms and their followers is, first, the emphasis on the people, and second, their belief that 'manners, customs, observances, superstitions, ballads, proverbs etc.' were all part of a whole, expressing the spirit of a particular nation. In this sense the subject of this book was discovered – or should it be 'invented'? – by a group of German intellectuals at the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>146</sup>

What Burke perhaps obfuscates in his discussion of popular culture is the distinction the 'German intellectuals' he refers to made between 'Kultur des Volkes' and what could be called popular culture. Bendix draws attention to one of the most important issues Herder had with a 'popular culture', 'The very real social gulf between an emerging urban proletariat and an emerging bourgeoisie made it appear impossible that the noble, "clean" fountain of authenticity would reside in the shabby noisy living quarters of the folk.'<sup>147</sup> Herder did not believe that Volkslieder existed in the cities, and did not believe that the 'urban proletariat' were the idealised Volk in which he could find the qualities he valued. In addition, Berlin's discussion of Herder's ideas of national identity is somewhat at odds with Burke. Burke claims that Kultur des Volkes was expressive of entire nation, whereas Berlin argues that Herder's ideas were more circumscribed in their focus, '...he developed the notion that every man seeks to belong to some kind of group, or in fact does belong to it, and it taken out of it will feel alien and not at home.'<sup>148</sup> Berlin goes on to assert that, 'Herder is the originator, the author, not of nationalism as is sometimes said, although no doubt some of his ideas entered nationalism, but of something – I do not quite know what name to give it – much more like populism.'<sup>149</sup> Although Burke notes Herder's important distinction between Kultur des Volkes and Kultur der Gelehrten, he muddies other distinctions which would give a further insight into Herder's ideas, and mistakenly situates these ideas at the end of the nineteenth century.

<sup>146</sup> Burke, Peter. 1978. *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*. Ashgate Publishing, Surrey. pp. 30 – 31.

<sup>147</sup> Bendix, Regina. 1997. *In Search of Authenticity: The Formation of Folklore Studies*. University of Wisconsin Press. p. 40.

<sup>148</sup> Berlin, Isaiah. 1999. *The Roots of Romanticism: The A. W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts*. Princeton University Press. p. 61.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.* p. 64.

The notion that this folk culture was invented has much in common with Hobsbawm's *The Invention of Tradition*, which is introduced with the following summary,

'Invented tradition' is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact, where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past.<sup>150</sup>

The practice of connecting traditions to a historical period is also something employed by the American collectors, most notably by Child. His definition of the popular ballad was firmly rooted in an historical period, but this indeterminate pre – medieval period seemed to originate largely from his imagination. Child described this historical period as possessing the ideal characteristics for the creation of popular ballads,

Whenever a people in the course of its development reaches a certain intellectual and moral stage, it will feel an impulse to express itself, and the form of expression to which it is first impelled is, as is well known, not prose, but verse, and in fact narrative verse.<sup>151</sup>

Similarly, Sharp claimed that the folk music he was collecting emerged from a particular historical period, and was produced by the same compulsion for self – expression, 'The dominant feeling of mankind, civilised or uncivilised, is the desire for self – expression.'<sup>152</sup> He developed this idea into a definitive statement about the origins of folk music,

Folk – music...is the product of a race, and reflects feelings and tastes that are communal rather than personal; it is always in solution; its creation is never

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<sup>150</sup> Hobsbawm, Eric, and Ranger, Terence. 1983. *The Invention of Tradition*. University of Cambridge Press. p. 1.

<sup>151</sup> Child, Francis. 1900. 'Ballad Poetry'. *Johnson's Universal Cyclopaedia*. New York.

<sup>152</sup> Sharp, Cecil J. 1907. *English Folk Song: Some Conclusions*. London, Simpkin & Co. Ltd. p. 5.

completed; while, at every moment of its history, it exists not in one form but in many.<sup>153</sup>

There are various components to Herder's theory of folk music, many of which were adopted subsequently by the American collectors. Herder conceived of folk culture and its ancillary forms of music, dancing, poetry etc. as belonging to the rural lower classes, whose low literacy levels and low exposure to *Kultur der Gelehrten* meant that they engaged in more traditional cultural expression. As Filene points out,

To Herder and other early collectors, true peasants were pure and artless and, usually, exotic. "The more wild and freely acting a people is," wrote Herder, "the more wild, that is, the more lively, free, sensuous and lyrically acting its songs must be!"<sup>154</sup>

This assertion naturally means Herder believed the folk music to be expressive, in content and style, of the uniquely simple existence of the rural peasant. Burke notices this idea, 'Herder went on to suggest that true poetry belongs to a particular way of life, which would later be described as the 'Organic Community'...' <sup>155</sup> Here Burke identifies an element of a strain of Romantic thought: the notion of art as expressing the natural and untrammelled self. Berlin cites Herder's idea of folk songs as, '...artefacts, that is to say, something which a man has made for the purpose of communicating with another man. This is the doctrine of art as expression, the doctrine of art as communication.' <sup>156</sup> Herder also states that such communicative art may actually be without artifice due to it being an unconscious expression of the Volk, 'He says that some things are made by individuals, and other things are made by groups. Some things are made consciously, and other things are made unconsciously.' <sup>157</sup> This also includes another important Romantic idea which was propounded by Kant, 'The only thing worth possessing is the unfettered will – this is the

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<sup>153</sup> Ibid. p. 15.

<sup>154</sup> Filene, Benjamin. 2000. *Romancing the Folk: Public Memory & American Roots Music*. University of North Carolina Press. p. 11.

<sup>155</sup> Burke, Peter. 1978. *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*. Ashgate Publishing, Surrey. p. 24.

<sup>156</sup> Berlin, Isaiah. 1999. *The Roots of Romanticism: The A. W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts*. Princeton University Press. p. 60.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid. p. 60.



central proposition which Kant put on the map.<sup>158</sup> Although Herder's idea of the unconscious expression of the Volk clashes somewhat with the determined expression of the self, both ideas crucially revolve around untrammelled expression of some kind. This is what Burke picks out when he refers to the 'Organic Community' and it is very much a Romantic idea, not simply an idea from Herder. Herder also believed folk music was representative of a seemingly unbroken history of folk culture which changed little despite concomitant changes in *Kultur der Gelehrten*. Finally, Herder saw the music as having more inherent value than *Kultur der Gelehrten*, due to its unselfconscious expression of the lives of the *Volk*, and particularly during Herder's life, it offered an alternative to the Enlightenment.

Another important element in Herder's definition of folk music is his distinction between rural working class culture and its urban equivalent, 'not just anyone counted as "folk." Herder distinguished between the true *Volk* (primarily rural peasants) and the urban "rabble in the streets," who, Herder believed, "never sing or rhyme but scream and mutilate."<sup>159</sup> These value judgements are echoed by similar judgements made by the Lomaxes in their early recording work, such as in their 1938 report to Congress,

The mountains have always been poor but, so long as that poverty also meant comparative isolation, the tradition of homemade music could survive more or less unchanged. In the last decades, however, rural music and the *mores* associated with poverty have found difficulty in resisting the competition of metropolitan intrusions backed by wealth and prestige.<sup>160</sup>

Burke's discussion of folk music in the context of Herder seems to make no distinction between folk and popular culture, but Filene implies a distinguishable urban popular culture as being separate from the rural folk culture. If this urban popular culture is further distinguishable from *Kultur der Gelehrten*, then there are apparently three distinct forms of culture which exist separately and can be antagonistic to each other. The notion of an urban

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid. p. 78.

<sup>159</sup> Filene, Benjamin. 2000. *Romancing the Folk: Public Memory & American Roots Music*. University of North Carolina Press. p. 21.

<sup>160</sup> Lomax, John A. 1938. *Annual Report of the Librarian of Congress*. United States Government Printing Office, Washington. p. 184.

culture of the people seems to be accepted by most of the American folk collectors, and it is often associated with technology threatening to folk music. Child conceived of it as a culture connected with printing technology, which had done significant damage to British ballads through products of this technology like the broadside. Child endorsed the distinction between an urban popular culture and the rural culture, and as Palmer highlights, he seemed to claim that urban popular culture was responsible for much of the corruption of genuine popular ballads.<sup>161</sup> Child referred to the emergence of the popular ballad as occurring, 'when the distinctions since brought about by education and other circumstances had practically no existence.'<sup>162</sup> The Lomaxes, particularly while recording in the 1930s, also saw a division between urban culture and rural culture, and linked this with the radio and phonograph technologies.

Primarily they sought traditional folk music in the "eddies of human society," self-contained homogenous communities cut off from the corrupting influences of popular culture. Mainstream communities, the Lomaxes feared, had lost touch with their folk roots. As historian Joe Klein writes, "Instead of listening to Grandma sing 'Barbara Allen' on the back porch, the kids – and often Grandma too – were listening to Bing Crosby on the radio"<sup>163</sup>

Ultimately it could be suggested that these tendencies in the work of the American collectors are partly affected by the context of the Romantic Movement in the same way that Herder's work was. Romanticism was a reaction against the prevailing intellectual climate, which could be regarded as one of rational, secular development in science and the humanities. Herder's personal reaction to this climate was to advocate a type of self-expression which was communal and not personal, and unconscious rather than conscious. With the Lomaxes, in a period of technological development and social change, they advocated the importance of tradition and of cultural and regional identity. This could be seen as a Romantic view of the self, which was traditional and retained its discrete cultural identity, whether that identity is regional or ethnic. Herder's construction of Volkslieder was

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<sup>161</sup> Palmer, Roy. 1996. "Veritable Dunghills': Professor Child and the Broadside'. *Folk Music Journal*. 7/2. p. 157.

<sup>162</sup> Child, Francis. 1900. 'Ballad Poetry'. *Johnson's Universal Cyclopaedia*. New York.

<sup>163</sup> Filene, Benjamin. 2000. *Romancing the Folk: Public Memory & American Roots Music*. University of North Carolina Press. p. 50.

an innovation in literary and philological studies which was brought about by the intellectual context in which he was working, and Herder's work itself provides an intellectual context for the American collecting tradition. Therefore it is possible to trace the connections between the work of the Lomaxes and eighteenth – century Romanticism, and see the transformations they introduced to the American collecting tradition partly as a result of Herder's work.

#### 2.4: The Grimms, Romantic Nationalism, and *Kinder – und Hausmärchen*

The Grimms followed on from the work of Herder in promoting the virtues of the poetry of the rural working classes, and its inherent value as a genuine expression of the people. The Grimms promulgated the idea that folk songs and tales 'write themselves'<sup>164</sup> and are communally composed without an identifiable author. Dégh attests to this theory in her study of *Kinder – und Hausmärchen*, 'Like fellow romanticists of the post – Herder era, they recognised the superiority of *Naturpoesie* [nature poetry], "made by itself" through divine inspiration and uttered by the ignorant folk, over the *Kunstpoesie* [art poetry] constructed by poets.'<sup>165</sup>

It was this contention that was questioned so frequently by the American collectors, despite their agreement with much of the Grimms theories of folk music. Child believed in the fundamental 'absence of subjectivity and of self – consciousness'<sup>166</sup> in the kind of popular poetry studied by the Grimms, but was careful to point out where the Grimms were incorrect. He went on to state that, 'Though they do not "write themselves" as William (sic) Grimm has said, though a man and not a people has composed them, still the author counts for nothing, and it is not by mere accident, but with the best reason, that they have come down to us anonymous.'<sup>167</sup> As previously demonstrated, Sharp also disagreed with the Grimms on the matter of composition, and seemed to agree largely with Child. In his study *English Folk Song: Some Conclusions* he articulates some of the critical approaches to

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<sup>164</sup> Child, Francis. 1900. 'Ballad Poetry'. *Johnson's Universal Cyclopaedia*. New York.

<sup>165</sup> Dégh, Linda. 1979. 'Grimm's *Household Tales* and its Place in the Household: The Social Relevance of a Controversial Classic.' *Western Folklore*. 38/2. p. 83.

<sup>166</sup> Child, Francis. 1900. 'Ballad Poetry'. *Johnson's Universal Cyclopaedia*. New York. p. 214.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*

Wilhelm Grimm's contention and notes several opponents to his thinking. He claims that Wilhelm Grimm's theory of composition,

...was a very pretty theory and, on the face of it, sounded plausible enough. But the Grimms supported it by assertion rather than by argument. They did not condescend to explain the precise manner in which poetry "made itself"; or the exact way in which the "communal mind" bridged the gulf between inspiration and concrete expression. This was the weak spot in their case and their opponents were not slow to seize upon it.<sup>168</sup>

Despite these theoretical disagreements, the notion of the Grimms that folk music was originally part of a national culture and could be again was supported by some American collectors.

The origins of the nationalist ethos of the Grimms lie in the same tradition in which Herder was a participant, although as Berlin argues, Herder's ideas entered nationalist thought, but he was not overtly nationalist himself. The political fragmentation of Germany in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, following the Thirty Years' War, created an urge for some kind of national identity or unity which was expressed in the writings of certain prominent German intellectuals. Berlin cites the belief that the German people were once unified and Greek as evidence of this national anxiety,

Once upon a time we were integral, we were Greeks. (This is the great myth of the Greeks, which is historically no doubt quite absurd, but dominated the Germans in their political helplessness – Schiller and Hölderlin and Hegel and Schlegel and Marx.)<sup>169</sup>

It is easy to see how the work of Herder could be adopted to suit a nationalist agenda, since his promotion of German Volkslieder could provide the basis for an indigenous national culture. In addition, Herder's philological works, such as *Treatise on the Origin of Language*

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<sup>168</sup> Sharp, Cecil J. 1907. *English Folk Song: Some Conclusions*. London, Simpkin & Co. Ltd. p. 9.

<sup>169</sup> Berlin, Isaiah. 1999. *The Roots of Romanticism: The A. W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts*. Princeton University Press. p. 87.

in 1772, promoted the idea that Germany had a national language, and that it should be spoken throughout the country. These ideas of German culture, or at least culture that was unique to Germany because it had developed within a cloistered community, impacted on the work of the Grimms and their study of German language. Bendix argues that, 'Their works contributed to the cultural institutions that were fundamental to the "nationalisation of the masses", as in the associations formed to preserve and practice regional or national folk cultural heritage in song, dance, or sport.'<sup>170</sup> This 'nationalisation' could be seen as continuing in such institutions as Sharp's English Folk Dance and Song Society, and Robert Gordon's Archive of American Folksong. Significantly, Bendix argues that the nationalist attitude of the Grimms can also be seen in the works of Ralph Waldo Emerson and the Transcendentalist Movement, 'During the "American Renaissance", the literary discourse and the Transcendentalist movement of the first part of the nineteenth century, the effort to formulate a distinctively individualistic American legacy free from European inspirations manifests itself strongly.'<sup>171</sup> It is important to bear in mind this domestic context for the work of Child, as well as the context of Romanticism and Nationalism in Germany, to gain an insight into the transformations of his work in the scholarly study of folk music.

Dégh suggests that, 'Tales, songs, and beliefs of German peasants were, for the Grimms, splintered remnants of the mythology of pagan ancestors suppressed by the medieval church.'<sup>172</sup> The Grimms believed, like Herder, that there was great inherent value in this pre – medieval popular poetry and it should be promoted. Dégh contends that they promoted this as a possible national culture, along with religion, language, and the human characteristics found in epic poetry.<sup>173</sup> Child felt that the 'popular ballad' had a legitimate claim to be considered genuinely national culture.<sup>174</sup> He goes on to explain his theory of the society which produces 'national or popular poetry', but the important element in Child's theorising is his belief in the existence of national culture. Sharp also ardently believed that the folk music he collected should be used as national culture in England and America,

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<sup>170</sup> Bendix, Regina. 1997. *In Search of Authenticity: The Formation of Folklore Studies*. University of Wisconsin Press. p. 56.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.* p. 69.

<sup>172</sup> Dégh, Linda. 1979. 'Grimm's *Household Tales* and its Place in the Household: The Social Relevance of a Controversial Classic.' *Western Folklore*. 38/2. pp. 84 – 85.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.* p. 85.

<sup>174</sup> Child, Francis. 1900. 'Ballad Poetry'. *Johnson's Universal Cyclopaedia*. New York.

If, therefore, we would gauge the musical potentialities of a nation we must look to the musical utterances of those of the community who are least affected by extraneous educational influences; that is, we must search for them amongst the native and aboriginal inhabitants of its remote country districts.<sup>175</sup>

Alan Lomax also recognised possibility of folk music becoming a kind of national American culture, and when describing the increasing popularity of folk music in the late 1940s he argued,

There may be an element of escapism in this trend, but the causes, I believe, lie deeper in our national life: first, our longing for artistic forms that reflect our democratic and equalitarian political beliefs; and, second, in our hankering after art that mirrors the unique life of this western continent – the life of the frontier, the great West, the big city.<sup>176</sup>

Lomax introduced an element of social commentary into his notion of American culture, and saw the popularity of folk music as a means of promoting the cause of the rural and urban working classes. However, the basic conceit of folk culture becoming national culture has changed very little since the Grimms in the early nineteenth century, and this is possibly their most important contribution to the collecting tradition. Despite the fundamentally unchanged conceit, the context in which this idea is deployed has changed radically, and so too have aspects of what constitutes Nationalism. For instance, the context in which Sharp and John Lomax promoted folk music as part of a national culture was a period in which many Victorian ideals still held sway, and the prevailing trend seemed to be ‘overcivilisation’. American Nationalism in the early twentieth – century was tied in with what Lears calls the ‘republican tradition’, and he asserts that,

It was not surprising, then, that many late – nineteenth – century critics of overcivilisation stood squarely within the republican tradition... In republican mythology, the virtuous husbandman had long been counterposed to the corrupt

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<sup>175</sup> Sharp, Cecil J. 1907. *English Folk Song: Some Conclusions*. London, Simpkin & Co. Ltd. p. 1.

<sup>176</sup> Cohen, Ronald. 2005. *Alan Lomax: Selected Writings 1934 – 1997*. Routledge Press, London. p. 86

cosmopolitan, but as rural populations declined, urban writers increasingly idealised farm life.<sup>177</sup>

Although Sharp clearly did not hold republican ideals, and it is debateable if Lomax did, their promotion of traditions which could form part of American culture is situated within the republican tradition which Lears describes. Alan Lomax discussed folk music as potentially becoming a national culture during differing political contexts, such as the New Deal era, World War Two, and the 1950s/60s and Cold War anticommunism. Ideas of national identity changed throughout those periods, and Alan consequently changed his ideas of folk music. The example of the Grimms and Romantic Nationalism demonstrates how the context changes the theories of folk music, from the Romantic Movement to Antimodernism to the New Deal, all of which also change the idea of Nationalism and national identity.

## 2.5: Thomas Percy's Upper – Class Folk Music

Unlike the Grimms and Herder, Percy saw the ballads he collected as formerly part of upper class culture. He believed the ballads in his collection *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* were composed by an identifiable 'order' of minstrels, whose work, 'contributed to soften the roughness of a martial and unlettered people by their songs and by their music.'<sup>178</sup> Like Child, Percy presented a concise history of the activities of the minstrels, connecting them with the more ancient bards, 'The minstrels seem to have been the genuine successors of the ancient bards...their skill was considered as something divine; their persons were deemed sacred; their attendance was solicited by kings; and they were everywhere loaded with honours and rewards.'<sup>179</sup> Evidently Percy was the type of collector who sought to elevate the cultural status of the collected material; not only to present it as having inherent value, but to show that it belongs to a diminished branch of 'high culture'. As Burke points out, this may be attributable to Percy's own status anxiety,

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<sup>177</sup> Lears, T.J. Jackson. 1994. *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880 – 1920*. University of Chicago Press. pp. 27 – 28.

<sup>178</sup> Percy, Thomas. 1765. *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*. J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd., London. p. 3.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.* p. 9.

Percy (who was something of a snob and changed his name from 'Percy' in order to claim noble descent) did not think ballads had anything to do with the people, but rather they were composed by minstrels enjoying a high status at medieval courts.<sup>180</sup>

Pearce's presentation of lowbrow, middlebrow, and highbrow cultures and the scope and attitudes associated with these cultures can partially explain the depiction of his ballads.

Pearce shows middlebrow culture to be,

Possessed of some respect for traditional European culture; prefers culture cast in traditionally accessible forms, i.e. figurative, narrative, unambiguous design; anxious about questions of good taste; uncomfortable with the revisions of meaning; dislikes popular culture and regards taste as an expression of social position and possible upward mobility.<sup>181</sup>

Percy's *Reliques* could be seen as an example of a statement of middlebrow culture, which dismisses the possibility of the ballads as popular culture, and instead depicts them as culture created for the upper classes. Some of the terms Pearce discusses do not necessarily fit with Percy's collection, which was produced at the beginning of the Romantic Movement, and is even sometimes credited with helping kick start the movement in England. Popular culture, for instance, is a particularly loaded term, and not one which can necessarily refer adequately to cultural distinctions of the mid – eighteenth century. However, it does seem to be accurate to suggest that Percy presented the ballads as poetry written for the upper classes. This may have been partly to satisfy Elizabeth Seymour, Duchess of Northumberland, to whom the collection is dedicated. The accuracy of Percy's history of these high culture ballads is questionable, but what is significant is how closely it matches Child's conception of the popular ballad. In Child's ballad entry for the *Universal Cyclopaedia* he stated that,

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<sup>180</sup> Burke, Peter. 1978. *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*. Ashgate Publishing, Surrey. p. 25.

<sup>181</sup> Pearce, Susan M. 1995. *On Collecting: An Investigation into Collecting in the European Tradition*. Routledge Press, London. p. 367.



Nothing, in fact, is more obvious than that many of the ballads of the now most refined nations had their origins in that class whose acts and fortunes they depict – the upper class – though the growth of civilisation has driven them from the memory of the highly polished and instructed, and has left them as an exclusive possession to the uneducated.<sup>182</sup>

However, despite this agreement regarding the history of ballads, Percy's collection was resolutely popular in its style, and was exactly the kind of ballad collection Child spent most of his career decrying. Palmer says Child's stance on Percy is evident,

...in his comment on the 'rank and noxious specimens of comparatively modern dirt, such as would suit the age of Charles II' in Bishop Percy's folio manuscript. Child is even more vehement in a letter advising a friend, should the *Percy Loose and Humorous Songs* volume ever come his way, 'to put [it] up the chimney (where it will be in its element) or into the fire – where the authors no doubt are!'<sup>183</sup>

Palmer goes on to point out that despite Child's criticism of Percy and other populist collectors, he was dependent on their work to complete *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*.<sup>184</sup> Filene points out that Percy's collection, despite its claims about the high culture origins of the ballads, was often taken as proof of the value of folk poetry. He claims, 'the ballads in *Reliques* were popular poetry, evidence of the tremendous creative power of the untutored folk. Increasingly, intellectuals felt that for a country to have a distinctively national cultural voice, it must understand its folk culture.'<sup>185</sup> It is incongruous that Percy's collection prompted much of the interest in folk music as the culture of the people, considering his notion of it as high culture. This was governed by the context of the early Romantic Movement, in which poets like Coleridge and Wordsworth based some of their

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<sup>182</sup> Child, Francis. 1900. 'Ballad Poetry'. *Johnson's Universal Cyclopaedia*. New York.

<sup>183</sup> Palmer, Roy. 1996. "'Veritable Dunghills': Professor Child and the Broadside". *Folk Music Journal*. 7/2. p. 157.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

<sup>185</sup> Filene, Benjamin. 2000. *Romancing the Folk: Public Memory & American Roots Music*. University of North Carolina Press. p. 11.

work on ballads from Percy's collection, and it encouraged some of the interest in folk music and culture during that period. Cantwell also identifies another aspect of the Romantic Movement in which Percy's *Reliques* played an important part, '...the ballad revival, a literary enthusiasm whose sources are in romanticism generally and in Percy's *Reliques* and the works of Robert Burns and Walter Scott in particular...'<sup>186</sup> The ballad revival resulted in further canonisation of Percy's collection as a cornerstone of the Romantic folk music interest. This context of heightened interest in folk music and culture has ascribed more folkloristic agency to Percy than he perhaps possessed, but this is further evidence of the considerable power of the intellectual context to canonise folk – related work. Also, the incongruity of Child's theoretical agreement with Percy on the matter of high culture is striking, despite his dismissal of the work. *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* had a considerable impact on the collecting tradition, but its populist nature may have contributed to its theoretical misreading by some European collectors as suggested by Filene. This populism is also what prompted Child to loudly dismiss it, despite using it as a source for his own collection, and sharing Percy's opinion on the origins of the ballad.

## 2.6: William Motherwell's Impact on Child and the American Collectors

Child was vocal in his support for the work of the Scottish collector William Motherwell, citing his 1827 collection *Minstrelsy Ancient and Modern* as a primary source for *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*. Harker draws attention to Child's opinion of Motherwell, as found in the index to *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*,

Child rejected the book – based chronology offered to him, in favour of a chronology of his manuscript sources. The hierarchy of those sources is made explicit: 'Of hitherto unused materials, much the most important is a large collection of ballads made by Motherwell.'<sup>187</sup>

Motherwell, in the introduction to *Minstrelsy Ancient and Modern*, established from the start that he was looking at, 'the Ancient Romantick (sic) and Historick (sic) Ballad of

<sup>186</sup> Cantwell, Robert. 1996. *When We Were Good: The Folk Revival*. Harvard University Press. p. 28.

<sup>187</sup> Harker, Dave. 1981. 'Francis James Child and the 'Ballad Consensus''. *Folk Music Journal*. 4/2. p. 152.

Scotland.<sup>188</sup> He explained that these two types of ballad have developed differently and emerged from differing sources. Firstly, the 'Romantick' ballad, 'which, though possessing all the features of real incident, and probably originating in fact, cannot now, after the lapse of many ages, be, with certainty, traced to any historical source.'<sup>189</sup> The 'Historick' ballad, 'embraces all those narrative songs, which derive their origin from historical facts, whether of a publick (sic) or private nature.'<sup>190</sup> According to the definition offered by Motherwell in *Minstrelsy*, the tradition of ballad singing in Scotland easily rivalled any literature produced by the educated. 'This interesting body of popular poetry, part of which, in point of antiquity, may fairly be esteemed equal, if not superior, to the most ancient of our written monuments, has owed its preservation principally to oral tradition.'<sup>191</sup> The connection to the work of Child is clear from this assertion, since Child too promoted the popular ballad as 'a distinct and very important species of poetry.'<sup>192</sup> Motherwell also praised the transmission of these ballads by the people, and suggests that this oral tradition introduces no corruption into the song.

It is not therefore with the unlettered and the rude, that oral song suffers vital and irremediable wrong...the tear and wear of three centuries will do less mischief to the text of an old ballad among the vulgar, than one short hour will effect, if in the possession of some sprightly and accomplished editor of the present day...<sup>193</sup>

This corresponds closely to Child's comments about editing and the corruption of ballads, and given Child's deference to Motherwell, as argued by Harker, his stance may have been lifted straight from *Minstrelsy*,

If the transmission has been purely through the mouths of unlearned people, there is less probability of wilful change, but once in the hands of professional singers there is no amount of change which they may not undergo. Last of all

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<sup>188</sup> Motherwell, William. 1827. *Minstrelsy Ancient and Modern*. John Wylie Publishing, Glasgow.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> Child, Francis. 1900. 'Ballad Poetry'. *Johnson's Universal Cyclopaedia*. New York.

<sup>193</sup> Motherwell, William. 1827. *Minstrelsy Ancient and Modern*. John Wylie Publishing, Glasgow.

comes the modern editor, whose so – called improvements are more to be feared than the mischances of a thousand years.<sup>194</sup>

Motherwell follows the example of Herder and the Grimms in announcing the suitability of this material as the basis for a national Scottish culture, and consequently the importance of documenting the material,

The almost total absence of written monuments to support the claims of Scotland to an inheritance of Ancient National Minstrelsy enforces the stern necessity of not wantonly tampering with the fleeting and precarious memorial tradition has bequeathed to these latter times.<sup>195</sup>

Like others in the Romantic Movement and its tradition of folk song interest, Motherwell recognised the need for some form of Scottish national culture to provide identity after the Union Acts of 1706 and 1707 had effectively created the United Kingdom. This is a partial reflection of the work of Herder and his response to German political divisions, and the Romantic ethos which was at the heart of his idea of the culture of communities. Motherwell's anxiety about Scottish cultural and literary inheritance also comes from a Romantic urge to preserve the traditional voice of the rural 'folk' and their oral culture, and in promoting it as Scottish national identity, seeking to furnish the country with the simple authenticity of such 'Ancient National Minstrelsy'. Motherwell also favoured the continued use of the Scots language as a kind of national language, despite the fact that, like the German language in Herder's time, Scots had generally been a regional language spoken in parts of the East and the Borders. The context of Romantic ideas of folk music and culture, and the Scottish precedents for such interest including Scott's *The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, impacted on Motherwell's work and his ideas about the importance of this work. Also, the situation regarding Scottish national identity, which had been compounded by the Acts of Union and possibly the failed Jacobite risings of 1715 and 1745, prompted Motherwell to promote the material he had collected as the basis for a Scottish national culture. This demonstrates the intellectual, and possibly even more important political,

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<sup>194</sup> Child, Francis. 1900. 'Ballad Poetry'. *Johnson's Universal Cyclopaedia*. New York.

<sup>195</sup> Motherwell, William. 1827. *Minstrelsy Ancient and Modern*. John Wylie Publishing, Glasgow.

context which determined some of Motherwell's ideas. Motherwell went on to stress the urgency of documenting this tradition of minstrelsy, 'We may regret that attention was not earlier bestowed on this neglected though interesting portion of national literature.'<sup>196</sup>

This exhortation is very similar to that of Sharp in his article for the *Musical Times*, in which he claims that there had been neglect of folk songs in England, and that this could be partially repaired, but some material has been irretrievably lost.<sup>197</sup> He also adopted some ideas from Motherwell, especially in the creation of folk songs,

The folk song is, therefore, communal in two senses: communal in authorship, and communal in that it reflects the mind of the community. That, no doubt, is what Motherwell meant when he said that the people's ballad was "the actual embodiment of their universal mind, and of its intellectual and moral tendencies."<sup>198</sup>

What this discussion of these European collectors demonstrates is the establishment of a shared discourse of ideas regarding folk music, its origins, and its uses. Also, it is interesting to note to what extent these ideas emerged from fractious political contexts, the Romantic intellectual tradition, and in the case of Percy the social standing of the collector and the eighteenth – century patronage system. The fact that Child and Sharp were direct participants in this discourse of folk music theory, given that between them they responded directly in their work to Herder, the Grimms, and Motherwell, shows how important the context of the Romantic tradition and eighteenth and nineteenth century European history is for the American collecting tradition. The overriding impression from this European collecting trend is that folk music is an important cultural resource in any country. The arguments that follow on from this assertion are that folk music can become a national culture, but that it needs to be collected and preserved intact before it is eroded. The next sections will discuss the ideas of the American collectors, examine the transformations they introduced to the American collecting tradition, and the discourse of folk music theory, and explore the contextual factors affecting their ideas.

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<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

<sup>197</sup> Sharp, Cecil J. 1907. 'Folk Song Collecting'. *Musical Times*. 48/767. p. 18.

<sup>198</sup> Sharp, Cecil J. 1907. *English Folk Song: Some Conclusions*. London, Simpkin & Co. Ltd. p. 1.

## 2.7: Child's Ballad History and the 'Popular Ballad'

Despite Child's obvious connection to earlier collectors like Herder who promoted the idea of a 'folk music', Child never used the terms *Volkslieder* or folk music in his work. This was partly due to his purely literary interest in ballads, which meant he had little interest in researching them as a form of popular music. Although Herder was also a literary collector, it was arguably due to Herder's fieldwork while assembling his *Volkslieder* collection that he became equally interested in popular poetry as a kind of popular music. Child was purely concerned with ballads as a form of 'popular poetry' which marked an early stage in the literary development of a people,

The word *ballad* in English signifies a narrative song, a short tale in lyric verse, which sense it has come to have, probably through the English, in some other languages. It means, by derivation, a dance – song, but though dancing was formerly, and in some places still is, performed to song instead of instrumental music, the application of the word in English is quite accidental. The *popular* ballad, for which our language has no unequivocal name, is a distinct and very important species of poetry.<sup>199</sup>

Child researched ballads as a 'species of poetry' rather than a song type within folk music, because of his literary leanings but also due to the way he conceived of ballads and their relationship to the 'folk'. Child often avoided proffering a definition of the ballad, and there is some criticism that such a definition cannot be found in his collection. Harker argues that, 'a closer inspection of the theoretical foundations of Child's edifice will reveal not only a circularity of argument, but also, ironically, a distinct lack of self – confidence.'<sup>200</sup> James, in the *Journal of American Folklore*, also criticised Child's failure to define the ballad, 'It has

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<sup>199</sup> Child, Francis. 1900. 'Ballad Poetry'. *Johnson's Universal Cyclopaedia*. New York.

<sup>200</sup> Harker, Dave. 1981. 'Francis James Child and the 'Ballad Consensus''. *Folk Music Journal*. 4/2. p. 146.

been the purpose of this paper to show that a “Child Ballad” means little more than one collected and approved by Professor Child.<sup>201</sup>

However, his entry on ‘ballad poetry’ in *Johnson’s Universal Cyclopaedia* does give some useful observations. Child made a determined attempt to explain the origins of the ‘popular ballad’ as he sees it,

The condition of society in which a truly national or popular poetry appears explains the character of such poetry. It is a condition in which the people are not divided by political organisation and book – culture into markedly distinct classes, in which there is consequently such community of ideas and feelings that the whole people form an individual...it will always be an expression of the mind and heart of the people as an individual, and never the personality of individual men. The fundamental characteristic of popular ballads is therefore the absence of subjectivity and of self – consciousness.<sup>202</sup>

Child marked out several points in his understanding of the popular ballad here, one of which is the influence of ‘book – culture’. He believed ardently that print culture had exerted a damaging influence over the popular ballad. He also insisted that ballads had been universally enjoyed prior to the intervention of print culture, which introduced distinctions between high and low culture that relegated the popular ballad to the lower classes. Once the ballad had been demoted in this way, it began to suffer from neglect and abuse at the hands of the lower classes, which included the corruption by ‘book – culture’ which Child lamented,

The primitive ballad, then, is popular, not in the sense of something arising from and suited to the lower orders of a people. As yet, no sharp distinction of high and low exists, in respect to knowledge, desires, and tastes. An increased civilisation, and especially the introduction of book – culture, gradually gives rise to such a division; the poetry of art appears; the popular poetry is no longer relished by a

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<sup>201</sup> James, Thelma G. 1933. ‘The English and Scottish Popular Ballads of Francis J. Child’. *Journal of American Folklore*. 46/179. p. 59.

<sup>202</sup> Child, Francis. 1900. ‘Ballad Poetry’. *Johnson’s Universal Cyclopaedia*. New York.

portion of the people, and is abandoned to an uncultivated or not over – cultivated class – a constantly diminishing number.<sup>203</sup>

The ambivalent stance on the ‘genuine’ folk is also apparent in this discussion of the true ballad, since Child valued their detachment from ‘book – culture’ but also deprecates their ability to act as custodians of a tradition. Peterson remarks on this conflicted attitude towards the ‘folk’,

At least since the eighteenth century and the time of the Enlightenment, Western civilisation has had a profoundly ambivalent feeling about such primitives. On the one hand they are derided for their superstition and sloth, and on the other they are admired for their natural purity.<sup>204</sup>

This attitude is very much part of the discourse of folklore theory, particularly related to the Grimms and their relationship with print culture and oral culture. Bendix points out a problematic attitude in the work of the Grimms,

The Grimms were concerned with textual authenticity, not the rights of dialect speakers, but the politics of language nonetheless bubbled under the surface. The very tools of their trade – writing and publishing in the new standard – were perceived as spoiling agents of the materials studied. Clearly, the privilege to speak and write in the politically powerful idiom was still to be kept from the bearers of tradition, who therefore, by implication, were also kept from social and political ascendance.<sup>205</sup>

This could be seen as one of the underlying principles of the Romantic notion of the authentic folk: the need to preserve the idyllic state of innocence of the folk. Child added his theories to this discourse, which attributed part of the decline of the popular ballad to the

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<sup>203</sup> Ibid.

<sup>204</sup> Peterson, Richard A. 1997. *Creating Country Music: Fabricating Authenticity*. University of Chicago Press. p. 68.

<sup>205</sup> Bendix, Regina. 1997. *In Search of Authenticity: The Formation of Folklore Studies*. University of Wisconsin Press. p. 53.



emergence of the ‘politically powerful idiom’ which introduced corruptions to many ballads which had survived orally. It could be suggested, as Bendix does<sup>206</sup>, that the Grimms had moved on, from this Romantic desire to preserve innocence and purity, to a notion that this had already disappeared and their work was an exercise in recovery. As Bendix also points out<sup>207</sup>, there is an inherent paradox in using the technology of civilisation, writing and printing, to document an oral tradition which had apparently been subsumed by the technology of civilisation. These theories and the associated paradox are another element in the context of Child’s work, and the discourse of folk music theory he subscribed to. Child’s lack of interest in fieldwork or any current folk music meant these attitudes were even more pronounced, since his work was so firmly rooted in the German Romantic tradition.

This further complicates the attitude towards civilisation, since it negates some of the ‘superstition and sloth’ seemingly present in the rural working classes, but must also necessarily detract from their ‘natural purity’. The influence of civilisation also means that the number of genuine rural and uneducated ‘folk’ decreases due to slowly increasing literacy and urbanisation. Williams addresses the effects of industrialisation on the prevailing rural culture, ‘The Industrial Revolution not only transformed both city and country; it was based on a highly developed agrarian capitalism, with a very early disappearance of the traditional peasantry.’<sup>208</sup> The Enclosure Acts changed the land that had previously been worked by the ‘peasantry’ from common land to private holdings, which forced a considerable amount of urban migration among the rural working classes. This marked a shift from the prominence of rural economies in the lives of the rural working classes to the economies of burgeoning industrial towns. However, as Williams points out, it is very difficult to distinguish defining events or periods in this gradual transformation of towns and the country,

If we take a long enough period, it is easy to see a fundamental transformation of English country life. But the change is so extended and so complicated, to say

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<sup>206</sup> Ibid. p. 51.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid. p. 54.

<sup>208</sup> Williams, Raymond. 1985. *The Country and the City*. Hogarth, London. p. 2.

nothing of its important regional variations, that there seems no point at which we can sharply distinguish what it would be convenient to call separate epochs.<sup>209</sup>

Despite this difficulty, Williams points out it is clear that there was a radical change in English country life in the years leading up to Child's work with ballads, and this necessarily had an impact on the rural culture during this period of change. Child, born in 1825, had lived through the effects these changes had on rural culture in America, and like his Romantic predecessors his view of the folk must have been partly determined by these changes. Despite Child's singular focus on ballads from medieval and early modern Britain, he was inevitably affected by the social and cultural context of mid – to – late nineteenth century Massachusetts.

Burke makes the important point that, although reliable statistics are difficult to establish, 'historians have concluded that a substantial minority of ordinary people in early modern Europe were in fact able to read,' and also that, 'that more of them could read in 1800 than in 1500.'<sup>210</sup> He also describes a limited increase in the standard of living for the working classes in the 1500 to 1800 period, 'In some regions, the richer peasants were prospering and this prosperity was translated into new standards of comfort.'<sup>211</sup> As Harker argues, Child appeared to ascribe the decline of the popular ballad to these improvements in living standards, "'Civilisation has made too great strides in the island of Great Britain for us to expect much more from tradition.'" 'Civilisation', in other words, is *defined* as being antagonistic to 'tradition'.<sup>212</sup> Part of Child's definition of popular ballads centred on this need for social stasis to preserve the music intact.

Child's anxieties and alienation came from the changes in popular culture, and the improvements in literacy and living conditions, all of which pushed out the popular ballad. Sharp and the Lomaxes had a similar belief that improvements in living standards were opposed to the continuation of folk music. Sharp, when describing the 'common people' from whom his songs were collected, insisted,

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<sup>209</sup> Ibid. p. 35.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid. p. 343.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid. p. 338.

<sup>212</sup> Harker, Dave. 1981. 'Francis James Child and the 'Ballad Consensus''. *Folk Music Journal*. 4/2. p. 150.

Nowadays, however, they form an exceedingly small class – if, indeed they can be called a class at all – and are to be found only in those country districts, which, by reason of their remoteness, have escaped the infection of modern ideas.<sup>213</sup>

This supposed ‘infection of modern ideas’ was what concerned John Lomax, particularly with regards to technology and its effect on folk singers. This is partly why he valued segregated penitentiaries so highly as sources, because of their inherent social deprivation. In his 1933 report to Congress Lomax said, ‘Thrown on their own resources for entertainment, they still sing, especially the long – term prisoners who have been confined for years and who have not yet been influenced by jazz and the radio, the distinctive old – time Negro melodies.’<sup>214</sup> Roger Abrahams criticises the idea that technology can contaminate folk music, and refers to it as a ‘misconception’, ‘A common misconception concerning the folk process is that there is an equation between illiteracy and “good” folklore, and that any suspicion that a piece or a community have been influenced by print renders it unworthy of further consideration.’<sup>215</sup> While this idea of folk music and technological contamination could be seen as a misconception, many of the ideas pertaining to civilisation and folk music were based on direct observations of fieldworkers, or the extensive research of textual scholars. Alan Lomax, in the journal for his 1938 Ohio and Indiana collecting trip, lamented the effect the technologies of this period, radio and phonograph, had on folk song traditions,

Certainly there is a folk song tradition in Southern Indiana...this tradition, however, seems to be pretty much at a stand – still at the moment, most of the ballad singers being either old or out of contact and having little effect against the rush of popular mechanised music.<sup>216</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> Sharp, Cecil J. 1907. *English Folk Song: Some Conclusions*. London, Simpkin & Co. Ltd. p. 4.

<sup>214</sup> Lomax, John A. 1933. *Annual Report of the Librarian of Congress*. United States Government Printing Office, Washington. p. 99.

<sup>215</sup> Abrahams, Roger D., and Foss, George. 1968. *Anglo – American Folksong Style*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey. p. 35.

<sup>216</sup> Lomax, Alan. 1938. *Journal of the Ohio and Indiana Collection*, March 26 – April 16, 1938. American Folklife Centre.

This was based on Lomax's numerous unsuccessful attempts during this trip to locate a folk song tradition in a particular town, only to find it had been undermined somewhat by the popular songs heard on the radio, and 78rpm recordings of the popular tunes of the day. Although, what is really at issue here is the overwhelming importance of context in determining the theories of folk music held by the American collectors. Child was working during a period of continuing industrial change, in which technology was driving social upheavals, and shortly before Child's birth had changed much of the landscape of Britain. He also inherited a conflicted discourse of writing and printing technology, which valued the oral tradition that had sustained ballads and folk songs, but equally could not have carried out textual scholarship so successfully without printing. The intellectual and technological contexts in which Child was working dictated much of his attitude to technology and social change, which ultimately dictates what ballads go into 'English and Scottish Popular Ballads'.

Much of Child's view of modern history is extrapolated from his research into the popular ballad. While this research was unquestionably thorough, it has been argued that it is not sufficient to base knowledge of history on trends observed in ballads, genuine or otherwise. Harker argues, 'instead of historical evidence about the nature of majority culture in medieval Britain, Child offers his own opinion, backed up by that of other litterateurs and literature scholars...'<sup>217</sup> Harker too notices Child's tendency to accept and depend on second – hand accounts, and his own views derived from his study of ballads. Since Child's knowledge of history was quite distorted, his conception of the history of balladry inevitably suffers from the same level of distortion, including an assertion that popular ballads must have emerged from partly from the upper classes because of their narrative content.<sup>218</sup> Harker criticises Child on this point,

Necessarily, Child does violence to any rational (or even empirical) conception of history...this alleged cultural homogeneity, before the cultural watershed of the appearance of 'art' (as reinforced by literacy and print), is implicitly contrasted with the cultural variety and individualism of Child's own society, against which he

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<sup>217</sup> Harker, Dave. 1981. 'Francis James Child and the 'Ballad Consensus''. *Folk Music Journal*. 4/2. p. 148.

<sup>218</sup> Child, Francis. 1900. 'Ballad Poetry'. *Johnson's Universal Cyclopaedia*. New York.

and other liberal intellectuals strove gamely, while forgetting the underlying divisive nature of the capitalist mode of production.<sup>219</sup>

Despite this issue with Child's idea of the origins of popular ballads, there are important precedents for this idea. As previously discussed, Percy claimed that the poetry in 'Reliques' had been composed for noble patrons, and as such often described details in the lives of the nobility. It is debatable whether Percy's ancient order of minstrels were actually responsible for the creation of the songs, but the fact that the upper – classes figure prominently in the history of balladry is clear from the content of the songs. One of the most obvious examples is the ballad *Lord Randall* (Child #12) in which the eponymous young nobleman is poisoned by his sweetheart while out hunting. The characters, activities, and details of the ballad all reflect early modern aristocracy, and while this may not prove that the ballad was composed for an upper – class patron, it shows the upper – class involvement with balladry even just as subject matter. Child's thesis of the universally popular ballad had its roots in Percy, and in the idea of Schiller, explained in the introduction, that at a certain point in history there was a universal culture before class distinctions introduced the idea of 'high' and 'low' culture.

However, these issues did not prevent Sharp from subscribing to a similar conception of history, in which folk music originates in more felicitous period. Sharp claimed, 'Up to the middle of the last century the country – side must have been full of songs and singers, and a much brighter and happier place than it is now.'<sup>220</sup> This articulates some of the conflicting positions on the creation of folk song, referring to the Grimms, Motherwell, and Percy, and describes his own research into ballads with the aid of Child's collection,

Although ballad themes are thus common property, their treatment by the several nations of Europe varies very considerably. The extent and character of these variations may be studied with profit in the late Professor Child's *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, where many of the ballads, which have in recent

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<sup>219</sup> Harker, Dave. 1981. 'Francis James Child and the 'Ballad Consensus''. *Folk Music Journal*. 4/2. p. 152.

<sup>220</sup> Sharp, Cecil J. 1907. 'Folk Song Collecting'. *Musical Times*. 48/767. pp. 17 – 18.

years been collected in Great Britain, may be seen and compared with their European analogues.<sup>221</sup>

Smith was acquainted with the work of previous collectors, much the same as Sharp was, and his idea of the origins of folk music was dictated to a certain extent by the established theory. Smith claimed that the records in the *Anthology* originated during, 'a crucial point in history, the last chance where the population can have an agrarian base to it. They won't be able to do that in a hundred years.'<sup>222</sup> Smith's ideas on the agrarian basis for folk culture do seem to have been partly based on those of Child, Sharp, and the Lomaxes, and partly extrapolated from trends observed in the records. Smith's comments are not purely speculative, and as has previously been discussed, the 'agrarian base' of the population had been declining during industrialisation, and as Smith points out it is unlikely that a rural population would exist in the same way in a hundred years. Smith's ideas regarding the creation of folk music are just as determined by the intellectual and historical context as those of Child and Sharp. Smith's intellectual context included the work of Child and Sharp to a certain degree, and ideas of agrarianism are part of the language of folklore scholarship that formed this context.

One of the clearest issues with Child's beliefs about print culture is that a knowledge of ballads like his, based on collections, manuscripts, broadsides etc. would not be possible without the influence of printing technology. Pearce theorises a trend of collectors which connects with Child's anxiety about technology,

One of the long – term characteristics of the collecting habit is its ability to carry on quite happily into a new generation modes of operation which belong to the previous generation, or generations. The collectors themselves seem quite untroubled by this; indeed they have frequently seemed to glory in their archaism.<sup>223</sup>

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<sup>221</sup> Sharp, Cecil J. 1907. *English Folk Song: Some Conclusions*. London, Simpkin & Co. Ltd. p. 90.

<sup>222</sup> Iglioni, Paola. 1996. *American Magus Harry Smith: A Modern Alchemist*. Inanout Press U.S. p. 143.

<sup>223</sup> Pearce, Susan M. 1995. *On Collecting: An Investigation into Collecting in the European Tradition*. Routledge Press, London. p. 133.

The tendency of the collector to 'glory in their archaism' also characterises much folk music collecting, since within the American collecting tradition it appears to be a largely backward – looking exercise. In the case of folk music collecting, the purpose is not simply to 'carry on quite happily' with songs 'which belong to the previous generation'; instead, the collector is determinedly facing away from the current, and looking to the past as a preferable alternative. In some cases, this goes as far as reintroducing the past into the present, as with Sharp's popularisation efforts, and those of the Lomaxes. These efforts are closely related to the previously quoted statement from Pearce regarding, 'resurrecting the body of the past intact so that it might be experienced in the present.'<sup>224</sup> However, in order to interact with the past, and to re – popularise it, the collector must use technologies which are inescapably part of the present. This paradox characterises much of the thinking on folk music in America: anxiety over the effects of technology on folk music, while using the same technology to attempt to preserve folk music. John and Alan Lomax were both concerned about the proliferation of the phonograph in rural communities.<sup>225</sup> Despite these concerns, they were both enthusiastic about the possibilities of portable recording technology, 'On their trips, the Lomaxes relied exclusively on the recording machine to take down songs, always experimenting with new techniques and technologies...'<sup>226</sup> There are important differences between the ways in which the American collectors apply technology, and the technological trends about which they were anxious. For instance, the context of textual scholarship which impacted on Child's work was based on teasing out the authentic text from numerous song variants, and as Bendix suggests,

In hindsight, the impact of print technology on scholarship is overwhelmingly obvious. Theoretically and methodologically, scholars were engaged in reconstructing languages, texts, and works of art. But pragmatically, this entailed deciphering handwritten, often singular manuscripts and hypothesising on oral

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<sup>224</sup> Ibid. p. 131.

<sup>225</sup> Lomax, Alan. 1938. *Journal of the Ohio and Indiana Collection*, March 26 – April 16, 1938. American Folklife Centre.

<sup>226</sup> Filene, Benjamin. 2000. *Romancing the Folk: Public Memory & American Roots Music*. University of North Carolina Press. p. 55.

“originals” in order to ultimately produce for broad distribution printed works that contained a suggested authentic reading.<sup>227</sup>

This is clearly different from the production of broadsides using the same print technology, which was motivated by a market for ballads and the opportunity to profit from this market. Similarly, the Lomaxes use of recording technology was based on an ethnographic urge to accurately capture folk songs so they could be studied, and an audio record of them could be preserved. Again, this differs from the recording industry’s use of similar technology to record folk songs as another response to market demand. It was not necessarily the technologies themselves Child and the Lomaxes were concerned about, but the uses of the technology.

The numerous socio – cultural, political, and technological contexts which determined Child’s theories on the popular ballad, from his own mid – nineteenth century period going back to early eighteenth century Romanticism, ultimately also impacted on the other American collectors. Child introduced his own transformations to the European theoretical precedents he followed, and as Bendix points out this was partly due to the benefits of having a great deal of prior work to draw upon,

Child’s work echoed German models, but his interest in “popular” (meaning “from the people”) poetry meant Romantic exuberance and scientific work emerged jointly, not successively. The Brothers Grimm had immersed themselves in the intricacies of historical accuracy, reducing their speculative, exuberant vocabulary. While Child modelled himself on the Grimms and the Danish ballad collector Svend Grundtvig, Child’s students and contemporaries happily employed an exuberant vocabulary of authenticity and engaged in speculative hypotheses on origin.<sup>228</sup>

Child’s ideas of the history of British balladry drew on the historical and textual scholarship of the Grimms, and the less mediated Romantic trends which favoured ideas of absolute

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<sup>227</sup> Bendix, Regina. 1997. *In Search of Authenticity: The Formation of Folklore Studies*. University of Wisconsin Press. p. 60.

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.* p. 77.



folk purity and authenticity. Child's transformation was to take these sometimes conflicting discourses of purity, authenticity, and historicism, and construct a cogent theory of popular British balladry which was important for the development of the folklore discipline in America.

## 2.8: Sharp's Development of Ballad History

Unlike Child, Sharp did consistently use the term folk music to describe the songs he was collecting and did not offer an alternative term. He frequently used the term 'traditional' to describe the songs, but this was certainly not preferred over folk music. He also occasionally referred to them as 'peasant' songs, and both 'traditional' and 'peasant' emphasise elements in his definition.<sup>229</sup> Sharp's focus on the traditional aspect of folk songs reflected his belief that authentic folk music originated at some unspecified time in the past and has been passed down by a largely oral tradition. Peterson identifies the same notion of 'authenticity' in his discussion of the various dictionary definitions of the term,

A closely related meaning of "authentic" is that of the relic, of the original...fanciful as this idea might seem today, it was widely held by the early anthropologists that "primitive" peoples represented earlier stages in cultural evolution, and this idea of "stone – age contemporaries" was applied to the peoples and the music of the Appalachian region, which was seen as cut – off from and uncorrupted by civilisation.<sup>230</sup>

This idea of cultural isolation is precisely what Sharp was interested in, and the songs he sought were conceived of as 'relics' from folk history, which were authenticated by this provenance. In *English Folk Song: Some Conclusions* he explains the unique qualities of the peasant,

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<sup>229</sup> Sharp, Cecil J. 1907. 'Folk Song Collecting'. *Musical Times*. 48/767.

<sup>230</sup> Peterson, Richard A. 1997. *Creating Country Music: Fabricating Authenticity*. University of Chicago Press. p. 207.

The expression “the common people” is used in this definition, and elsewhere in this book, strictly in its scientific sense, to connote those whose mental development has been due not to any formal system of training or education, but solely to environment, communal association, and direct contact with the ups and downs of life. It is necessary that a sharp distinction should be drawn between the *un* – educated and the *non* – educated. The former are the half or partially educated, i.e. the illiterate. Whereas the non – educated, or “the common people”, are the unlettered, whose faculties have undergone no formal training whatsoever, and who have never been brought into close enough contact with educated persons to be influenced by them.<sup>231</sup>

This effectively amounts to a contention that the ‘non – educated’ or peasant class have a greater intellectual purity and so are more inclined to continue singing the traditional songs passed down orally. Sharp valued these class and cultural distinctions because they preserve the purity of the folk songs and the people who sing them. The Romantic intellectual context is essential to bear in mind when examining ideas like this, since this principle of familiarity with folk songs due to community influences can be found in Herder. He postulated that folk songs communicate within particular groups because they have elements that are common to that group, such as common experiences and language. The idea of intellectual purity also owes something to the Romantic Movement, which revered the simple purity, or ‘noble savage’ qualities of the rural folk who remained uncorrupted by the trappings of civilisation. In the case of Sharp, this inherited Romantic discourse of purity was combined with his socialist leanings to produce his own ideas, which Walkowitz discusses in relation to those of Sharp’s collaborator and rival Mary Neal,

Both Neal and Sharp embraced the “purity” of the “simple” folk, but they did so in fundamentally different, and in what they came to feel were irreconcilable, ways. Sharp, the Fabian socialist, claimed a paternalistic responsibility as “expert” to capture their simplicity and translate it to others.<sup>232</sup>

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<sup>231</sup> Sharp, Cecil J. 1907. *English Folk Song: Some Conclusions*. London. pp. 3 – 4.

<sup>232</sup> Walkowitz, Daniel J. 2010. *City Folk: English Country Dance and the Politics of the Folk in Modern America*. New York University Press. pp. 77 – 78.

Although Sharp valued the ‘non – education’ of the common people, he held a Fabian belief that he could help achieve some kind of social progress by educating others in the folk traditions he had collected.

This notion of the cultural isolation of the folk is very similar to the ideas of John Lomax, and Alan Lomax in his early career, who both focused their recording efforts on the most isolated and socially underdeveloped communities. Alan Lomax, in his Ohio and Indiana collecting journal, noted the supposed necessity of isolation for authentic folk music, ‘I do feel, however, that whatever there remains of folk music in southern Indiana is definitely the property of the rural population and the working class fringes in the cities and small towns.’<sup>233</sup> John Lomax, in *Songs of the Cattle Trail and Cow Camp*, notes the key element of isolation in the creation of songs, ‘Many of these have this claim to be called songs: they have been set to music by the cowboys, who, in their isolation and loneliness, have found solace in narrative or descriptive verse devoted to cattle scenes.’<sup>234</sup> In his earlier collection too, Lomax claimed that isolation and a lack of education were preconditions for the creation of folk songs.<sup>235</sup> This idea of education, social developments, and the integration of the population through new communication technologies and mass media, being detrimental to folk music continued throughout the American collecting tradition.

Sharp insisted that the key to the preservation of folk music lies in education, and not in urban migration, though the two things are very much connected,

...at the present time the expressions “peasant song”, “country song”, and “the song of the common people”, all mean one and the same thing, viz. “folk song”, and may be used indifferently in contradistinction to the “town song”, or “art song”, i.e. the song of the cultivated musician. Strictly speaking, however, the real antithesis is not between the music of the town and that of the country, but between that which is the product of the spontaneous and intuitive exercise of

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<sup>233</sup> Lomax, Alan. 1938. Journal of the Ohio and Indiana Collection, March 26 – April 16, 1938. American Folklife Centre.

<sup>234</sup> Lomax, John A. 1919. *Songs of the Cattle Trail and Cow Camp*. MacMillan Publishing, New York.

<sup>235</sup> Lomax, John A. 1910. *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads*. New York, MacMillan Press.

untrained faculties, and that which is due to the conscious and intentional use of faculties which have been especially cultivated and developed for the purpose.<sup>236</sup>

Sharp maintained the distinction held by Child, between the folk song (or popular ballad) and the 'art song' although Sharp made no claims as to when this distinction might have appeared. However, he was unequivocal on the subject of the effects of education, which he believes produces the distinction between folk and 'art' music. Sharp was looking at the issue from the perspective of a musician, and he is correct to a certain extent. Much folk music, particularly the English music he was collecting, is composed using modal scales which allegedly originated before some of the earliest 'art music'. Sharp discussed the history of the modal scale, how it predates the modern forms, and, 'It may be that the increasing interest that is now being excited in folk music, especially in that part of it which is modal, may lead to a revival of the ancient modes.'<sup>237</sup> This difference in composition is ascribed to the schooling of the educated classes in the forms of 'art music', and again this is a reasonable assertion. The correctness of Sharp's claims about composition notwithstanding, this contrast between composition and spontaneous creation is also partly a Romantic idea, which contrasted 'high art' poetry with the folk poetry which is created without artifice, training, or education. Herder in particular valued the creation of folk songs and poetry from the experiences of the folk, and which communicates these experiences between the folk. There are also aspects of Antimodernism in Sharp's privileging of untutored folk music over educated and composed art music, which could be seen as a reaction against overcivilisation and what might be called 'over – education'. In *English Folk Song: Some Conclusions* Sharp claimed that the instinctive faculties can, and perhaps should, develop without education, 'When these aptitudes are pronounced they will, under favourable conditions, reveal themselves without the aid of conscious or formal education, and in some cases achieve results of a very remarkable kind.'<sup>238</sup> Clearly Sharp was concerned about the instinctive faculties being educated away, despite being very interested in teasing out these faculties using folk music and dance tutoring. The intellectual context of overcivilisation coupled with Fabianism produced in Sharp a determination to

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<sup>236</sup> Sharp, Cecil J. 1907. *English Folk Song: Some Conclusions*. London. p. 4.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid. p. 46.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid. p. 1.

reintroduce idealised creative impulses through tutoring and training that might draw out these impulses.

The neat distinction between folk music and ‘town music’ could be questioned, since there could be similarities drawn between the two forms. Differences in musical form, i.e. the modal composition, distinguish folk music, but there is little else associated with folk music that cannot also be applied to ‘town music’. Sharp embraced the idea that there is a greater degree of authenticity to be found in the ‘music of the common people’ as opposed to the ‘town music’. As previously explained, Herder also made a distinction between actual Volkslieder and the music of the urban working classes, and although this idea is clearly tied in with ideas pertaining to the decline of rural culture and the development of cities, it also has a historical basis and is taken from first – hand observation of these trends. In the case of Herder, this also relates to the notion of a loss of community in the city, and as previously discussed, Herder valued this community very highly as the originator of common language, poetry, and song. Williams cites, ‘a failure of identity in the crowd of others which worked back to a loss of identity in the self, and then, in these ways, a loss of society itself...’<sup>239</sup> For collectors like Sharp, who also believed in the importance of community in the creation of folk songs, the seeming loss of community in the city may have engendered Sharp’s dismissal of ‘town music’.

He identifies the link between folk music and nationalism in his definition, arguing that the musical value of a country can only be measured through its folk music, and any other musical forms not based on such folk music will have little or no value.<sup>240</sup> Again, this is informed by an intellectual context of Romantic Nationalism, which promoted folk poetry and songs as the ideal basis for a national culture because they emerge from the people of the nation who are least affected by outside influences. They express the feelings of the group, and taken together they can express the feelings of a nation. Sharp’s contemporary intellectual context of Fabian socialism was behind his proposals for achieving the kind of national culture he espoused, using education to train students in the performance of folk songs so that their instinctive faculties might be fostered,

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<sup>239</sup> Williams, Raymond. 1985. *The Country and the City*. Hogarth, London. p. 150.

<sup>240</sup> Sharp, Cecil J. 1907. *English Folk Song: Some Conclusions*. London. p. 1.

Is there any justification for the more comforting prediction that the recent recoveries of English folksong – of music, that is, which is distinctively national and English, and, therefore, inherently different from that of every other nation in the world – will eventually lead to the foundation of an English National School of composition, comparable with any one of the great Continental Schools of Music?<sup>241</sup>

This is a further demonstration of the importance of the intellectual context on the ideas of the collector, and by extension the importance of that context on what the collector does with their collected material. Sharp's part Romantic Nationalist ethos helped govern his idea of folk music as national culture, and his Fabianism made him push for the teaching of folk music and dance in schools. These motivations resulted in many folk music and dance curricula in schools in America following his work there, and this veneration of English culture is related to the Antimodernism movement, which revered Anglo – Saxon heritage and rural culture.

Pearce contends that collecting like that of Sharp is a kind of opposition to modern society,

In a sense all of this kind of collecting is an act of subversion, in that the theme which runs through it is the intention to overturn the world of accepted material values, not just of monetary values although this element is not absent, but also the values of quality, fidelity to evidence, purity and normality in which the social world is grounded. The accepted order is subverted when very ordinary, everyday things, things which are worthless by 'accepted' moral or aesthetic standards, are collected with the same obsessive care which others would lavish upon 'acceptable' material.<sup>242</sup>

Although Pearce is referring to a slightly different type of material hobbyist collecting, the idea of cultural subversion is just as relevant in the American collecting tradition. All of the

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<sup>241</sup> Ibid. p. 129.

<sup>242</sup> Pearce, Susan M. 1995. *On Collecting: An Investigation into Collecting in the European Tradition*. Routledge Press, London. p. 188.

collectors studied in this thesis are attempting to establish the intrinsic value of folk music, and to 'overturn' the prevailing attitudes of ignorance or dismissal. It has been suggested that Smith's *Anthology* was advancing exactly the type of subversive agenda Pearce describes, and Edmund O' Reilly laments the disappearance of this subversion,

Sanctioned now by the federal government, Asch and Smith no longer signify resistance, subversion, tough – minded utopian vision. The scapegrace Smith and the cultural radical Asch have been reinvented to fit a benign, Disneyfied version of the twentieth century: Smith is cute; Asch is avuncular.<sup>243</sup>

Regardless of any perceived flaws in Sharp's understanding of folk music, it is derived from an established conception of folk music. Herder and the Grimms promoted the intrinsic value of the 'music of the common people' and its suitability as national culture throughout their work. Child also deprecated the worth of culture which was not based on authentic folk music, arguing that literature which was not based on authentic ballad culture was 'false and artificial'.<sup>244</sup> The next transformation in the series which define the American collecting tradition is Sharp's notion of folk music as alive, although languishing somewhat, and with the possibility of being rescued. Sharp also conceived of folk music as a tool or resource for instruction in schools, which could lead to a national curriculum of folk traditions as a means of restoring instinctive faculties and the folk community in which there is unity of thought and feeling. This is precisely the kind of restorative revival that Cantwell discusses, and in this case it was induced by Romantic Nationalism, Fabian Socialism, and elements of Antimodernism.

## 2.9: John and Alan Lomax: The Discovery of Indigenous Folk Music

It might seem unfair to examine John and Alan Lomax together so frequently, but their work and attitudes overlap to such an extent that delineating either cleanly becomes problematic. Since John Lomax's early work was concerned mainly with cowboy songs, it is

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<sup>243</sup> Russell, Ian, and Atkinson, David. 2004. *Folk Song: Tradition, Revival and Re – creation*. The Elphinstone Institute, University of Aberdeen. p. 89.

<sup>244</sup> Child, Francis. 1900. 'Ballad Poetry'. *Johnson's Universal Cyclopaedia*. New York.

worth looking at how he defined the cowboy songs and the culture that created them. When the introduction to *Cowboy Songs* is explored, one of the most arresting aspects of its definition is what it owes to the Romantic Movement as well as Antimodernism. Lomax refers to the same conditions of social isolation and illiteracy that Sharp invokes, and also includes the same kind of generalised folk history as the basis for the cowboy song.<sup>245</sup> The purpose of Lomax's definition in *Cowboy Songs* is difficult to gauge, because of the popular aim of the collection. The romanticism of this characterisation may have resulted from Lomax's desire to make the collection commercially appealing. In his discussion of the development of the singing cowboy, Peterson accords a prominent place to *Cowboy Songs*,

The 1910 anthology *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads* was the first widely – distributed, full – length publication that featured the image of cowboy as *singer*. In his introduction to the anthology, John A. Lomax presents the stock romanticised depiction of cowboy ways...<sup>246</sup>

This 'stock romanticised depiction' of the American cowboy owed a considerable amount to Sharp and his 'stock romanticised depiction' of the American 'peasant', since both characterisations of the 'folk' are based on cultural isolation and the 'natural' instinct towards song. However, it is somewhat reductive to refer to Lomax's image of the American cowboy as a 'stock' image, since this obfuscates the various traditions at work in Lomax's cowboy. There is the Romantic tradition of characterising the rural folk as living simple lives, which are representative of traditions that are disappearing in the face of modernisation of one kind or another. As Berlin points out, the notion of the traditions of men being communal and valuable can even be found in the work of Rousseau, such as *The Social Contract* (1762), '...which is a typically classical treatise that speaks of the return of man to those original, primary principles which all men have in common...'<sup>247</sup> The romanticisation of the cowboy was not a simple process of personally distorting the nature or origins of something, but was based on an inherited discourse of Romantic ideals. Perhaps the more

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<sup>245</sup> Lomax, John A. 1910. *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads*. New York, MacMillan Press.

<sup>246</sup> Peterson, Richard A. 1997. *Creating Country Music: Fabricating Authenticity*. University of Chicago Press. p. 82.

<sup>247</sup> Berlin, Isaiah. 1999. *The Roots of Romanticism: The A. W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts*. Princeton University Press. p. 7.



important context for Lomax was the tradition of manhood at Harvard and the associated Antimodernism movement. As discussed previously, conceptions of manhood in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century were based around the life of strenuous activity, without the trappings of overcivilised late Victorian society. Lomax's cowboy was an embodiment of the idealised Harvard man, who lived simply, strenuously, and honestly. Perhaps most importantly, the cowboy worked hard for his honest living, and in doing so did the duty of an ideal man. William James offered a violent exhortation along these lines in the *Dilemma of Determinism* (1884), 'Hang your sensibilities! Stop your snivelling complaints, and your equally snivelling raptures! Leave off your general emotional tomfoolery, and get to WORK like men!'<sup>248</sup> Lears describes the related desire during the late Victorian period of reviving the traditional artisan,

Yearning to reintegrate selfhood by resurrecting the authentic experience of manual labour, a number of Americans looked hopefully toward the figure of the premodern artisan. His work was necessary and demanding; it was rooted in a genuine community; it was a model of hardness and wholeness.<sup>249</sup>

This could easily describe the work of the cowboy, 'necessary and demanding...rooted in a genuine community...a model of hardness and wholeness'.

Lomax also followed on from Child, and cites the collective and anonymous composition of the cowboy songs, and also the spontaneity of such folk song creations,

The work of the men, their daily experiences, their thoughts, their interests, were all in common. Such a community had necessarily to turn to itself for entertainment. Songs sprang up naturally, some of them tender and familiar lays of childhood, others original compositions, all genuine, however crude and unpolished...in this sense, therefore, any song that came from such a group would be the joint product of a number of them...<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>248</sup> Townsend, Kim. 1996. *Manhood at Harvard: William James and Others*. Norton, London. p. 39.

<sup>249</sup> Lears, T.J. Jackson. 1994. *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880 – 1920*. University of Chicago Press. p. 60.

<sup>250</sup> Lomax, John A. 1910. *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads*. New York, MacMillan Press.

Lomax uses very similar terms to those Child and Sharp use, such as ‘naturally’ and ‘genuine’, to emphasise the place these songs have in a wider folk song tradition. Also, this infers the existence of ‘unnatural’ and ‘un – genuine’ folk songs, of the sort decried by Child and Sharp as the products of people other than the real ‘folk’. Peterson also makes an interesting point about the relationship of the cowboy to civilisation, ‘Imbedded in this scenario is the tragic realisation that the cowboy, in working as an agent of civilisation, is bringing about the demise of the older communal ways in which his way of life is imbedded.’<sup>251</sup> Lomax presented the idea that civilisation has ended the cowboy traditions, but as Peterson points out the image of the cowboy suggests that this decline is inevitable because of the nature of the cowboy. Beyond this realisation, it has been observed by Townsend that the cowboy did not necessarily completely disappear from American culture,

Of course the cowpuncher did not really have to retreat after all. He only had to relocate and change costumes. He has survived, he has thrived, in fact, in hard – boiled detectives, gangsters, superannuated cold warriors and new frontiersmen, in fictive space probers, rogue stock manipulators, or purchasers of second homes “in the country.” He has taken up permanent residence at the heart of American culture.<sup>252</sup>

Townsend makes the point that the cowboy as an image of manhood has persisted throughout the twentieth century, and can be seen the ideal of manhood of each successive decade in America. Although the profession of the cowboy had declined, some of the characteristics which Lomax values in the cowboy, e.g. hard work, sense of duty, and belonging to a community, can be seen in these images of manhood Townsend describes. Although, an intrinsic part of the Antimodern idea of manhood was its existence despite the overcivilisation of modern society, so it is easy to understand why Lomax conceived of the cowboy as living in a declining tradition.

Clearly Lomax was determined to promote these cowboy songs as authentic, particularly since he was defining a type of indigenous American folk music. This is an

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<sup>251</sup> Peterson, Richard A. 1997. *Creating Country Music: Fabricating Authenticity*. University of Chicago Press. p. 82.

<sup>252</sup> Townsend, Kim. 1996. *Manhood at Harvard: William James and Others*. Norton, London. p. 269.

important point since indigenous American musical styles had hitherto been largely ignored, certainly by academic collectors. Even though Sharp transcribed songs from rural Americans, he was only interested in identifiably English songs. Lomax needed to provide the cowboy songs he collected with some kind of legitimacy, which partly explains the introduction to the third edition by academic folk song authority Barrett Wendell, with tacit endorsement from Kittredge. The definition of cowboy songs served as much to enhance their importance as to theorise their origins.<sup>253</sup> He was quietly promoting the idea of an indigenous American folk music, which was an unfamiliar idea particularly in 1910 when the book was published, while still emphasising the British tradition prevalent in America. He referred to the 'Anglo – Saxon ballad spirit' as being responsible for the continuation of British folk music and for the cowboy songs. Lomax manages to mitigate the audacity of his indigenous American folk music claims by suggesting they are basically British in their origin and style.

By the time John Lomax began working with his son Alan he was more outspoken about uniquely American folk music, and his agenda was to document this tradition rather than linking it to British traditions. Working together on recording expeditions in the early 1930s, John and Alan were developing their own definition of this unique American music which diverged from the Child/Sharp tradition. Filene describes the Lomaxes as having,

...produced a web of criteria for determining what a "true" folk singer looked and sounded like and a set of assumptions about the importance of *being* a "true" folk singer. In short, they created a "cult of authenticity," a thicket of expectations and valuations that American roots musicians and their audiences have been negotiating ever since.<sup>254</sup>

Although the Lomaxes believed this 'authenticity' manifested differently from Child and Sharp's conception of authenticity, they still based much of their definition of American folk song on the same assumptions. Filene is incorrect when he ascribes his 'cult of authenticity' to the Lomaxes, because the rudiments of their 'web of criteria' are very similar to Child and Sharp. The Lomaxes undoubtedly contributed to this 'cult of authenticity', but as this

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<sup>253</sup> Lomax, John A. 1910. *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads*. New York, MacMillan Press.

<sup>254</sup> Filene, Benjamin. 2000. *Romancing the Folk: Public Memory & American Roots Music*. University of North Carolina Press. p. 49.

chapter shows the foundations were created by the European collectors and the early American collectors.

These criteria and assumptions include the perennial idea that the rural working classes can be the only 'true' folk singers, as demonstrated by Alan Lomax's declaration that, 'To be folk, you live folk'<sup>255</sup>. This statement was made in 1959 in response to the growing folk music revival movement, which was sustained largely by people who would not qualify as 'true' folk singers by the Lomaxes standards. The context for Alan's declaration regarding authenticity was an epiphany following his period collecting music in Europe, primarily in Britain. Szwed describes this realisation as,

Work songs in Spain, Scotland, and Italy had made Alan further aware of the relationship between vocal tension, sexual restrictions, and socioeconomic development. Reading Freud, Marx, and Emile Durkheim on the relationship between forms of production and social organisation and Darwin's writings on emotion in animals and humans, gave him the means to bring together materialism, psychoanalysis, and social and cultural evolution as the foundations of a theory of song.<sup>256</sup>

Alan became convinced that folk music was defined by style, which in turn was defined by the culture which produced the songs, and its attitudes to sex, death, family, and various other important aspects of life. He was determined to find the connections between societies and folk song styles, particularly vocal styles and the physical complexities of the voice. Following these realisations Alan urged revival folk singers to reproduce vocal style and even posture, if they wanted to be able to sing folk music authentically.

The revivalists were urban, college educated, middle – class young people who were breaking somewhat from the middle class culture of the period. However, this idea was by no means only a reaction to the American folk revival: Child claimed authenticity in popular ballads was linked to the circumstances in which it was created, and that they are

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<sup>255</sup> Denisoff, R. Serge and Lund, Jens. 1971. 'The Folk Music Revival and the Counter Culture: Contributions and Contradictions'. *Journal of American Folklore*. 84/334. p. 396.

<sup>256</sup> Szwed, John. 2010. *The Man Who Recorded the World: A Biography of Alan Lomax*. William Heinemann, London. p. 330.

fundamentally inimitable by the modern writer.<sup>257</sup> Sharp also limited authenticity in folk music to, 'those whose mental development has not been due to any formal system of training or education, but solely to environment, communal association, and direct contact with the ups and downs of life.'<sup>258</sup> Tied to this depiction of rural working class authenticity is the notion held especially firmly by John Lomax that isolation was conducive to authentic folk music, 'The Lomaxes hoped to find the old styles "damned up" in America's more isolated areas.'<sup>259</sup> They also dismissed the relevance or influence of contemporary popular music, as could be heard on the radio in the early 1930s. Alan Lomax was particularly disappointed during a recording trip in the mid-1950s when he could not find the folk music he was expecting.<sup>260</sup> John Lomax resented the proliferation of popular music through technologies like the radio and phonograph, and the fact that they appeared to be supplanting folk music in many working class areas.<sup>261</sup>

The Lomaxes definition of American folk music was complicated by their interest in African – American music, and their progressive belief that it belonged under the banner of 'American folk music'. John Lomax identified one of the most distinctive traits of something that could be called American folk music: its ethnic diversity. Even in his early recording expeditions John Lomax recorded British – American, African – American, and Spanish – American music, and made no value distinctions between ethnicities in folk music. In fact, he believed that one of the strongest aspects of indigenous American folk music was the African – American music he had recorded. In his 1937 report to Congress, he explained the larger numbers of African – American folk song recordings in the Archive, 'The explanation of the proportionately larger number of records of Negro folk songs is that more Negro songs are available. The Negro is our chief folk singer.'<sup>262</sup> Patrick Mullen argues,

Lomax's attitudes towards race were complex and changed over the course of his life; they were based on nineteenth century cultural assumptions about blacks, his

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<sup>257</sup> Child, Francis. 1900. 'Ballad Poetry'. *Johnson's Universal Cyclopaedia*. New York.

<sup>258</sup> Sharp, Cecil J. 1907. *English Folk Song: Some Conclusions*. London. p. 3.

<sup>259</sup> Filene, Benjamin. 2000. *Romancing the Folk: Public Memory & American Roots Music*. University of North Carolina Press. p. 50.

<sup>260</sup> Collins, Shirley. 2004. *America over the Water*. SAF Publishing, London.

<sup>261</sup> Porterfield, Nolan. 1996. *The Last Cavalier: The Life and Times of John A. Lomax*. University of Illinois Press. p. 268.

<sup>262</sup> Lomax, John A. 1937. *Annual Report of the Librarian of Congress*. United States Government Printing Office, Washington. p. 151.

emotional early childhood experiences, his formal education, and social and fieldwork contacts with blacks from different socioeconomic milieu.<sup>263</sup>

Mullen also quotes Lomax's biographer Porterfield saying, 'Those attitudes, although indefensible from an enlightened point of view, were nevertheless commingled with a sensibility which complicates any effort to dismiss him as a simple racist.'<sup>264</sup> Mullen also discusses Alan Lomax's attitudes towards African – American music and culture as the conflation of various attitudes on race, but something which is fundamentally progressive, 'Lomax seems to be consciously constructing whiteness from what he thinks is a black perspective to more fully identify with blacks himself...'<sup>265</sup> Despite any conflicted attitudes the Lomaxes both held regarding race, their work speaks to a commitment towards African – American music and culture, and at least a partial refusal to recognise social constraints of race. For instance, John Lomax went to great lengths to promote Lead Belly as an accomplished folk singer, to find him work, and to enable his wife to travel with him. John Lomax also spent the latter part of his career working largely with African – American folk music, since he believed it to be among the most important folk music styles in America. Alan also spent much of his career working with African – American folk music, and in particular championing African – American musical styles like jazz. His indefatigable efforts to promote the pioneering jazz music of Jelly Roll Morton is evidence of this, and as Alan later remarked regarding his interviews with Jelly Roll,

I later came to call this process "the cultural system," where people talk their images into a recording instrument or into a film, and suddenly begin to find that they have importance, what they have to say is significant. All that came out of the Jelly Roll interview...This was the first oral history, and that's how it all began on the stage. Jelly Roll invented oral history, you might say.<sup>266</sup>

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<sup>263</sup> Mullen, Patrick B. 2000. 'The Dilemma of Representation in Folk Studies: The Case of Henry Truvillion and John Lomax', *Journal of Folklore Research*. 37/2 – 3. p. 156.

<sup>264</sup> Porterfield, Nolan. 1996. *The Last Cavalier: The Life and Times of John A. Lomax*. University of Illinois Press. p. 169.

<sup>265</sup> Mullen, Patrick B. 2008. *The Man Who Adores the Negro: Race and American Folklore*. University of Illinois Press. p. 96.

<sup>266</sup> Szwed, John. 2010. *The Man Who Recorded the World: A Biography of Alan Lomax*. William Heinemann, London. p. 124.

This is another instance of the political and social context dictating the work of the American collectors: in the case of John Lomax the prevailing attitudes of the early twentieth – century American South still affected his ideas about African – American music, but what was more important was his own experiences recording work songs, blues, and spirituals which convinced him of the importance of African – American music as part of American culture overall. Much of Alan Lomax’s work was conducted during the Civil Rights movement, and this political background influenced his promotion of African – American music, and partly fulfilled Alan’s wishes of cultural equity for African – American culture.

Lomax’s racial views are integral to his conception of African – American folk music, and as Mullen suggests must be examined with due consideration of context. His consideration of black music, and attitude towards the institutional dismissal of black culture and society, was undoubtedly progressive. However, it was inhibited by Lomax’s ingrained ‘Old South conservative’ politics, and in his definition of American folk music black musical forms belonged to a naturally inferior people. Or, as Porterfield observes, ‘He was no less than a product of his time; he was, alas, never more than it either.’<sup>267</sup> Lomax was frustrated by the same trends of overwritten folk music in black communities as he was in white communities. He regarded jazz as being especially threatening to the survival of black folk music, and lamented the popularity of ‘white pop music’ in black communities. Lomax deplored,

...that segment of blacks who were ashamed of their heritage and blind to the true artistic value of their vernacular music. They simply made fools of themselves, said Lomax, when they tried to imitate white music, with all its artifice and class snobbery.<sup>268</sup>

Speaking of the popular music influences he also said that African – American traditional songs, ‘in musical phrasing and in poetic content, are most unlike those of the white race, the least contaminated by white influence or by modern Negro jazz...’<sup>269</sup> This is part of the reason Lomax did so much recording at the segregated penitentiaries, because he sought,

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<sup>267</sup> Porterfield, Nolan. 1996. *The Last Cavalier: The Life and Times of John A. Lomax*. University of Illinois Press. p. 169.

<sup>268</sup> Ibid. p. 298.

<sup>269</sup> Ibid.

‘the Negro who had the least contact with jazz, the radio, and with the white man...the convicts heard only the idiom of their own race.’<sup>270</sup>

The Lomaxes conception of folk music is an important transformation in the American collecting tradition because it accepted ethnic diversity as one of the basic constituents of an American folk music. They did not believe in the necessity of looking far back to discover the ‘true’ folk music of their country, and their idealised period of optimum folk fertility was distinctly narrow. From the mid to late nineteenth century to the early twentieth, before the proliferation of radio, was the period in which the Lomaxes were most interested. This emphasis on a legitimate and uniquely American folk music had an observable impact on the work of Smith,

Using Alan’s 1940 mimeographed “List of American Folk Songs on Commercial Records” and the reissued songs on Alan’s 1941 *Smoky Mountain Ballads* as a model, Smith created his own anthology on three long – playing records that helped revive older folk music.<sup>271</sup>

The work of John and Alan Lomax in legitimising the music of popular folk recording musicians was very important for the American collecting tradition. It was partly responsible for the creation of Smith’s *Anthology*, which presented purely commercial 78rpm records as legitimate American folk music.

Alan was just as fascinated by African – American music and culture as his father, but added to this an interest in promoting the social and cultural equality of African – Americans. His address to the American Psychological Association in 1966 can be used for insight into his anthropological interest in folk music, especially of African – American origin,

Once painting lived on the body, sculpture was something which was used and handled, architecture was the result of cooperative labor, and literature was recited or danced. In civilisation all these arts have become representational and a dirty problem for the behavioral sciences. On the contrary, song and dance are

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<sup>270</sup> Filene, Benjamin. 2000. *Romancing the Folk: Public Memory & American Roots Music*. University of North Carolina Press. p. 51.

<sup>271</sup> Szwed, John. 2010. *The Man Who Recorded the World: A Biography of Alan Lomax*. William Heinemann, London. p. 223.



acts that may be recorded anywhere as performed, and then studied as events which structure the relations of human actors in cultural context. Such structures may be compared to more everyday behaviors.<sup>272</sup>

This argument reveals certain aspects of Alan Lomax's attitude to his collecting, and informs his definition of true or authentic folk music. It makes a credible point about behavioural scientists observing cultural behaviour second – hand through objects, and out of context. Alan also argued for the importance of his recording and collecting work as allowing the scientist to experience a direct capture of social behaviour through song. There are still some generalisations about the decontextualisation of forms of cultural expression such as painting, sculpture, architecture, and literature. Also, a recorded performance of a folk song is still inherently decontextualised by the process of capturing, and experienced second – hand through the record and the collector. This does clearly demonstrate Lomax's intellectual context, referred to earlier, of interest in the social context of folk music. The roots of this can be seen as far back as Herder, who argued that Volkslieder has meaning within the community in which it originates. Lomax's ideas represented the continuation of this attention to social context, but the additional intellectual context was Lomax's grounding in anthropology and his interest in psychoanalysis and other sciences of behaviour. This was one of many transformations Lomax introduced to the collecting tradition: focusing on the social and cultural context in which the songs originated, and what song content and the intricacies of performance can reveal about this context.

Despite Alan's more liberal and politicised attitude to the rural working classes, particularly African – Americans, as well as his scientific approach to song collecting, he had not shaken the romanticised image of their traditional and 'simple' lifestyle. It is also clear that he still had ideas of folk music authenticity very much within the Child/Sharp tradition, and following on from his father's ideas. He partly shared his father's belief that popular music was threatening America's folk music, and that the traditional songs were in danger of disappearing permanently. Mullen, in his study of race and folklore, quotes Alan Lomax,

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<sup>272</sup> Lomax, Alan. 1967. 'The Good and the Beautiful in Folk Song'. *Journal of American Folklore*. 80/317.

...we have to work on behalf of the folk, the people. We have to defend them, to interpret them, to interpret to them what is going on in the world which they do not make, but which begins to move in upon them and to crush their culture.<sup>273</sup>

This suggests that Alan inherited some of the traditional anxieties about the modern world and popular culture threatening folk music. This of course can be traced back to the ideas of Herder, who lamented the change in tastes which brings about such threats to folk music, 'Could it be that what a nation at one time considers good, fair, useful, pleasant, true it considers at another time bad, ugly, useless, unpleasant, false? – And yet this happens!'<sup>274</sup>

As Alan began to assume prominence over his semi – retired father in the 1940s and 50s, the conception of folk music presented in their work changed. Alan began to depict folk music as something that did change according to popular trends, and as a tradition that could be contributed to rather than simply preserved. Filene argues for the significance of this more progressive attitude towards folk music,

Since they conceived of folklore as fundamentally vibrant, not endangered, the folklorists no longer saw themselves as mounting a desperate rear – guard preservation effort. They moved away from the notion of folklore as a matter of collecting...“dead or phony stuff” and instead concentrated on the role folklore played in society and the process by which it evolved.<sup>275</sup>

The focus on 'the role folklore played in society and the process by which it evolved' is essentially a mandate for Alan's anthropological studies in folk music. In the tradition of folk music definitions discussed in this chapter, this is another movement towards a more accurate definition of folk music as it exists in modern society. This transformation in the conception of folk music must be looked at in relation to the politics of the Popular Front, which promoted the role that folk music could play in social change, and for this to occur folk music must not remain static. This partly involved a move away from the determined

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<sup>273</sup> Mullen, Patrick B. 2008. *The Man Who Adores the Negro: Race and American Folklore*. University of Illinois Press. p. 90.

<sup>274</sup> Forster, Michael N. 2002. *Johann Gottfried von Herder: Philosophical Writings*. Cambridge University Press. p. 256.

<sup>275</sup> Filene, Benjamin. 2000. *Romancing the Folk: Public Memory & American Roots Music*. University of North Carolina Press. pp. 138 – 139.

focus on authenticity in folk music and towards a conception of folk songs being governed by function. As Michael Denning points out,

Though Popular Front musical theory is often described as “nationalist” because of its interest in folk traditions, all of the major Popular Front music theorists...rejected national and racial myths of musical purity in favour of what [Sidney] Finkelstein called “the basic truth that beauty is a product of labour.”<sup>276</sup>

This can be found in Alan’s use of functionalism in his 1930s and 40s folk song collections, which draw attention to the functions the songs perform in society. Denning also draws attention to one of the results of the work of collectors and promoters like Alan Lomax,

Curiously, however, the folk music collectors themselves and the short – lived folk singing groups and organisations that emerged out of this world – the Almanac Singers, People’s Songs, and the Weavers – have often received more attention than the vernacular musicians they laboured to promote.<sup>277</sup>

Although there were limits to the effectiveness of the Popular Front at promoting singers and their songs, the politics of Alan’s collecting in this period were very much in step with the Popular Front. Alan not only wanted to promote the folk musicians and their music, but also wanted to demonstrate the social conditions that produced the music, and to show how poverty, labour, social inequality, and the penal system was behind the creation of many folk songs. These conditions determined the function of the song, and as Denning points out the musical theory of the Popular Front focused on a form of functionalism.

The introduction to the Lomaxes’ 1941 collection *Our Singing Country*, which Filene cites as evidence of their changing approach, seems heavily influenced by Alan,

The needle writes on the disc with tireless accuracy the subtle inflections, the melodies, the pauses that comprise the emotional meaning of speech, spoken and

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<sup>276</sup> Denning, Michael. 1997. *The Cultural Front: The Labouring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century*. Verso, London. p. 460.

<sup>277</sup> *Ibid.* p. 359.

sung. In this way folklore can truly be recorded. A piece of folklore is a living, growing, and changing thing, and a folk song printed, words and tune, only symbolises in a very static fashion a myriad – voiced reality of individual songs.<sup>278</sup>

This statement reveals several points of his attitude to folk music and collecting: It begins by promoting the efficacy of recording technology, and its inherent suitability for capturing folk song performances. In the same sentence he also refers to his belief that folk song is representative of more general cultural behaviour and has many of the same social functions as speech. Alan also argues that folk music is very much alive and adaptive which is a significant contribution to the tradition of definitions offered by Child, Sharp, and the early work of his father. The developments in the definition of folk music prompted by Alan Lomax could be seen as an attempt to represent more of himself in his collecting work, something which is discussed in detail by Pearce,

Collections are psychic ordering, of individuality, of public and private relationships, and of time and space. They live in the minds and hearts of their collectors, for whom they act as material autobiographies, chronicling the cycle of a life, from the first moment an object strikes a particular personal chord, to specialised accumulation, to constructing the dimensions of life, to a final measure of immortality.<sup>279</sup>

The cycle described by Pearce can be seen in the work of Alan Lomax, from his earliest experiences of folk music which produced a strong urge to record it,

The rough, powerful voice of the men chanting in harmony from the gloom of the thickets on the creek howls excited men all over the pueblo. They shouted and

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<sup>278</sup> Lomax, Alan, and Lomax, John A. 1941. *Our Singing Country: Folk Songs and Ballads*. New York, MacMillan Press.

<sup>279</sup> Pearce, Susan M. 1995. *On Collecting: An Investigation into Collecting in the European Tradition*. Routledge Press, London. p. 279.

joined in the chant – someday Alan will come with his recording outfit and can that music.<sup>280</sup>

From this to his ultimate influence on folk music, which has been described thus, ‘Lomax was arguably one of the most influential Americans of the twentieth century, a man who changed not only how everyone listened to music but even how they viewed America.’<sup>281</sup>

Alan Lomax’s theoretical transformations are arguably the most important and radical in the American collecting tradition, and were impacted by a myriad of political, technological, and intellectual contexts. Alan’s notion of folk music as something living and active, which responded to and incorporated change was based on his own observations during recording trips, where he saw musical styles about which he may have been hesitant combining with folk music. As previously discussed, Lomax began to conceive of folk music not as an authentic artefact of a declining tradition, but as a functional object which represented societal activities including work, recreation, and worship. These ideas were influenced by the politics of the Popular Front, and also to a certain extent by the practices of anthropology which values the importance of cultural context. The sciences of behaviour, including anthropology and psychoanalysis affected his later conception of folk music as being dictated by the behaviours of the society in which it is produced. In this transformation his work was impacted by the work of Freud, Marx, and anthropologists like Franz Boas. Although remnants of the Romantic Movement and Antimodernism surfaced in Lomax’s work, particularly his earlier work, Lomax was one of the first collectors in the American tradition to move away from these intellectual backgrounds. In this respect Lomax benefitted from university training in anthropology, and becoming acquainted with psychoanalysis in the 1940s and 50s, partly due to his own analysis sessions during this period. Despite the erudition behind Lomax’s ideas of folk music, it was essentially still about promoting the people who performed the music. As Szwed observes, Alan was, ‘...the pied piper of the Other America, the common people, the forgotten, the ethnic, those who always came to life in troubled times...’<sup>282</sup>

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<sup>280</sup> Filene, Benjamin. 2000. *Romancing the Folk: Public Memory & American Roots Music*. University of North Carolina Press. p. 48.

<sup>281</sup> Szwed, John. 2010. *The Man Who Recorded the World: A Biography of Alan Lomax*. William Heinemann, London. p. 388.

<sup>282</sup> *Ibid.* p. 389.

## 2.10: Smith and American Folk Music as Avant – Garde

In some ways Harry Smith was not part of the American collecting tradition: his work had little to do with folk music scholarship, ethnography, or the active promotion of folk music or musicians. He nevertheless introduced another important transformation into the collecting tradition: the conception of eclecticism and strangeness as part of American folk music. During the production of the Anthology Smith seemed to develop an idea of American folk music as being responsible for a number of unusual regional styles, which seemed especially exotic compared to the music which was popular in the early 1950s. The selections of the Anthology make it clear where this idea came from, particularly Cajun songs like Didier Hebert's *I Woke up One Morning in May*, and Bascom Lamar Lunsford's *I Wish I Was a Mole in the Ground*. Smith took this eclecticism and reframed it, with the input of Moe Asch of Folkways Records, as 'American folk music' while including various illustrations, design schemes, and accompanying notes which emphasised the strangeness of the collection. As Cantwell claims, 'The Folkways Anthology was a kind of curriculum in mystical ethnography, converting a commercial music fashioned in the twenties out of various cultural emplacements and historical displacements into the "folk" music of the revival.'<sup>283</sup> As Smith stated, he adopted ideas from Alan Lomax's list of important commercial records, and his *Smokey Mountain Ballads* collection, and used them to create his own version of the folklorist's collection. Smith's ideas of folk music history were partly taken from prior work on the subject, and partly based on his personal record collection, a small part of which formed the Anthology. These differing elements of folk music history and eclectic strangeness are presented together in the Anthology, such as in the arresting illustration of the Celestial Monochord adorning the cover of the notes, and the straightforward description of the history of the recording industry; the unusual bold numbering of the selections, and the carefully researched cross referencing with other collections; and simply the use of unusual recordings of songs under the rubric of American folk music. Smith's ideas of folk music, and his transformation of folk music into an expression of the avant – garde, come partly from the context of existing folk music

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<sup>283</sup> Cantwell, Robert. 1996. *When We Were Good: The Folk Revival*. Harvard University Press. p. 190.

collections like those of Alan Lomax, but more importantly from his own record collecting in the 1940s and the Avant – Garde art and Beat movement in which he was a peripheral participant.

Through the eclecticism of the collection Smith demonstrates the diversity that has created a unique American folk music. This diversity lies in the African – American folk music forms like blues and jazz, which are represented in the *Anthology*; the American evangelical tradition which is exemplified by the Black and White church music; the British ballad tradition as seen in songs like Dick Justice’s recording of ‘Henry Lee’; the French – Canadian presence in Louisiana through Cajun songs like ‘Acadian One – Step’ and ‘La Danseuse’; and the largely rural White American tradition of hootenanny’s and other dance events accompanied by folk music styles.<sup>284</sup> There are communities and musical styles that are not represented in this collection, such as the Eastern European musical forms, Yiddish folk music, South American, and Native American. However, this was not the result of neglect or oversight from Smith, rather the admission that comprehensive representation was not possible in a collection like his. Also, he could only work with what 78rpm records he had found during the 1940s. It is difficult to attach too much importance to interviews given by Smith, since he was notoriously evasive or confounding when talking to people about his work, and as Rani Singh observes, ‘His answers depended on his mood, his drug intake, and his financial situation at the time. He might bait the interviewer...’<sup>285</sup> Despite this, Smith made some coherent comments regarding the *Anthology* in a 1969 interview with John Cohen. Many of his answers are self – mythologising asides, but he did comment that, ‘Previously, the *Anthology* was appreciated as a curiosity. Now people can get involved with a great variety of music.’<sup>286</sup> This assertion seems to be symptomatic of Smith’s emphasis on strangeness and eclecticism in the *Anthology*, and the impression of some commentators fits with the idea of the *Anthology* as a curio or piece of ephemera. Cantwell discusses,

...one of the most peculiar features of the handbook – the bold, black entry numbers standing at the head of each citation, by far the most conspicuous element on the printed page – is at once the most ironic and the most arbitrary.

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<sup>284</sup> Smith, Harry. 1952. *Anthology of American Folk Music*. Folkways Records, New York.

<sup>285</sup> Singh, Rani, ed. 1999. *Think of the Self Speaking: Harry Smith – Selected Interviews*. Elbow/Cityful Press, Seattle. p. ii.

<sup>286</sup> *Ibid.* p. 96.

What principle can have determined this forceful enunciation of seriality in a body of music that has no inherent sequence, chronological or otherwise?<sup>287</sup>

The overriding impression of strangeness in the *Anthology* helps create the impression of the strangeness inherent in American folk music. It could be argued that Smith's idea of folk music, as found in the *Anthology*, was notably inclusive and did not maintain distinctions found in earlier collections or in the record catalogues of 'race' and 'hillbilly' music from which the *Anthology* was constructed. Cantwell argues for the efficacy of Smith's definition in achieving this inclusion,

The Anthology did with sound what the discourse of folklorists and ethnomusicologists, with the endemic distinction between Afro and Anglo – American, could not do: drive home the essential integrity, in American folk music, of African and European traditions – for the very language of scholarship preserves the distinctions that scholars want to eliminate.<sup>288</sup>

One of Smith's anecdotal remarks is indicative of the democratic success of his definition in the *Anthology*, 'It took years before anybody discovered that Mississippi John Hurt wasn't a hillbilly!'<sup>289</sup> Mississippi John Hurt was an African – American blues and folk singer whose voice and style does not immediately betray his ethnic heritage, but since Smith did not maintain any distinctions between ethnicities all of the music was heard together. As Cantwell's contention suggests, despite the attention given to African – American music by the Lomaxes, the distinction was still maintained between the ethnic communities and the music they produce. Defining American folk music as being inherently eclectic and derived from America's ethnic diversity, but not basing the arrangement of the collection on ethnicity or traditional musical styles, contributes to Smith's overall move towards inclusiveness.

Aspects of Smith's collecting seem particularly connected to Pearce's collecting theory, since Smith was collecting material objects for a personal collection. His conception

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<sup>287</sup> Cantwell, Robert. 1996. *When We Were Good: The Folk Revival*. Harvard University Press. p. 199.

<sup>288</sup> Ibid. p. 220.

<sup>289</sup> Iglori, Paola. 1996. *American Magus Harry Smith: A Modern Alchemist*. Inanout Press U.S.



of folk music as naturally eclectic, and the corresponding move towards inclusiveness, fit in with Pearce's ideas of traditional value in material culture. Pearce, as previously mentioned, observes a recurring impulse in collectors to subvert the values of material culture,

The power inherent in collecting practice can be turned to mocking and subversive ends. 'Unacceptable' collectors, among other things, are making important assertions about the 'ordinary' material world and our relationship to it, which we ignore to our detriment.<sup>290</sup>

Smith's record collecting falls into this area of collecting which, while not 'unacceptable', was not seen as the most valuable exercise for a folklorist or a hobbyist collector. Smith recounts his collecting methods, which give some idea of the perceived value of the records,

As soon as I discovered how to look for records – which was to find a store that had gone bankrupt – I found places like that in Port Townsend where the Brunswick records were. The Victor ones were in a place north of San Francisco. But there were boxes, unbroken boxes that the records had been shipped in, of just about everything.<sup>291</sup>

As Marcus points out, Smith intended for his collection to have some kind of social impact, "I felt social changes would result," said Smith of his *Anthology* in 1969...<sup>292</sup> and Cohen articulated the type of change in values alluded to by Pearce, 'In that album (*Smokey Mountain Ballads*) John and Alan Lomax made hillbilly music respectable enough to have it sold along with art music and symphonies.'<sup>293</sup> Although it is debateable if Smith, as he claims, imagined the collection having a large social impact upon its release, the cultural subversion of the collection is certainly conceivable, although this also may not have been planned by Smith. In 1952 when the *Anthology* was released television was growing in

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<sup>290</sup> Pearce, Susan M. 1995. *On Collecting: An Investigation into Collecting in the European Tradition*. Routledge Press, London. p. 196.

<sup>291</sup> Singh, Rani, ed. 1999. *Think of the Self Speaking: Harry Smith – Selected Interviews*. Elbow/Cityful Press, Seattle. p. 73.

<sup>292</sup> Marcus, Greil. 1997. *A Booklet of Essays, Appreciations, and Annotations Pertaining to the Anthology of American Folk Music*. Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, Washington D.C.

<sup>293</sup> Singh, Rani, ed. 1999. *Think of the Self Speaking: Harry Smith – Selected Interviews*. Elbow/Cityful Press, Seattle. pp. 72 – 73.

popularity, and Smith's collection could be seen as a reaction against this proliferation, as Marcus does in his commentaries on the *Anthology*. Cantwell also refers to the importance of television during this period, and its limitations, 'As the idiom surrounding television had long indicated, the tube was nothing less than a form of nonsurgical lobotomy, a pervasively commercial medium whose content was been ever more crassly and straightforwardly determined by advertising...'<sup>294</sup> The strangeness of the *Anthology* would appear to set it very clearly apart from the television which is homogenised and serving an advertising agenda. This is where Smith's idea of the strangeness and eclecticism of American folk music serves a somewhat subversive agenda, being based around the notion that American culture is not homogenous, healthy, and harmless. This has much in common with the Beats of the 1940s, and to a certain extent the so – called second generation Beats of the 50s, who rallied against post – war society,

Slowly their ideas for a new society developed, and they began to meet like – minded people. The dropping of A – bombs on Japan and the revelation of the horrors of the concentration camps combined with the petty puritanism of bourgeois America to cause widespread disillusion with the established values of society and to lead them to seek another direction, away from hypocrisy toward honesty, truthfulness, and, they hoped, a new spirituality.<sup>295</sup>

Smith's avant – garde view of folk music emerges from a similar reaction against 1940s/50s society, and as Marcus suggests the *Anthology* may be seen as expression of the view that there is still mystery and strangeness in American culture.

This is the type of overturning of cultural values which Pearce argues is an important aspect of the work of collectors. It has also been argued that Smith's cultural subversion included overturning the values of popular music at the time, as O'Reilly remarks,

Intense performance styles seemed to reveal authentic inner lives, expressing unmediated responses to real emotional disturbances and concrete problems,

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<sup>294</sup> Cantwell, Robert. 1996. *When We Were Good: The Folk Revival*. Harvard University Press. p. 199.

<sup>295</sup> Beard, Rick, and Berlowitz, Leslie Cohen. 1993. *Greenwich Village: Culture and Counterculture*. Rutgers University Press. p. 169.

whether commonplace or bizarre. The restraint that Marcus finds deadpan and mask – like seemed to me refreshingly mature in contrast with the hit parade excess of a pop singer like Johnny Ray, whose ‘Cry’ marked some kind of peak in histrionic self – indulgence.<sup>296</sup>

O’ Reilly’s comments are particularly important in relation to Smith’s cultural subversion, where the strangeness or unfamiliarity to listeners in the 50s is the manner in which the singers recount horrific accidents, murder, adultery, and extreme toil and drudgery, without ‘histrionic self – indulgence’. The contrast O’ Reilly makes between ‘intense’ and ‘histrionic’ is a usefully concise demonstration of Smith’s cultural subversion. Some of the performances on the *Anthology* are intense, but without being overbearing, which may distinguish them from some pop music of the 1950s. O’ Reilly hints at the strangeness of the collection, but also at the mystery of the singers who ‘reveal authentic inner lives’ about which the listener knows nothing. Cantwell refers to this mystery as what allowed some of the songs to become popular during the folk revival,

We knew little of the actual social and commercial context of these recordings, and still less of the people who recorded them, in the sixties; they came to live in the world evoked by their own voices and the stories they tell – that, again, is one of the principal movements of the *Anthology*, the absorption of singer into song – a movement that permits us to embrace Asch’s promise largely unaware of the art at work.<sup>297</sup>

Smith’s idea of eclecticism and strangeness in American folk music did come partly from the records he had collected, which were evidence of a recording industry that had captured some remarkably strange songs and performances in the 20s and 30s. More importantly though, Smith’s ideas were affected by the Beat culture of the 1940s, which revolted against the ‘bourgeois’ culture of the period, and attempted to fashion a trend of exuberant and honest expression. The records of the *Anthology* could be seen as ideal examples of the

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<sup>296</sup> Russell, Ian, and Atkinson, David. 2004. *Folk Song: Tradition, Revival and Re – creation*. The Elphinstone Institute, University of Aberdeen. p. 92.

<sup>297</sup> Cantwell, Robert. 1996. *When We Were Good: The Folk Revival*. Harvard University Press. p. 217.

Beat philosophy: as O' Reilly puts it, 'unmediated responses to real emotional disturbances and concrete problems...' Echoes of the Romantic Movement can be seen in the Beat philosophy: both are reactions against a prevailing culture which is seen as smothering and both value sincerity of expression highly. Smith's idea of folk music was considerably impacted by Beat notions, and by the pop music of the 1940s which seemed to people like O' Reilly to be the antithesis of the music on the *Anthology*.

## 2.11: Definitions of Folk Music and the American Collecting Tradition

It is clear from the preceding discussions that the ideas of folklore collectors, since the early eighteenth – century, have been governed by the intellectual, political, socio – cultural, and technological context in which they work. Some of the most important intellectual trends during this period, such as Romanticism and Antimodernism, have resulted in transformations in ideas of what folk music is, how it is created, and who creates it. These transformations of folk music theory are what characterise the American collecting tradition, repeatedly changing the reason the collecting is done, and what happens to the material collected. Ultimately, these context – based transformations determine how folk music is understood from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries, and from Europe to America.

The next chapter examines the collecting methods used by the European and American collectors, and further demonstrates the importance of context by showing how intellectual frameworks, social and political conditions, and technological innovations dictate how the collecting is done.

## Chapter 3: Methodologies and the Collecting Tradition

### 3.1: Introduction

Since this study examines the history of collecting in America, it is important to establish what actually makes a collector. This question assumes that there are a distinguishable set of conditions that define a collector, and this chapter attempts to explain these conditions, and discuss whether this can be used to identify a legitimate collector. This chapter discusses whether legitimacy can be ascribed to a collection, and if so what determines if a collection is legitimate or not. Some of this discussion involves the collecting theory of Susan Pearce and Paul Martin, and how it can be applied to the American folk collectors. This discussion is partly used as the basis for an analysis of the early European collectors and their techniques. The variety in the techniques of the European collectors is studied, as are the similarities in these techniques. The varied techniques employed by the American collectors are explored, along with the aspects of these techniques they inherited from their European predecessors. This chapter demonstrates that the various ways in which the European and American collectors conducted their work are affected by the context in which they were working. It will argue that the transformations in collecting techniques, amongst the European collectors, and more importantly amongst the American collectors, are what define the American collecting tradition, which is based on successive innovations in its practices and survives because it adapts to changing circumstances.

### 3.2: Subjective Notions of Collecting

Pearce suggests there are serious problems with a definition of collecting which depends on ideas of connectedness between objects, and the personal motivations of the collector. She claims that, 'sharp notions of seriality or of intention prove too crude to catch the play of human feeling and activity.'<sup>298</sup> While it is demonstrably difficult to establish definitions, and produce criteria from which such definitions can form, it is too evasive to leave it to the

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<sup>298</sup> Pearce, Susan M. 1998. *Collecting in Contemporary Practice*. Sage Publications, London. p. 3.

mentality of the collector. Pearce states that, 'essentially a collection is what he believes it is, provided there are at least some physical objects gathered together. This expresses the essentially subjective element in collecting...'<sup>299</sup> This idea of a collector and the collection they create is too dependent on an unworkable subjectivity to be of use in this thesis. She again allows subjectivity to influence the definition of the collection itself, 'Much ink has been spilt over the definition of a 'collection', and of the difference, if any, between 'a collection' and 'an accumulation', 'a group' and 'a hoard'... A collection exists if its owner thinks it does...'<sup>300</sup> Although this idea permits any collector to be discussed on the same level as the most prominent folk collectors, it is nonetheless too weak as a definition to be used in this thesis. In order for it to be possible to discuss folk music collectors and ask what makes them collectors, there must be something beyond their own conception of themselves as collectors. This can be in the form of external validation of the work of a collector, working on behalf of a repository or institution of some kind, or the production of a coherent collection(s) in which some of the objects are arranged.

Perhaps the most important aspect of defining the process of collecting, which goes beyond claiming that a collection is defined by its owner, is the idea of giving legitimacy and value to collected objects. All of the collectors in the American tradition enacted this process of legitimising folk music, often simply by including songs in their collections at all. For instance, the ballads Child chose to include in *English and Scottish Popular Ballads* were given the value of authenticity and importance by their inclusion. They were also given cultural legitimacy as examples of the genuine popular ballad, and since so many subsequent folk music enthusiasts deferred to Child this idea of value and legitimacy becomes even more important. This complicates the process of collecting, since the collectors effectively take on the role of a cultural arbiter who decides what American folk music is through their collecting practices. However, as the previous chapter shows, collectors decide in principle what constitutes folk music, so this cultural arbitration is not simply inherent in their collecting practices.

Muensterberger proposes a definition of collecting, in order to give his study the necessary defined terms, which also defers to subjectivity, 'I will define collecting simply as

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<sup>299</sup> Ibid.

<sup>300</sup> Ibid.

*the selecting, gathering, and keeping of objects of subjective value.*<sup>301</sup> This definition brings in the idea of selection, or privileging, which is an important element in collecting since collectors cannot possibly collect everything. At some stage a collector must decide which things do not possess the characteristics that they value in an object. This relates to the idea of how subjectivity influences collecting: he does not insist, like Pearce, that the process of collecting or being a collector is entirely subjective. Instead he suggests that some kind of subjective selection criteria are established so that a collector knows exactly *what* to collect. This notion of subjective selection is another iteration of the importance of attaching value and legitimacy to objects through collecting. Rather than referring to this aspect of collecting simply as subjectivity at work, it is important to identify the actual processes of legitimising and cultural elevation that occur when a collector is selective about the objects that are collected. John Lomax's earliest work with African – American work songs could be seen as an example of legitimising objects and giving them value, since Lomax essentially legitimised these songs as part of American folk music and gave them value as yet another remnant of a declining tradition. The fact that, of various African – American musical styles, work – songs were selected to be legitimised by John Lomax, and jazz was not, demonstrates these processes of arbitration which create or change an aspect of culture. The idea of subjective value also refers to the objects gathered perhaps only being of value to the collector, and this being determined by the collecting interests of the collector,

I emphasise the subjective aspect of collecting because the emotion and often the ardour attached to the collected object or objects is not necessarily commensurate with its specialness or commercial value, nor does it relate to any kind of usefulness.<sup>302</sup>

In terms of folk collecting, Muensterberger's idea of subjective value is tied to the concept of authenticity. Alan and John Lomax's selection policies valued this attribute highest, and they generally only recorded performers who seemed sufficiently 'folky'. Referring to their experiences with Lead Belly, Filene states, 'He seemed to be a living link to traditions that

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<sup>301</sup> Muensterberger, Werner. 1994. *Collecting: An Unruly Passion*. Princeton University Press. p. 4.

<sup>302</sup> *Ibid.*

were slipping away, a store – house of old – time songs greater than they had thought possible to find in the twentieth century.’<sup>303</sup>

Child was also preoccupied with authenticity in his ballad collection, and his selection was based on authenticity through provenance and uncorrupted texts,

These volumes have been compiled from the numerous collections of ballads printed since the beginning of the last century. They contain all but two or three of the *ancient* ballads of England and Scotland and nearly all those ballads which, in either country, have been gathered from oral tradition, whether ancient or not.<sup>304</sup>

Muensterberger’s use of ‘selecting, gathering and keeping’ in his definition is another helpful qualifier that distinguishes a dedicated collector from someone with a minor interest in the subject. The collecting work of Smith fits with this element in Muensterberger’s definition well, since Smith conducted years of record collecting before he began work on the *Anthology*, ‘I don’t recall the exact number of records I had. I think it was 2,000 records, which had been cut down from 20,000, at one point...There was no way of listening to them, but you didn’t want to skip anything that might be good.’<sup>305</sup> Since he was initially not collecting with the *Anthology* in mind, it could be argued that he was simply hoarding. However, the collection could be seen to legitimise Smith as a collector once his personal record collection became the basis for the commercially released collection. Ultimately, Muensterberger’s definition of what constitutes collecting is the most useful for this thesis because it identifies the notion of authenticity that characterises much of the work of the American collectors. Although, the idea of giving legitimacy and value to an object should be added to Muensterberger’s definition of collecting, so the definition of collecting becomes: selecting, gathering and keeping of objects as a means of conferring value and legitimacy. It is essential to understand that the application of subjective value systems, and the

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<sup>303</sup> Filene, Benjamin. 2000. *Romancing the Folk: Public Memory & American Roots Music*. University of North Carolina Press. p. 51.

<sup>304</sup> Harker, Dave. 1981. ‘Francis James Child and the ‘Ballad Consensus’’. *Folk Music Journal*. 4/2. p. 148.

<sup>305</sup> Singh, Rani, ed. 1999. *Think of the Self Speaking: Harry Smith – Selected Interviews*. Elbow/Cityful Press, Seattle. p. 77.



selectiveness of collecting, is tied in to giving the objects legitimacy and value, and it is more accurate to refer to legitimising and giving value, rather than simply citing 'subjective value'.

### 3.3: Building a Collection

Another aspect of collecting is: does a collector have to be gathering objects with the intention of compiling them as a collection in order to be a legitimate collector? It is difficult to ascribe this intention to any collector, even one who does ultimately build an identifiable collection, since the motivation of a collector is hard definitively to pin down. It was Child's ambition to compile this grand reference work as completely as possible, as he stated in the introduction to his collection, where he acknowledges the necessity for comprehensiveness given his title.<sup>306</sup> In this respect Child is unique among the American folk collectors, since all his collecting work was contributing to and working towards this single ballad collection. His intention of gathering 'every known ballad' was also ambitious beyond the other major American collectors. John Lomax also regarded his work as a contribution to a repository of American folk music, although this collection and its assembly are much more diffuse than that of Child.<sup>307</sup> The question is: does this make Lomax or Child more legitimate collectors than someone like Sharp, because they were working towards coherent collections, whereas Sharp was gathering songs with the general aim of preserving them. This means of distinction may ostensibly appear to work, because it differentiates between a collector and a *gatherer* or *hoarder* of objects since they may not be collecting with a final collection in mind.

Many accumulations of objects end up being displayed as collections when they were never intended as such. The University of Glasgow's Hunterian collections appear to be unrelated bundles of things, and were not collected like Child's ballads with a single coherent collection in mind. Keppie notes this,

William Hunter's principal aim in bequeathing his collection in 1783 had not been to provide the College at Glasgow with a museum, but to install a teaching

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<sup>306</sup> Ibid. p. 14.

<sup>307</sup> Lomax, John A. 1935. *Annual Report of the Librarian of Congress*. United States Government Printing Office, Washington. pp. 161 – 162.

resource as a stimulus to the medical curriculum, for which many of its sections were admirably suited.<sup>308</sup>

Despite this they are exhibited as collections, and although the use of the word collection may have implications of intentions like those of Child, they remain groupings of objects not observably connected. Judging by the information available on Smith's record collecting he did not gather records with the aim of compiling a collection, but was merely accumulating records because of his personal interest. The fact that Smith was collecting 78s from bankrupt record shops and junk shops, and conferring value on them simply by the act of making a determined effort to gather them, also suggests the countercultural character of some collecting. Smith applied some of the same value judgements Alan Lomax applied in his *List of American Folk Songs on Commercial Records*, such as simply searching for good performances of songs, or just songs made prominent by Child. This invariably excluded some records, but the fact that Smith was giving attention to these ageing records goes against the general trend to ignore or neglect the records. Pearce suggests the possibility of collecting being a countercultural activity, and in some instances folk music collecting was countercultural because it focused on collecting things which were not universally valued. In this sense, conferring value and legitimacy on some objects is a countercultural impulse, such as Smith's 78s, John Lomax's African – American work songs, and Alan's championing of the music of Jelly Roll Morton, which all goes against prevailing thought to some degree.

This also prompts the question: do these objects have to be related to constitute a collection? Pearce cites a definition of collecting that includes the notion of relationships between objects,

We take collecting to be the selective, active, and longitudinal acquisition, possession and disposition of an interrelated set of differentiated objects (material things, ideas, beings or experiences) that contribute to and derive extraordinary meaning from the entity (the collection) that this set is perceived to constitute.<sup>309</sup>

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<sup>308</sup> Keppie, Lawrence. 2007. *William Hunter and the Hunterian Museum in Glasgow 1807 – 2007*. Edinburgh University Press. p. 132.

<sup>309</sup> Pearce, Susan M. 1998. *Collecting in Contemporary Practice*. Sage Publications, London. p 3.

This definition revolves around the idea of 'seriality' which Pearce subsequently dismisses as too 'crude'. However, all of the American collectors compiled their collections according to differing ideas of 'seriality', and this was partly done for the sake of organisation. Child's collection, although it lacks any clear ballad categories, still arranged ballads according to subject. For example, ballads concerning Robin Hood are grouped together, from ballad 117 to ballad 154, to aid navigation.<sup>310</sup> In the case of the *Anthology*, the seriality which is heavily emphasised in the design of the notes seems arbitrary and unfathomable simply by looking at the records. The records are related at the crudest level as 78rpm records produced in the 1920s and 30s, but the seriality Smith sees in the records is not made any clearer by the accompanying notes. The arrangement of the records into 'Ballads', 'Social Music' and 'Songs' does indicate some of the further connections between the records. It could be argued that the only relation between objects that really matters to the collector is the value they have been given. All of the collectors in the American tradition have grouped together songs which they have deemed legitimate and valuable enough to be collected, and this may be the most important connection between the objects.

The Lomaxes, in their later song books, used the functionalist approach to song classification, so that songs could be grouped together according to their social function. This helped the reader to find particular songs by using the style of the song, which is another example of seriality being important in a collection.<sup>311</sup> Smith adopted elements of the functionalist approach in the arrangement of the *Anthology*, the 'seriality' of which was important to many listeners. As Fahey states, 'Smith had an encyclopaedic knowledge of 78s and a preternatural feel for the connections between them...'<sup>312</sup> 'Seriality' is clearly an aspect of collections that links the American collectors, and it is unreasonable for Pearce to dismiss it. Another important aspect of the definition cited by Pearce is the reference to meaning derived from the collection itself, and each object contributing to the completeness of the collection. This is clearly the case in a collection like Child's *Ballads*, the purpose of which was to be as complete as possible. Each ballad entry contributes to this

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<sup>310</sup> Child, Francis. 1898. *The English and Scottish and Popular Ballads*. Boston, Houghton, Mifflin, and Co.

<sup>311</sup> Lomax, Alan, and Lomax, John A. 1941. *Our Singing Country: A Second Volume of American Ballads and Folk Songs*. MacMillan Press, New York.

<sup>312</sup> Fahey, John. 1997. 'Essay on the *Anthology of American Folk Music*'. *Anthology of American Folk Music*. Smithsonian Folkways Recordings.

completeness, whereas a single ballad taken from a manuscript has little value without being placed in a context of some kind. In *Ballads* the songs were given meaning as part of Child's popular ballad tradition, and the subsequent influence of the collection means many of the ballads are closely associated with this meaning. Sharp's *English Folksongs* gathered together seemingly unrelated folk songs and gives them meaning under the umbrella of English folk music in America. Smith's *Anthology* did something similar with a collection of commercial 78s, giving them meaning as American folk music and giving them the folk musical legitimacy associated with such a title. Despite Pearce's dismissal of much of the definition quoted above, it highlights important aspects of a collection which give it solidity and coherence.

### 3.4: What Makes a Folk Collector?

Returning to the question of what makes a collector, the conditions that dictate this are very much open to debate. The strong emphasis on subjectivity in Pearce's introduction definition reveals something of the variability of ideas, 'The stress here is laid on the mentality of the collector, for essentially a collection is what he believes it is...'<sup>313</sup> Her argument suggests that a collector can collect any type of object in any number, and decide whether or not they are a collector without any notions of legitimacy intruding. Record company scouts in the 1920s and 30s, like Polk Brockman and Ralph Peer, could be seen as collectors because of their extensive work recording folk music. However, Peterson points out that these record company workers did not consider themselves collectors or fieldworkers,

He never met anyone who had any self – awareness of his role as a preserver of culture... [He and his contemporaries in the business] were simply looking for something they could sell...In response to the fact that we think of him not so much as a successful businessman [but] as a person who made a contribution to

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<sup>313</sup> Pearce, Susan M. 1995. *On Collecting: An Investigation into Collecting in the European Tradition*. Routledge Press, London. p. 2.

American culture, Brockman replied, “It was accidental if I did because I was at it from the commercial standpoint.”<sup>314</sup>

Despite this lack of self – awareness regarding their collecting work, these record company scouts could be seen as collectors since they were gathering recordings, and they are not the first collectors to collect objects with a commercial boon in mind. Brockman and Peer could also be seen as conferring value to the songs they recorded, in the sense of importance but also attaching commercial value to the songs and recordings simply by recording and selling them. This complicates the earlier definition of collecting, which involved the selecting, gathering, and keeping of items in order to confer legitimacy and value upon them. Going by this definition, there are no material differences between the practices of Brockman and Peer, and John and Alan Lomax. However, as argued in the previous chapter, there are significant differences in the motivations behind the recording work of the Lomaxes, and that of record company scouts. The important distinction appears to be between the intention to confer value on items, as in the case of the Lomaxes, and the intention to find material which will sell well. The record company scout and the ethnographic collector are both engaged in the ‘selecting, gathering, and keeping’ of objects, but the distinction is the aim of conferring legitimacy and value to these objects.

The work done by Smith, and Child, which contributed to their folk collections, seems to have more in common with the kind of private hobbyist collector studied by Pearce and Martin. They were collecting objects because of a personal interest and, especially in the case of Smith, these objects were not accepted as having universal cultural value. Smith’s records were often about to be destroyed,

During the war they bought up all the records to melt them down or something, so there were masses of records everywhere...People collected records because you could sell them for scrap. There were big piles of 78s – enormous groaning masses of them.<sup>315</sup>

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<sup>314</sup> Peterson, Richard A. 1997. *Creating Country Music: Fabricating Authenticity*. University of Chicago Press. p. 28.

<sup>315</sup> Singh, Rani, ed. 1999. *Think of the Self Speaking: Harry Smith – Selected Interviews*. Elbow/Cityful Press, Seattle. pp. 69 – 70.

The Lomaxes, in their work for the Archive of American Folksong, were comparable to the public collector referred to by Martin and the 'repositories for the rare, delicate and valuable...'<sup>316</sup> that they represent. Also, Sharp could fit into this category of public collectors, since much of his work in America went towards the creation of a folk music program for schools. Although he was not collecting directly on behalf of schools like Pine Mountain Settlement School<sup>317</sup>, he nevertheless used his collecting to instruct the students in folk music. So, the private and public collecting outlined by Martin and Pearce has similarities with the folk collecting discussed in this thesis, and each folk collector also exhibits characteristics of West's professional and popular collector. The necessity of fieldwork and anthropological interest is not vital however: Smith did no fieldwork for the *Anthology* yet maintained an interest in anthropology; Sharp's *English Folksongs* was based entirely on fieldwork but with little or no cultural study; and Child was interested in neither cultural study nor fieldwork, and yet is acknowledged as a founder of the collecting movement in America. Consequently a folk collector can be defined as someone who collects folk music in any form, with no criteria for the ultimate intention of the collection. This can be combined with the earlier definition of a collector of any objects, to produce a workable definition of the folk collectors in the American tradition: their work is the 'selecting, gathering, and keeping of folk music in any form, without any necessary intention for a collection, but with the aim of conferring legitimacy and value on the songs they collect'.

### 3.5: Can a Collection be Culturally Representative?

The objects that are collected within this practice can be said to represent some facet of culture, regardless of their type. This relates back to earlier conditions that defined the activities of the folk collectors: the accumulation of cultural products. Filene refers to these folk collectors as 'cultural workers' and asks, 'How have cultural workers defined America's cultural "margins" and "mainstream," how have they represented "the Other," and how, in the process, have they operated against or within the so called culture industry?'<sup>318</sup> Filene's

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<sup>316</sup> Martin, Paul. 1999. *Popular Collecting and the Everyday Self*. Leicester University Press. p. 4.

<sup>317</sup> Karpeles, Maud. 1967. *Cecil Sharp: His Life and Work*. Routledge Ltd., London. p. 162.

<sup>318</sup> Filene, Benjamin. 2000. *Romancing the Folk: Public Memory & American Roots Music*. University of North Carolina Press. p. 2.

use of the term ‘the Other’ requires some explanation since it is an important concept in ethnographic study. He uses the term again in his introduction without any explanation of its meaning or significance in folklore studies, ‘As my title indicates, they “romanced” the folk, in the sense both of wooing them as intimates and of sentimentalising them as Other.’<sup>319</sup> ‘Otherness’ refers to something foreign and unfamiliar in a person or persons that distinguishes them from a majority in society. Filene claims that certain folklorists have emphasised or exaggerated this characteristic with music and performers, most notably with Lead Belly. ‘At the same time, though, that the Lomaxes ennobled Lead Belly as an authentic folk forefather, they thoroughly exoticised him. Their publicity campaign depicted him as a savage, untamed animal and focused endlessly on his convict past.’<sup>320</sup> This treatment of Lead Belly’s publicity is a clear example of exaggerating ‘Otherness’ to enhance the popular appeal of Lead Belly.

The Lomaxes, in their 1933 collecting expedition, were funded by the Library of Congress under the Roosevelt Administration’s New Deal initiatives<sup>321</sup> to record performances of folk songs. Filene goes some way to answering his own question later in his book, ‘as the Lomaxes struggled to promote vernacular music within popular culture, their efforts began to attract support from a surprising source, the nation’s “official culture” – the culture sustained, sanctioned, and deployed by the federal government,’<sup>322</sup> and he goes on to argue,

Faced with this broad – based challenge, though, the government did not attack but appropriated the folk vogue. By the end of the 1930s, the celebration of the marginal, which had emerged out of disenchantment with America, had become the basis for a new style of patriotism celebrating America.<sup>323</sup>

Szwed argues that one of Alan Lomax’s aims was to introduce folk music into the ‘culture industry’ of popular culture,

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<sup>319</sup> Ibid. p. 5.

<sup>320</sup> Ibid. p. 57.

<sup>321</sup> Ibid. p. 49.

<sup>322</sup> Ibid. p. 133.

<sup>323</sup> Ibid.

Lomax was convinced that every village and town had its own stars, singers and composers who captured the spirit of their people. If these artists were presented properly, they could attract an audience as large as America itself. Folk culture could become pop culture.<sup>324</sup>

It would seem that in this situation the Lomaxes, as cultural workers, are operating within the culture industry because the marginalised folk culture has been integrated into popular culture. This complicates the previously established idea of the folk collector who legitimises and gives value to the objects collected. In this instance it would appear that the culture industry is what confers legitimacy and value on folk songs, which seems to undermine the role of the collector as a cultural arbiter. The collector may be a cultural worker, but the arbitration comes from the culture industry, which determines the objects that have value. However, it may not be appropriate to confuse the New Deal era's use of folk culture with the culture industry. Rather than products made for consumption, the New Deal used aspects of folk culture to create an image of America which had its foundations in the rural working classes. This image was created to help with the economic recovery, but was also used to draw attention to the conditions of rural poverty in country. The New Deal was partly used by some of its participants as a mission of social awareness, including Alan Lomax. In this situation, the collector does retain the power of a cultural arbiter, since the collector dictates how the public sees the rural folk and their economic troubles.

It could be argued that the development of folk music was not as connected with advertising and commercialism as popular music, because it was largely being performed in communities that were detached from major population bases. However, this overlooks the fact that many of the musicians that the Lomaxes recorded, that Sharp took down songs from, or that appear on Smith's *Anthology*, were professionals. They earned a modest living performing at dances, on street corners, and in some cases making recordings for commercial record companies. Their interest in folk music was largely commercial since it provided them with a living. Miller argues persistently that folk music did have a commercial basis, giving the example of blues singer Big Bill Broonzy, 'The musician repeatedly reinvented himself and his sound, using his music to circumvent the colour line, travel

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<sup>324</sup> Szwed, John. 2010. *The Man Who Recorded the World: A Biography of Alan Lomax*. William Heinemann, London. p. 389.



where he wanted to go, and eventually get paid for the strength of his singing instead of his back.<sup>325</sup> Even with Child's ballads, commercialism intruded in a collection which was supposed to represent the ballad tradition before commercialism intervened. He routinely resorted to using broadsides as sources for *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*<sup>326</sup>, and broadsides were produced and sold to profit from the seventeenth and eighteenth century interest in folk songs. This does not negate the fact that folk music is not as deeply connected with commercial ventures as pop music often is. Folk music has a history of being performed recreationally, and ballads are used as a communicative device for narrating a story among communities. Despite the tendency of collectors to fixate on the purity of folk music, their own observations during fieldwork have shown that a great deal of folk music has little to do with commercialism or advertising. There is an important distinction which needs to be made between folk singers earning a living from performing, and the idea of commercialism. For instance, Alan Lomax, especially in his later career, made a point of paying singers whom he recorded for their songs, but this is certainly not an example of the commercialisation of folk music. Commercialisation implies control by the forces of commercial demand, which has not often happened with folk music. Even the 78s Smith collected were not commercialised in this way, since they were catering to very circumscribed regional markets, and their production was not governed by commercial forces but by record company scouts. It is important not to confuse the production of broadsides, or the payment of folk singers, with the commercialisation of folk music.

### 3.6: Can Collecting Misrepresent Culture?

Many folklore and folk music collections, such as those assembled by the Lomaxes and Sharp, can provide some degree of insight into a regionalised or specialised element of culture. These specialisations include Sharp's collection of only English songs from the Southern Appalachian mountains, John Lomax's work devoted to cowboy songs, and Alan Lomax's collections based on early jazz and blues. The folk music can be especially useful in revealing regional differences in dialect, dissemination of songs, instrumental style, and

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<sup>325</sup> Miller, Karl Hagstrom. 2010. *Segregating Sound: Inventing Folk and Pop Music in the Age of Jim Crow*. Duke University Press, North Carolina. p. 281.

<sup>326</sup> Palmer, Roy. 1996. 'Veritable Dunghills': Professor Child and the Broadside'. *Folk Music Journal*. 7/2.

often song content. Karpeles describes this 'scientific' aspect of the collection, 'From the scientific standpoint the value of the collection lies in the fact that it is an expression of the innate musical culture of a homogenous community'<sup>327</sup> Although Karpeles is unequivocally complimentary about Sharp, and the reality of the 'homogenous community' that she describes is questionable, it shows that some collectors were interested in what folk songs could tell them about the culture they come from. Despite this anthropological leaning, some of these folk music collectors also had limited interest in the real culture they may have observed firsthand.

Sharp had a romanticised view of England's folk song past in which songs made the countryside a more pleasant place,<sup>328</sup> which he seemed determined to transfer over to rural America. Since he felt that England's folk culture was in a state of irreversible decline, as a result of ignorance and neglect,<sup>329</sup> he exhaustively promoted his view that it survived in America,

Although the people are so English they have their American quality [in]...that they are freer than the English peasant. They own their own land and have done so for three or four generations, so that there is none of the servility which unhappily is one of the characteristics of the English peasant. With that praise I should say that they are just exactly what the English peasant was one hundred or more years ago.<sup>330</sup>

The interest in the culture of these songs was limited to his agenda of demonstrating the Englishness of the rural Americans. His insistence on using the word peasant is part of the regressive associations he makes between American and English rural working classes. His idealised view of folk music in the past inevitably influences the way he represents the American 'folk' he encounters. This partly explains his persistent use of the word peasant, since he was determined to present these songs as representing an idealised past. The singing peasant was very much part of this idealised past, and he wished to maintain this romanticised state of arrested development in his informants. Sharp's main interest was in

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<sup>327</sup> Karpeles, Maud. 1967. *Cecil Sharp: His Life and Work*. Routledge Ltd., London. p. 169.

<sup>328</sup> Sharp, Cecil J. 1907. 'Folk Song Collecting'. *Musical Times*. 48/767. p. 18.

<sup>329</sup> Ibid.

<sup>330</sup> Sharp, Cecil J. 1907. *English Folk Song: Some Conclusions*. London, Simpkin & Co. Ltd. pp. 145 – 146.

retrieving these cultural products and trying to preserve them in some way. Although Sharp did not write a great deal of cultural theory based on his collecting, he nevertheless discussed the people who had created the songs in his *English Folk Songs* collection. Sharp speculates on their origins in England and the Scottish borders, discusses their economic independence, the Calvinist leanings of their beliefs, and describes them as, ‘...a leisurely, cheery people in their quiet way, in whom the social instinct is very highly developed. They dispense hospitality with an openhanded generosity and are extremely interested in and friendly towards strangers, communicative and unsuspecting.’<sup>331</sup> Although Sharp’s cultural investigations are clearly not the priority, it would be wrong to say he had no interest in the people from whom he transcribed songs. This partly comes from the Romantic context in which some of Sharp’s work is situated, which idealised the folk in a similar way and valued their natural civility and ingenuousness. This was also fundamentally a Fabian socialist belief in the benefits of traditional culture on the behaviour of communities, and by extension the belief that the adoption of traditional culture would have restorative properties in this regard.

However, his attitude towards the people he retrieved them from was ambivalent: he idealised their culture and general existence, yet patronised them and had a certain disdain for their fickleness. He did not believe that they were suitable as holders of these valuable traditions, and wanted to re – popularise them in schools, ‘He had no intention of allowing these treasures to remain hidden in his notebooks...and he threw all his energies and talents into reviving the tradition so that it might take its rightful place in our national culture.’<sup>332</sup> In the case of Sharp’s *English Folksongs* the reader can only really learn about the culture of folk songs as he chose to depict it: an idealised rural existence based on an illusory past. Child’s output always depicted the ballad tradition as having arisen during an unspecified pre – medieval past in which there was no high/low cultural distinction.<sup>333</sup> Child also had little interest in a contemporary culture which might still use these popular ballads, as Benjamin Filene points out, ‘If no new songs of merit had been created in the last four centuries or so, Child saw little point in making contact with current folk communities and

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<sup>331</sup> Sharp, Cecil J. 1917. *English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians*. New York, G.P. Putnam and Sons. p. v

<sup>332</sup> *Ibid.* p. 109.

<sup>333</sup> Child, Francis. 1900. ‘Ballad Poetry’. *Johnson’s Universal Cyclopaedia*. New York. p. 214.

trying to dredge up songs from their collective memory.<sup>334</sup> Although, it could be argued that Sharp's desire to educate folk traditions into the population came less from a disdain for the folk than a desire to improve the other people of the country. Also, whether this past was illusory or not is less important than its details, and where this idealised past comes from. Sharp's vision of the history of folk songs, as argued in the previous chapter, comes from the Romantic tradition of folk music scholarship. Herder and the Grimms both promoted an idea of the history of folk traditions which showed these traditions as part of a culturally homogenous community in which the songs and tales were what Herder called 'communicative art' that communicated in a familiar vernacular to the people of the community. Although Sharp critiqued elements of the Romantic ideas of folk music, this was the intellectual context of his ideas and this is evident in his idea of folk music history. What this does clearly demonstrate is the collector acting as a cultural arbiter, not only in terms of Sharp legitimising the music he collected in the Southern Appalachians as remnants of an English tradition, but also what aspects of the culture he includes in his descriptions of the Appalachian folk. Sharp's cultural arbitration results in an image of the Appalachian folk which emphasises their good manners, poverty but not squalor, and gregariousness. Sharp, however, seems well aware of his role as a cultural arbiter and notes this in his introduction to *English Folk Songs*,

...I am aware that the outsider does not always see the whole of the game, and I am fully conscious that there is another and less lovely side of the picture which in my appreciation I have ignored. I have deliberately done so because that side has, I believe, already been emphasised, perhaps with unnecessary insistence, by other observers.<sup>335</sup>

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<sup>334</sup> Filene, Benjamin. 2000. *Romancing the Folk: Public Memory & American Roots Music*. University of North Carolina Press. p. 14.

<sup>335</sup> Sharp, Cecil J. 1917. *English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians*. New York, G.P. Putnam and Sons. p. vii

### 3.7: Collecting Objects or Facts?

There is an issue as to whether the folk music collectors favoured the songs themselves, or whether they collected them for the information they might yield about the culture that created the songs. The cultural arbitration of the Lomaxes demonstrated the various folk music styles that comprised American folk music through the songs they collected, but it is arguable if they conferred value on the culture of the people who sang the songs in the same way. Ultimately, a single song from Sharp's Appalachian Mountains collection, while retaining its use as a folk song, reveals almost nothing about the people that sang it for Sharp to transcribe. Only when these songs are gathered together could some information be gleaned regarding trends in this Appalachian mountain culture. A.J.B. Humphreys has stated, 'It is not the object that is worth collecting, but the data which it yields'<sup>336</sup> While the connection between archaeological collecting and folk music collecting may be limited, the emphasis on information attached to objects is very apposite. To elucidate this point, Humphreys gives the following example:

If an archaeologist were presented with a single handaxe with no information whatsoever on its provenance the archaeological value of that object would be about nil. That object could give no information about its maker. The archaeologist may well recognize the object as a handaxe and would probably be able to describe how it was made and in what context it may have been used, but this information is not being yielded by that specific handaxe. The archaeologist is able to say something about the specimen not because of its intrinsic archaeological value but only because he is applying knowledge gained from other assemblages containing handaxes which were derived from meaningful excavations and collections.<sup>337</sup>

This situation would be the same for a folk music scholar if presented with a single song from a collection: the scholar might recognise the song as a variation of a familiar song, and

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<sup>336</sup> Humphreys, A.J.B. 1973. 'Museum Collecting in Archaeology'. *The South African Archaeological Bulletin*. Vol. 28, No. 111 – 112. p 67.

<sup>337</sup> *Ibid.*

have general ideas about where and when it was popular, but these suppositions are from prior knowledge gathered from other sources. Without an accurate account of the context from which the song was taken it cannot be informative about the culture of the people who sang it. The aim of historical knowledge is obviously different in archaeology, but folk music collecting as an endeavour should not be entirely subject to extrapolations without observable support. Humphreys hesitates to use the word 'collecting' at all in his article,

I wondered...if the term 'collecting' in the title 'Museum Collecting in Archaeology' was at all appropriate. I concluded that it was not appropriate – we don't collect in archaeology...archaeologists are concerned with *facts not objects*. This means purely and simply that we do not go out and collect a selection of, say, Acheulean artefacts for the sake of having a sample of handaxes, cleavers, scrapers, and so on.<sup>338</sup>

If this is the case, then it could be suggested that collectors such as Sharp are interested in *objects not facts* because they place such emphasis on the object over the context in which it was collected. However, this is the collecting tradition Sharp was working within, since all preceding important collections had largely been concerned with the songs and not the culture that created them.

That is not to say the collectors had no interest in the culture, since this was demonstrably never the case, although it was often a romanticised version of the culture. However, the collections they released generally focused on the objects, and any accompanying explanation was focused on explaining the object in greater detail. For example, Child's collection has extensive notes for each of the 305 ballads, but the purpose of these notes is only to explain the provenance of the ballad. The entry for *James Harris (The Daemon Lover)*, which features in other American collections as *The House Carpenter*, is a useful example of this.

There are several copies of the broadside version (A); that in the Pepys collection was printed for Thackeray and Passenger, and the ballad is No. 71 in Thackeray's

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<sup>338</sup> Ibid.

list, printed 1865. 'The Daemon Lover' was first published in Scott's *Minstrelsy*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition, 1812.<sup>339</sup>

Child's main interest was obviously in the objects, especially since the *English and Scottish Popular Ballads* was intended as a reference work which would necessarily focus on the songs. Although Sharp's collection was not created with reference in mind as clearly as Child's, the purpose of the book is still illustrated by the title: *English Folksongs from the Southern Appalachians* is meant to demonstrate the English folk song tradition still in existence in America. Despite some of the American collectors being particularly interested in folk culture *and* music, most notably Alan Lomax, the folk collection still functions as a showcase for *objects not facts*. This is by no means a problem or limitation of the collections in the American tradition, since they are intended to primarily show the songs that have been collected. In addition, Alan Lomax had an abiding interest in the culture that produced the songs, and discussed it in radio and television programmes, and in greater depth in articles and essays. For instance, his 1959 article in *American Anthropologist*, *Folk Song Style: Musical Style and Social Context*, he discusses at length the cultural background of the songs he collects. He asserts,

The study of musical style should embrace the total human situation which produces the music: (1) The number of people habitually involved in a musical act, and the ways in which they cooperate. (2) The relation between the music makers and the audience. (3) The physical behaviour of the music makers – their bodily stance, gestures, facial expressions, muscular tensions, especially those of the throat. (4) The vocal timbres and pitch favoured by the culture, and their relationship to the factors under 3. (5) The social function of the music and the occasion of its production. (6) Its psychological and emotional content as expressed in the song texts and the culture's interpretation of this traditional poetry. (7) How songs are learned and transmitted.<sup>340</sup>

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<sup>339</sup> Child, Francis. 1898. *The English and Scottish and Popular Ballads*. Boston, Houghton, Mifflin, and Co. p. 543.

<sup>340</sup> Cohen, Ronald. 2005. *Alan Lomax: Selected Writings 1934 – 1997*. Routledge Press, London. pp. 141 – 142.

This gives an impression of the extent of Lomax's interest, especially later in his career, in the cultural context of the songs. However, the primary function of the collection remains to display the collected objects.

### 3.8: John Lomax's Singing Cowboy

John Lomax's focus was similarly trained on the acquisition of objects rather than the collection of information about the objects. *Cowboy Songs* emerged from an ambition to capture and preserve the 'cowboy tradition' before it disappeared. To this end Lomax mailed hundreds of requests for songs, mostly to newspapers which occasionally printed them, and transcribed some songs directly from the cowboys themselves.<sup>341</sup> In Lomax's case the songs were chosen because of their content, but the context from which they were lifted, or in which they were originally composed, has limited impact on the collection beyond the general cowboy theme. Some of the songs were transcribed from singers, but the context from which they were taken afforded them no particular importance in the collection.

Filene points out some the inconsistencies in Lomax's collecting,

Porterfield challenges the legend that Lomax travelled by horseback gathering songs for the book, noting that the manuscript was essentially complete before Lomax began the collecting expeditions that the Sheldon Fellowship funded. Although Lomax's book helped popularise "Home on the Range," which soon became a nationwide hit, Porterfield notes that a half – million – dollar lawsuit established that the song had actually been composed by a Kansas doctor in 1873.<sup>342</sup>

Once again, the aspect of the songs which interested Lomax was the seeming authenticity of their content, not the context from which they came or what they could tell the reader about the 'cowboy culture'. Pearce's notion of context as an important factor in collecting

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<sup>341</sup> Porterfield, Nolan. 1996. *The Last Cavalier: The Life and Times of John A. Lomax*. University of Illinois Press.

<sup>342</sup> Filene, Benjamin. 2000. *Romancing the Folk: Public Memory & American Roots Music*. University of North Carolina Press. p. 242.



does not apply to Lomax, who was clearly interested in the *object* and not the *facts* which could be gleaned from it. In fact, Lomax in many cases obscured the *facts* pertaining to the *objects* he had collected so they might fit into his collection with greater ease. Lomax's idea of authenticity in this context is not based on provenance or the informant who sang the song, but on the appearance of authenticity in the content of the song. This is similar to the kind of authenticity Peterson finds in the early country music, and after giving six dictionary definitions of authenticity he states, 'Echoes of all six uses of the term "authentic" just discussed can be found in the 1950s discourse of authenticity in country music, but it was the final two that clearly predominated.'<sup>343</sup> One of these 'final two' definitions fits Lomax's idea of authenticity in cowboy songs, 'A distinct sense of "authentic" developed in the *Oxford English Dictionary* centres on being *believable* or *credible* to the contemporary general observer.'<sup>344</sup> The songs in *Cowboy Songs* seem to have been selected with this idea of credibility in mind: songs which sounded sufficiently cowboy – esque were published in the collection. Songs like 'Home on the Range' were not composed by cowboys in the way outlined by Lomax in his introduction but, importantly, they sounded like they could have been. Regardless of any issues with Lomax's representation of the cowboy, the idea of authenticity found in *Cowboy Songs* comes from the context of the folklore tradition in which Lomax was working. Bendix points out that the texts in Grimm's *Kinder – und Hausmärchen* are largely awarded authentic status based on their content and not the culture that produced them. Despite the changes introduced by *Cowboy Songs*, such as the focus on uniquely American music, Lomax was still working from the context of literary folk song collections. The Grimms certainly did not obtain all of their folk tales from informants among the 'folk', but they included material in their collection which was considered authentic by the content. In this sense, the privileging of 'objects not facts' is part of the intellectual context of Lomax's work.

Another aspect of Lomax's representation is that it suffers from the same degree of romanticism as Sharp's collection, and it also applies this romanticism with an agenda, albeit a different one. Porterfield observes that Lomax's, 'notions of what singing cowboys

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<sup>343</sup> Peterson, Richard A. 1997. *Creating Country Music: Fabricating Authenticity*. University of Chicago Press. p. 209.

<sup>344</sup> *Ibid.* p. 208.

sounded like derived as much from his vivid imagination as from actual experience...<sup>345</sup> The introduction and ancillary remarks detail his image of the singing cowboy explicitly: he was ‘Dauntless, reckless, without the unearthly purity of Sir Galahad though as gentle to a pure woman as King Arthur, he is truly a knight of the twentieth century.’<sup>346</sup> Lomax called attention to the prevailing Britishness of these songs, referring to the continued existence of a type of folk song culture similar in principle to Child’s ballad history.<sup>347</sup> In this claim Lomax was clearly following on from the current understanding of the identity of folk music in America, much of which was based on the work of Child. Porterfield notes one of the realities of his collection, ‘many of the songs that came to him would prove to be less “folk” than “composed”’; still, they were valuable artefacts of a vanishing culture and would have disappeared were it not for Lomax.<sup>348</sup> This would conflict with the idea of the oral cowboy song tradition that Lomax promoted, ‘their very reliance on oral traditions meant that the most ignorant of them remembered things which the educated had forgotten.’<sup>349</sup> Porterfield’s contention that the songs would have vanished is debateable: does folk music actually require the urgent rescuing that some collectors believe it does? Is it only through the timely intervention of collectors that folk music survives? It is difficult to speculate about the effects on the continued singing of folk songs the numerous collections of folk songs may have had. More importantly however, this paradox of using technologies which threaten folk music to document folk music is an element of the disciplinary field in which Lomax was working. Folk music may have been able to survive unaided, or it may have needed the assistance provided by collectors, but what is essential for any discussion of Lomax’s collecting is the fact that collectors continued to believe their work was necessary. These distinctions between oral tradition and composition, and the connection of folk music to more venerable traditions, are important parts of the intellectual context of the folklore discipline.

Lomax’s agenda in largely misrepresenting the culture was a populist one, but more financially driven than Sharp’s. He comments, ‘I have violated the ethics of ballad – gatherers, in a few instances, by selecting and putting together what seemed to be the best

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<sup>345</sup> Porterfield, Nolan. 1996. *The Last Cavalier: The Life and Times of John A. Lomax*. University of Illinois Press.

<sup>346</sup> Lomax, John A. 1910. *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads*. New York, MacMillan Press.

<sup>347</sup> Ibid.

<sup>348</sup> Porterfield, Nolan. 1996. *The Last Cavalier: The Life and Times of John A. Lomax*. University of Illinois Press.

<sup>349</sup> Ibid.

lines from different versions, all telling the story. Frankly the volume is meant to be popular.<sup>350</sup> The 'ethics' he refers to are partly those of Child who disapproved of collectors editing songs, but here he identifies his agenda: popular appeal. These ethics also belong to Child's predecessors, who sometimes explicitly criticised the practice of editing songs and assembling composite songs, as in the case of Motherwell in the introduction to *Minstrelsy Ancient and Modern*,

These pernicious and disingenuous practices breed a sickly loathing in the mind of every conscientious antiquary, and would, if not checked and exposed, in a short while, lay the broad axe to the root of everything like authenticity in oral song.<sup>351</sup>

It is interesting to note that Motherwell was opposed to editing because it threatened the authenticity of the song, whereas in many cases Child believed editing was necessary to restore the authenticity of a ballad. Lomax's use of the 'best lines' could even be seen as an attempt to create the most authentic sounding song, which is partly what Child was doing. Child's editing is backed up by years of investigation and a thorough knowledge of ballad variants and changes ballads underwent. The fact that Lomax seems slightly apologetic for his popular ambitions suggests he believed his editing was plain circumvention of Child's standards. However, the editing practices of Child and Lomax may not be as distant as Lomax imagined, and herein lies the intellectual context of Lomax's work, and these ideas of authenticity and editing come directly from this context.

### 3.9: Smith's Record Culture

Smith's collection managed to bypass such romantic misrepresentation by presenting the music without any unnecessary embellishments like those of Lomax in *Cowboy Songs*, and without the preconceptions of Sharp. As Smith states in his foreword to the *Anthology*, 'The eighty – four recordings in this set were made between 1927, when electronic recording made possible accurate music reproduction, and 1932 when the depression halted folk

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<sup>350</sup> Wilgus, D.K. 1959. *Anglo – American Folksong Scholarship Since 1898*. New Jersey, Rutgers University Press. p. 161

<sup>351</sup> Motherwell, William. 1827. *Minstrelsy Ancient and Modern*. John Wylie Publishing, Glasgow. p. iv.

music sales.<sup>352</sup> Clearly he ascribes the existence of the recordings to nothing more than a popular trend and recognises the economic factors which ended the trend. As mentioned before, he accepted the established notion of cultural and social isolation being conducive to fostering folk music, but this is based on work such as Sharp's and the Lomaxes. It is notable that Smith did not invent his own romanticised ideas of folk music culture, and when offering his own observations on the subject he was quite measured. He does not romanticise the origins of the records, and notes some of the unpleasant aspects of their history, quoting Okeh Record Company scout Ralph Peer,

“We had records by all foreign groups: German records, Swedish records, Polish records, but we were afraid to advertise Negro records, so I listed them as “race” records and they are still known as that.” Unfortunately these unpleasant terms are still used by some manufacturers.<sup>353</sup>

The subsequent popularity of the *Anthology* demonstrated that people did not require any romanticisation of the music and its origins to appreciate the records. In fact Smith's collection presented the records as more of a reference work, albeit with a strong avant – garde art leaning which based on Smith's own ideas of what the records represented. This reference work is replete with bibliographical and discographical references, detailed information about original record catalogue numbers, and commentaries on thematic content. Aficionados of the *Anthology* actually romanticise the music by themselves to a certain extent, inventing conceits which connect the records,

This is Smithville. Here is a mystical body of the republic, a kind of public secret: a declaration of what sort of wishes and fears lie behind any public act, a declaration of a weird but clearly recognisable America within the America of the exercise of institutional majoritarian power.<sup>354</sup>

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<sup>352</sup> Smith, Harry. 1997. *The Anthology of American Folk Music*. Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, Washington DC.

<sup>353</sup> Ibid.

<sup>354</sup> Marcus, Greil. 1997. *A Booklet of Essays, Appreciations, and Annotations Pertaining to the Anthology of American Folk Music*. Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, Washington D.C.

Marcus' 'Smithville' conceit is a particularly eminent example of commentaries on the *Anthology* which theorise the collection and furnish it with significant political and social meaning.

Other commentators offer a more measured summary of Smith's achievements, but fundamentally refer to the same great success of the *Anthology*,

Harry Smith "discovered" vernacular art at America's social margins, and he mixed it in a melting pot *Anthology* of distinctive regional, local, and idiosyncratic forms. Naming it American Folk Music suggested a collectivity that appealed to a significant part of the public. Today we may deconstruct it and interpret it from many sides but we cannot deny its central role in shaping American popular music.<sup>355</sup>

Smith's *Anthology* did not attempt to represent American folk culture comprehensively, nor did it use romantic stereotypes to increase the appeal of the music. He instead packaged the records as a particular trend in the history of the recording industry, with considerable contextual detail to situate this trend. Listeners often romanticised the music themselves, but most importantly his collection achieved a certain degree of popular success without misrepresenting a particular culture. However, Smith's focus nevertheless remained the objects and not the facts that could be gleaned from them. The *Anthology* was a vehicle for presenting the objects, and the accompanying commentary and reference details are used to frame the objects and provide information about them, not the culture that produced them. This is not necessarily a problem though, and it could be argued that folk music collections should focus on presenting the music rather than using the music to inform a discussion of the culture.

### 3.10: The Collecting Tradition

The issue of *objects not facts* and the use of folk songs to represent culture can be traced back to the European collectors. Child was directly influenced by the Brothers Grimm and

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<sup>355</sup> Rosenberg, Neil. 1997. *A Booklet of Essays, Appreciations, and Annotations Pertaining to the Anthology of American Folk Music*. Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, Washington D.C.

their collection of German folk tales (or fairy tales) that has become popularly regarded as the best collection of its kind. In a manner very similar to Child's work, Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm's primary interests were linguistic and literary research and their collection was constructed as part of their research into these areas. The first volume of *Kinder – und Hausmärchen* was first published in 1812, and contained eighty six stories that were allegedly transcribed from the 'folk' themselves. The second volume was published in 1814 and featured a further seventy tales. By the seventh edition of the collection, published in 1857, two hundred and eleven stories were included. Some of the most well – known fairy tales come from this collection, such as 'Snow White', 'Hansel and Gretel', 'Little Red Riding Hood', and 'Sleeping Beauty'. Filene has connected the creation of this collection to a wider interest in folk culture and history in post – Enlightenment Europe, 'In Britain and across the Continent, there was a surge of interest in documenting the range of folk cultural expression...collectors feared that pure native cultures were being corrupted as transportation improved and literacy spread.'<sup>356</sup> Burke also argues that, 'The example of the Grimms was soon followed all over Europe.'<sup>357</sup> Bendix importantly marks out a trend which caused Child and others to follow the German model of collecting, specifically that many American universities in the mid – to – late nineteenth century did not offer graduate degrees, and consequently many students travelled to Germany for graduate studies.<sup>358</sup> Bendix goes on to state,

The advanced philological scholarship practiced in Germany left a strong imprint on Francis James Child. In the work of Child and his followers, one rediscovers the interest in medieval literature, language reconstruction coupled with text editing, and folk poetry that so dominated the work of Bopp, the Grimms, and Lachmann (all of whom taught at Berlin).<sup>359</sup>

This may be another element in the adoption of German philological scholarship as a means of folk song study in America.

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<sup>356</sup> Filene, Benjamin. 2000. *Romancing the Folk: Public Memory & American Roots Music*. University of North Carolina Press. p. 11.

<sup>357</sup> Burke, Peter. 1978. *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*. Ashgate Publishing, Surrey. p. 27.

<sup>358</sup> Bendix, Regina. 1997. *In Search of Authenticity: The Formation of Folklore Studies*. University of Wisconsin Press. p. 76.

<sup>359</sup> Ibid.

This can be seen as a reaction to the secular rationalism that characterised the Enlightenment period, and in the face of growing urbanisation and industrialisation there was a desire to reconnect with the rural folk roots of a country. The ideas of folk culture that the Brothers Grimm subscribed to were arguably formed by Herder, who was an opponent of the rationalism of the Enlightenment, and had a fascination with folk music and culture as an antidote to the prevailing philosophical trends. He believed that philosophy should serve the people, or folk, rather than existing only among philosophers, ‘The people...is the greatest, most venerable, part of the public, in contrast to which philosophy is a troglodyte – people living in caves with Minerva’s night – owls! If the latter have treasures, well then, they must become common property.’<sup>360</sup> Herder distinguished pointedly between *Kultur des Volkes* (folk culture) and *Kultur des Gelehrten* (learned culture), and argued his preference for the former as a national culture if such a thing could exist. When discussing the music of the *Kultur des Volkes* Herder said, ‘The more wild and freely acting a people is, the more wild, that is, the more lively, free, sensuous and lyrically acting its songs must be.’<sup>361</sup> Herder published a collection himself, again arising from his academic work in philosophy, of folk songs gathered from the region now called Latvia. The title of this collection included the word *Volkslieder* – folk song – which had been little used before this, and marked an important development in identifying what a folk song was. As well as distinguishing between learned culture (*Kultur des Gelehrten*) and folk culture (*Kultur des Volkes*) Herder also made a distinction between the rural folk and their urban equivalents. This contributes to the idea of what constitutes folk culture and music into the twentieth century, since it represents many of the same beliefs as those held by the Lomaxes, Sharp, and Child. All these American collectors believed that authentic folk music existed among the rural lower classes, despite their different ideas about the survival of this music.

### 3.11: Brothers Grimm and ‘Scientific Method’

Herder’s ideas clearly influenced the Brothers Grimm and their conception of the folk culture from which their folk tales had originated. They also built their collection on

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<sup>360</sup> Forster, Michael N. 2002. *Johann Gottfried von Herder: Philosophical Writings*. Cambridge University Press. p. 7.

<sup>361</sup> Ibid.

transcriptions of tales taken directly from the storyteller, as Herder had done with his songs. Rather than base the collection on previously recorded tales or songs, they were engaged in fieldwork that involved interaction with the 'Volk', and were publishing material from this *Kultur des Volkes*. Michaelis – Jena applauds the academic rigour in the work of the Brothers Grimm, referring to it as a kind of 'scientific method'.<sup>362</sup> As discussed earlier in the thesis, Bendix argues that the work of the Grimms represented a transition from the Romantic fascination with the purity of the folk to the search for artefacts of an idealised human past. This search that was the basis of the work of the Grimms may account for the greater degree of rigour found in their collecting practices. That is not to suggest that the folklore scholarship of the Romantic period lacked rigour, but the approach of the Grimms required textual analysis, editing, and reconstruction that demanded some of the rigorous techniques of scholarship. The suggested 'scientific method' (or *wissenschaft*) differs from what was discussed in the previous section of this chapter, where American folk collecting was discussed as a distinctly unscientific practice, with data not necessarily used to form any ideas about culture. However, the collecting characteristics that Michaelis – Jena claims typify the 'scientific method' are also present in the work of collectors like John Lomax. Lomax did emphasise his informants for *Cowboy Songs* and drew attention to the importance of the work for literary study. Wendell attests to this in his foreword to *Cowboy Songs*, citing the collection's importance for the scholarly study of folk poetry.<sup>363</sup>

Evidently this kind of 'scientific method' refers to the type of collecting which involves fieldwork and acknowledging the contributions of informants. Despite this, Wilhelm Grimm in particular often manipulated his scientific data,

A master of simplicity with a perfect ear for the colloquial, he replaced indirect speech by dialogue, gave motivation to certain happenings, and when necessary pieced together variants, printed and oral ones, to make a better whole. He preserved the content of the original yet gave it a new expression.<sup>364</sup>

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<sup>362</sup> Michaelis – Jena, Ruth. 1971. 'Oral Tradition and the Brothers Grimm'. *Folklore*. 82/4. p. 268.

<sup>363</sup> Lomax, John A. 1910. *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads*. New York, MacMillan Press.

<sup>364</sup> Michaelis – Jena, Ruth. 1971. 'Oral Tradition and the Brothers Grimm'. *Folklore*. 82/4. p. 267.



Much of the content of the folk tales was changed over the course of the seven editions, and the majority of extirpated material was sexual in nature, due to the young audience interested in the stories. Burke comments that, 'in Germany at this time the middle classes quite literally spoke a different language from the craftsmen and peasants...'<sup>365</sup> Burke also observes the editing techniques of the Grimms, 'Translation was necessary, but it necessarily involved distortions. Some stories were bowdlerised, because they would otherwise have shocked their new readers. Individual idiosyncrasies in the telling were smoothed out so that the collection had a uniform style.'<sup>366</sup> The indulgence of editing was something that Child submitted to as well, but his collection differed from the Grimms in what it claimed to represent. The Brothers Grimm pointed out the varied European origins of their folk tales, and stressed that they were not intended to be part of a solely German collection.<sup>367</sup> Child on the other hand claimed to be representing the ancient oral ballad tradition that he believed in, despite the origins of many of his ballads in printed collections and broadsides. This is an example of Child working within the disciplinary context of German philological and textual scholarship, but introducing the transformation of the popular ballad tradition to explain his work. Although Child carried out no fieldwork or transcribing, his research into ballad provenance, ballad variants, and close textual analysis is from the methods of the Grimms. As Bendix and others point out, this came from his time as a graduate student in Germany, and was also based on prominent scholars like Grundtvig. These practices determined how Child assembled his collection, but Child's transformation was also the scope of his collection which encompassed the entire ballad tradition of England and Scotland.

Child's collecting techniques differed dramatically from those of the Brothers Grimm, despite his fascination with their work. Harker's criticism of Child points out his deference to his predecessors, and his reliance on the historical theories of the Grimms.<sup>368</sup> Harker's condemnation of Child's views of history will be examined shortly, but the incongruity of having the Brothers Grimm as an inspiration can be seen in Child's dismissal of fieldwork. He was interested exclusively in ballads that were composed before the popularisation of the printing press, since he believed print culture had effectively supplanted oral culture in

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<sup>365</sup> Burke, Peter. 1978. *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*. Ashgate Publishing, Surrey. p. 44.

<sup>366</sup> Ibid.

<sup>367</sup> Grimm, Jakob, and Grimm, Wilhelm. 1812. *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*.

<sup>368</sup> Harker, Dave. 1981. 'Francis James Child and the 'Ballad Consensus''. *Folk Music Journal*. 4/2. p. 152.

Britain, and that genuine popular ballads must have an oral root. To this end he consulted numerous ballad collections, researched in libraries, and maintained a number of European correspondents from whom he received transcriptions of songs. At no point during his collecting work did Child transcribe music heard from the contemporary 'folk', and as Filene notes Child saw no purpose in transcribing from informants if no new songs had been created, which largely excluded America from his work.<sup>369</sup> Despite this preference, there are similarities between Child's work and his predecessors. Like the Grimms, Herder, and Motherwell<sup>370</sup>, Child's collecting had a distinctly scholarly method, with due reference to previous research, a great deal of accompanying and explanatory notes, and extensive bibliographic references. McCarthy refers to qualities of Motherwell's that are true for the German collectors and Child too,

The fruit of Motherwell's collecting and editing was his anthology of Scottish Ballads, *Minstrelsy: Ancient and Modern*. The *Minstrelsy* is distinguished by: 1. An introduction exhibiting unexpected insight into the oral process in ballad composition. 2. Texts remarkable for their fidelity to the oral tradition. 3. An appendix which includes thirty three ballad tunes, not idealised but matched to the specific stanzas to which they were sung. 4. Sound scholarship throughout.<sup>371</sup>

The period in which these European and American collectors were working was marked by folk music collecting being a literary field, and the preserve of the educated Gentleman,

...these gentlemen did not go out into the highways and byways...to find the objects with which they were so fascinated. Like genteel collectors of rural artefacts today, these editor – collectors relied to a great extent on middlemen, or pickers as they are now called in the antique trade.<sup>372</sup>

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<sup>369</sup> Filene, Benjamin. 2000. *Romancing the Folk: Public Memory & American Roots Music*. University of North Carolina Press. p. 11.

<sup>370</sup> For a study of the collecting techniques of William Motherwell see: McCarthy, William B. 1987. 'William Motherwell as Field Collector'. *Folk Music Journal*. 5/3.

<sup>371</sup> McCarthy, William B. 1987. 'William Motherwell as Field Collector'. *Folk Music Journal*. 5/3. pp. 295 – 296.

<sup>372</sup> *Ibid.*

McCarthy's use of 'editor – collectors' indicates another important trait that ties Child to this collecting tradition: editing. Michaelis – Jena referred to the editing of Wilhelm Grimm and the way he 'pieced together variants, printed and oral ones, to make a better whole'<sup>373</sup>; Motherwell's *Minstrelsy* was based on the same process of assembling a piece from all available variants, 'the great contribution that an editor can make is to take versions with significant variants and from them print a better composite, a more complete and more 'correct' than any previous text.'<sup>374</sup> Child followed this editing heritage, and his *English and Scottish Popular Ballads* is constructed from as many recorded versions of songs as could be found in previous collections. Harker quotes him saying,

...the rule has been to select the most authentic copies, and to reprint them as they stand in the collections, restoring readings that had been changed without grounds, and noting all deviations from the originals, whether those of previous editors or of this edition, in the margin. Interpolations acknowledged by the editors have generally been dropped. In two instances only have previous texts been superseded or greatly improved.<sup>375</sup>

This process of working from previous collections assembled by contemporaries or earlier workers distinguishes this as a literary subject, much like the history of Shakespeare scholarship based on additions, subtractions, and revisions by scholars over many years. It is clear that Child was collecting within this tradition of 'editor – collectors' who paid a great deal of attention to the conventions of folk scholarship and aimed to produce comprehensive reference works, some with a broad appeal. The contexts of Herder's Romantic pursuit of the voice of the folk, and perhaps more importantly, the literary and philological scholarship of the Grimms, determined the practices of Child. His scholarly treatment of texts and his research into the texts, coupled with his editing to guarantee authenticity, are part of the beginnings of the folklore discipline in the work of the Grimms.

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<sup>373</sup> Michaelis – Jena, Ruth. 1971. 'Oral Tradition and the Brothers Grimm'. *Folklore*. 82/4. p. 267.

<sup>374</sup> McCarthy, William B. 1987. 'William Motherwell as Field Collector'. *Folk Music Journal*. 5/3. p. 301.

<sup>375</sup> Harker, Dave. 1981. 'Francis James Child and the 'Ballad Consensus''. *Folk Music Journal*. 4/2. p. 149.

### 3.12: Literary Collecting to Musical Collecting

One of the changes in the collecting tradition was the transition from folk music as a literary study to folk music as a musicological, or at least musical, study. This is perhaps the biggest leap in practices within this collecting tradition, because it changes the reason why collecting is done. Among the collectors discussed in this thesis, Sharp is the first person working in America to collect folk music for a different reason. Since his background was solidly rooted in music, his collecting was an adjunct of his musical pursuits which included a recently discovered interest in folk music. The most preponderant difference between Sharp's collecting and the example set by Child was the fieldwork basis of his approach. Child's emphasis on manuscripts and his belief in the disappearance of genuine folk (or ballad) culture meant that fieldwork was precluded. However, many previous collectors also conducted fieldwork, and were notably forward – thinking regarding what could be achieved with their collections. Herder, for example, based his *Volkslieder* collection entirely on fieldwork done in the area that was previously known as Riga (Latvia). Also, his ambition was to promote the music he collected as an ideal form of national culture, and to demonstrate the value of the Romantic folk 'purity'. Suppan and Borneman briefly look at Herder's motivations for his collecting, quoting Herder stating, 'My only motive has been to stimulate a general awakening and rebirth,' and argue that, 'It was the concept of a humane, ethically and morally intact world which determined Herder's relation to folksong, and that was also the reason he appealed to his contemporaries to take stock and work on its regeneration...'<sup>376</sup> This was also Sharp's reason for collecting, as he often stated, 'What better form of music or of literature can we give them than the folk – songs and folk – ballads of the race to which they belong, or of the nation whose language they speak?'<sup>377</sup> Although both Herder and Sharp wanted to promote the music they collected, this impulse is driven by very different intellectual contexts. Herder's came from a Romantic urge to show the 'purity' to be found in the rural folk culture of the country, and how vital this 'purity' could be for a national culture of Germany. Sharp was driven by a Fabian interest to induce some form of social progress through education, and this education would be based

<sup>376</sup> Borneman, Eva, and Suppan, Wolfgang. 1976. 'Research on Folk Music in Austria Since 1800.' *Yearbook of the International Folk Music Council*, Vol. 8. p. 118.

<sup>377</sup> Sharp, Cecil J. 1917. *English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians*. New York, G.P. Putnam and Sons. p. xx

in the material of folk culture he had collected. Sharp's Fabian belief in improvement through education was coupled with a belief in the value of folk music and dance, and how this could be used in education to restore aspects of an idealised past.

Karpeles comments on the divergence of Sharp's work from Child's established style,

Inspired by the monumental work of Professor Child of Harvard, the universities of America have taken great interest in the English and Scottish popular ballad; but at that time the subject had been treated almost entirely from the literary standpoint and such collections of mountain ballads as had hitherto been made...were with a few exceptions restricted to the texts, and the tunes had been ignored.<sup>378</sup>

The obvious reason for this is once again the philological and literary focus of previous collectors: their primary interest in the words of a song, and their probable inability to easily document the music in standard notation. Very few collectors had musical knowledge or training, and few classically trained musicians aside from Sharp had any documented interest in folk music until that time. Despite these differences, Sharp inherited many of the characteristics accrued within the Romantic period, some of which were inherited from Child. His preoccupation with folk history and the degradation of folk traditions is the most pervasive of these inherited characteristics. Although he believed folk music was still alive, he insisted that it had been steadily declining, and thought the alleged previous dominance of folk traditions would have made the lives of the folk 'much brighter and happier'<sup>379</sup>. This is comparable to Child's conception of the popular ballad as something which emerged during a period in which certain conditions allowed it.<sup>380</sup>

Szwed makes several comments regarding the communication of this collecting tradition,

Whether it was the influence of Sharp, or something deeper that Kittredge saw in John Lomax and his cowboy ballads when he came to Harvard as a student, the

<sup>378</sup> Karpeles, Maud. 1967. *Cecil Sharp: His Life and Work*. Routledge Ltd., London. p. 154.

<sup>379</sup> Sharp, Cecil J. 1907. 'Folk Song Collecting'. *Musical Times*. 48/767. p. 18.

<sup>380</sup> Child, Francis. 1900. 'Ballad Poetry'. *Johnson's Universal Cyclopaedia*. New York. p. 214.

professor's encouragement of Lomax's recording of music and text was sincere, and gave John the courage to go forward.<sup>381</sup>

Szwed also claims the work of earlier European collectors can be seen in Lomax's collecting work,

The history of the early song collectors resonated in John Lomax's life, and he sometimes found himself reliving it. When John asked former president Theodore Roosevelt, a Harvard graduate himself, to write "an endorsement" of his book, he was repeating Percy's and Scott's experiences with ballads in a democratic way.<sup>382</sup>

There is also significance in Kittredge being another of Lomax's academic supporters, since both Kittredge and Barrett Wendell were students of Child and their work followed on directly from Child's. As Filene points out,

Many of the earliest connoisseurs of folk ballads had been literature professors, and they often integrated some folk materials into their course offerings. Francis James Child and George Lyman Kittredge, especially, had inspired generations of young ballad collectors at Harvard.<sup>383</sup>

This is indicative of the way in which the American collecting tradition developed: it was through prominent collectors and scholars that subsequent collectors like Sharp, the Lomaxes, and Smith, were introduced to ideas, techniques, and types of collection. Although Sharp's collecting techniques differed from Child's in his use of fieldwork, he was clearly working within the same tradition.

Sharp placed himself in this tradition by alluding to the work he is building on, which was apparently the work of the German collectors who conducted some of the earliest

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<sup>381</sup> Szwed, John. 2010. *The Man Who Recorded the World: A Biography of Alan Lomax*. William Heinemann, London. p. 12.

<sup>382</sup> *Ibid.* p. 13.

<sup>383</sup> Filene, Benjamin. 2000. *Romancing the Folk: Public Memory & American Roots Music*. University of North Carolina Press. p. 164.

fieldwork with folklore.<sup>384</sup> Sharp was not only connecting his work to that of Herder in the use of the term folk song (*volkslieder*), but also linking his collecting techniques to those of the Grimms, referring to a 'scientific' form of folklore. He revealed his familiarity with the most eminent collectors in this tradition, referencing Motherwell and Child, as well as Buchan and Scott.<sup>385</sup> Although he criticised the lack of attention paid to folk song tunes, again he was clearly placing himself in this tradition of folk song collectors. Sharp's transformation of collecting techniques is in this determination to document the music of folk songs as well as the texts. Along with the previously discussed Fabian socialist educational aspect of Sharp's collecting techniques, it could be argued that Sharp's fieldwork was partly motivated by social and political concerns of the early twentieth century. Walkowitz comments that,

...the historian Georgina Boyes' view of Sharp as one who "politically, philosophically and in personal terms...disliked change" seems on the mark...She reminds us that the traditions he transmitted, as in all such conversions, were inventions shaped by his frustrated social aspirations and class and gender prejudices.<sup>386</sup>

Sharp was living through a period of social change, which had gender and class dimensions which troubled Sharp. As Walkowitz states,

Ironically, the rural and "peasant" pasts were both a problem and a solution. At the same time as reformers organised to teach these urban newcomers how to make budgets, adjust to factory rhythms, and behave like burghers, reformers (sometimes the same reformers) came to believe these newcomers had a vibrant, curative "peasant" past in their blood that only had to be awakened.<sup>387</sup>

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<sup>384</sup> Sharp, Cecil J. 1907. *English Folk Song: Some Conclusions*. London, Simpkin & Co. Ltd. p. 2.

<sup>385</sup> *Ibid.* p. ix – x.

<sup>386</sup> Walkowitz, Daniel J. 2010. *City Folk: English Country Dance and the Politics of the Folk in Modern America*. New York University Press. p.18.

<sup>387</sup> *Ibid.* p. 31.

This social change was partly what Sharp was acting against when he conducted fieldwork in rural areas, interacting with folk who had not yet been 'reformed' for urban life. Sharp also had concerns about the women's suffrage movement of the period, which undermined gender divisions and traditional gender roles, which made Sharp's fieldwork experiences even more valuable since they presented a scene in which gender distinctions were still clear. It is also possible to see the concerns of Antimodernism at play in Sharp's issues with gender politics of the early twentieth century, since much of Antimodernist thought in America was preoccupied with the 'feminisation' of American culture. Folk music and culture, rooted in traditional values, could be seen to reassert masculinity. Sharp's fieldwork is partly an Antimodernist connection with a past in which gender distinctions were clearly defined.

As Sharp states, in keeping with the transformation from texts to tunes, 'It is time, therefore, that the balance, as between the respective claims of the words and the tunes, should be restored.'<sup>388</sup> Pearce suggests the importance of tradition in the practice of collecting,

The study of collecting in social practice is intended to tease out an understanding of how communities develop strategies which enable them to bring together the accumulating possibilities of objects and other social structures...in order to maintain the social pattern and project it into the future.<sup>389</sup>

The idea of 'communities developing strategies' is what happens in the field of folk collecting, consisting of a community of folk music specialists developing the strategies which allow them to record folk songs in one form or another. Sharp's contributions to the American collecting tradition meant that within a more scholarly – focused collection there is legitimate space for including tunes and texts. As with Pearce's 'European tradition of popular collecting,' the American tradition of folk music collecting is defined by transformations like those of Sharp which allow it to capture more elements of a folk song.

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<sup>388</sup> Sharp, Cecil J. 1907. *English Folk Song: Some Conclusions*. London, Simpkin & Co. Ltd. p. 2.

<sup>389</sup> Pearce, Susan M. 1995. *On Collecting: An Investigation into Collecting in the European Tradition*. Routledge Press, London. p. 28.



### 3.13: Developments of the Lomaxes

The development of collecting, meaning the tune taking precedence over the lyrics of a folk song, was embraced by the Lomaxes in their work. John Lomax's *Cowboy Songs* is a partial synthesis of Child and earlier collectors, and Sharp, which produced a collection that had a textual base, partly derived from literary collecting, and partly from fieldwork, but also had commercial appeal. Lomax gathered many of his songs from correspondents as Child and Motherwell often did, and he too edited his songs to assemble what seemed the best version. His editing was, 'selecting and putting together what seemed to be the best lines from different versions, all telling the story.'<sup>390</sup> This is very similar to the way in which Wilhelm Grimm, 'when necessary pieced together variants, printed and oral ones, to make a better whole. He preserved the content of the original yet gave it a new expression.'<sup>391</sup> While he was taking these cues from the Child end of the tradition, he was also conducting fieldwork, transcribing from 'real cowboys' and other informants, such as the bartender from whom Lomax claimed to have first heard 'Home on the Range'.<sup>392</sup> Although Lomax did not conduct fieldwork and transcribing to the extent he afterwards claimed, it still formed part of his collecting methods. Some of these changes were due to the need for commercial appeal in the collection, and this commercial aspect was one of the elements in the American tradition that had been little explored previously. This ties in with the issues of folk and popular culture, and the impact of commercialism, since Lomax's desire to produce a commercially successful collection resulted in the extensive use of editing. Despite his vocal opposition to the conflation of popular and folk, and the associated commercialisation of folk, Lomax used these, to a certain extent, to enhance the appeal of *Cowboy Songs*, just as he did in his promotion of Lead Belly. Ultimately, the elements of his career which involved the conflation of folk, popular, and commercialisation, had the biggest public impact and consequently the biggest effect on public awareness. This is not to confuse Lomax's sales of *Cowboy Songs*, which were relatively limited, with the commercialisation of

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<sup>390</sup> Wilgus, D.K. 1959. *Anglo – American Folksong Scholarship Since 1898*. New Jersey, Rutgers University Press. p. 161

<sup>391</sup> Michaelis – Jena, Ruth. 1971. 'Oral Tradition and the Brothers Grimm'. *Folklore*. 82/4. p. 268.

<sup>392</sup> Porterfield, Nolan. 1996. *The Last Cavalier: The Life and Times of John A. Lomax*. University of Illinois Press.

the folk music branch of cowboy songs. As previously discussed, commercialisation is a term very much associated with dictation by commercial interests, and this was not the case with *Cowboy Songs* which remained a modest literary collection of folk songs. Although Lomax, and Sharp, sold their collections of folk songs there were interests aside from commercial ones which dictated their work.

Lomax took this popular appeal further by constructing a highly romanticised portrait of the American cowboy that would appeal to the expected audience of the collection: middle class people living in a thoroughly urbanised environment. Another trend that connects every collector from Herder onwards is an educated middle class interest in folk music. Burke identifies this as a trend common across Europe,

Most of them, however, came from the upper classes, to whom the people were a mysterious Them, described in terms of everything their discoverers were not (or thought they were not): the people were natural, simple, illiterate, instinctive, irrational, rooted in tradition and in the soil of the region, lacking any sense of individuality, (the individual was lost in the community).<sup>393</sup>

Many collections were produced in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries due to this interest, and the people with an interest in Lomax's cowboy songs were of a similar type: educated, reasonably affluent, and fascinated by the idealised rural 'folky' lifestyle, 'Once scorned as ignorant and illiterate, ordinary folk began to be glorified as the creators of cultural expression with a richness and depth lacking in elite creations.'<sup>394</sup> *Cowboy Songs* catered to this middle – class idea of the 'folk' as enviably primitive, linking the lifestyle of the cowboy to the Anglo – Saxon culture depicted in *Beowulf*.<sup>395</sup> He took this even further when describing the context in which a song may be sung, 'A vagrant puff of wind shakes a corner of the crimson handkerchief knotted loosely at his throat; the thud of his pony's feet mingling with the jingle of his spurs is borne back; and as the careless, gracious, lovable figure disappears over the divide, the breeze brings to the ears, faint and far yet cheery still,

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<sup>393</sup> Burke, Peter. 1978. *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*. Ashgate Publishing, Surrey. p. 31.

<sup>394</sup> Filene, Benjamin. 2000. *Romancing the Folk: Public Memory & American Roots Music*. University of North Carolina Press. p. 9.

<sup>395</sup> Lomax, John A. 1910. *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads*. New York, MacMillan Press.

the refrain of a cowboy song...<sup>396</sup> Enhancing the appeal of the collection was not the sole factor in determining Lomax's image of the cowboy: the Anglo – Saxon nativist ideas of the Antimodernist and manhood movements. Cantwell describes this image as,

...working – class and masculine, framed by his Anglo – American ruling – class outlook and set in vivid contradistinction to the world of white – collar occupations and comforts and to middle – class standards generally, and in this sense echoed the scrapbooks, dime novels, picture magazines, calendars, postcards, and other ephemera in which the cowboy had his represented life.<sup>397</sup>

In a manner that is somewhat reminiscent of Sharp, Lomax carves out a type of racial heritage for white Americans, based on these idealised English antecedents, which serves the idea of an Anglo – Saxon American hegemony in the twentieth century. As Cantwell points out, this was a reaction against the middle – class world of the period, despite this being part of Lomax's audience. If this is Lomax's most significant transformation in his early work, the focus on uniquely American music, it is firmly rooted in these intellectual frameworks and depends on them more than the desire for popular appeal.

Alan Lomax's contributions to this tradition moved even further forward than his father's work on *Cowboy Songs* and subsequent recorded collections. However, the importance of John Lomax's transformation of the practice should not be underestimated, since he was one of the first collectors to make effective use of recording technology. This fundamental change in collecting techniques determined much of the collecting work done throughout the rest of the twentieth century, and was made possible by the context of technological advancements which allowed a portable recording device to be used in the field. Lomax's use of the recording machine resulted in his enduring interest in African – American music, which seemed to take precedence over the Anglo – Saxon hegemony of the cowboy songs. Alan's collecting techniques were far more broadly sourced than his father's, and although he held similar ideas about authenticity in folk music, his recording expeditions seemed to be more about recording everything he could find that interested him. His 1936 – 37 collecting trip in Haiti is indicative of the excitement when confronted

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<sup>396</sup> Ibid.

<sup>397</sup> Cantwell, Robert. 1996. *When We Were Good: The Folk Revival*. Harvard University Press. p. 70.

with so much material to record, as he revealed in a letter to his friend and sometime teacher Charles Seeger,

The working class, the peasants who sit flat on their buttocks on the soil, so to speak, are all informants, so far as the folklorist is concerned, especially if he has a lot of radical notions about folklore not being old, necessarily, or cut to fit any special pattern, or the sole possession of a few adepts, but the property of whatever person it has by the tongue. That makes every single peasant I meet here an informant, and most of the population is peasant. So I have been buried, snowed under. I wish I had the virtue of the single – track mind, but I am interested in everything I hear. And as for songs, *mon dieu*, Tin Pan Alley thought itself fertile, but I can fill a couple of hundred discs without stirring my stump from this one little community.<sup>398</sup>

His comments about ‘radical notions’ of folklore being new indicate something of the developments from his father’s work, and as he stated, he is inclined to record ‘everything I hear’. This development in the collecting tradition is comparable to Sharp’s in terms of its significance: Sharp added a musician’s interest in the tune of a folk song, and Alan Lomax seems to add an anthropologist’s interest in the culture.

However, Alan still had perennial issues with music which seemed inadequately ‘authentic’ and after hearing a particularly disappointing performance in Haiti he recorded in his journal,

I made two poor records of his Haitian stuff, two Carnival pieces with complicated rhythms in imitation of the drum. He was very hurt when I showed no pleasure at the results. I had to explain at great length that the acoustic conditions were not satisfactory, which was true, and that I wanted to try again in the studio of the national radio station, which was not. I am afraid that I have gone too far in my

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<sup>398</sup> Lomax, Alan. 1937. *Haitian Diary: Papers and Correspondence from Alan Lomax’s Haitian Journey 1936 – 1937*, compiled and edited by Ellen Harold. American Folklife Centre, Washington DC.

bluff about wanting all Haitian music: high, low; written or orally transmitted; sophisticated or folk.<sup>399</sup>

Alan's recording expeditions were still based on the acquisition of folk 'authenticity' just as Child, Sharp, and John Lomax's research and collecting had been.

Peterson succinctly sums up the authenticity argument in discussing country music, 'Joel Friedman...says that proof of the need for authenticity is that while country music songs regularly become hits in the pop music field, pop songs rarely become hits in the country music field.'<sup>400</sup> This comparison captures the essence of Alan Lomax's position on authenticity in folk music: the more popular music he attempted to record in Haiti should not be part of his collection because of its inauthentic nature. Popular music, even popular interpretations of folk music, cannot reproduce the authenticity that comes from the 'genuine' folk performing their own music. Also, Alan still made the distinction in his collecting work between 'high' and 'low' music, and indicates a desire only to record songs which correspond to the three criteria outlined in this journal entry: low, orally transmitted, folk music. As Bendix points out, this debate over authenticity is part of the folklore discipline, and Lomax was a participant in the emergence of this discipline. Bendix contends that, 'Although American folklorists had never been as hampered as Europeans by a peasant – based concept of the folk, as long as folklorists searched for folkloric "items" the idea that folklore resided in marginal groups threatened by mass culture prevailed.'<sup>401</sup> Lomax was also involved in the development of the idea of authenticity, concurrent with the development of the folklore discipline, and was an early adopter of the idea Bendix describes, 'If expressive culture lived in the fleeting moment of enactment, then authenticity should have been recognised as experiential, rather than static and lasting.'<sup>402</sup> Alan adopted this idea that authenticity was inherent in a performance rather than an object, which was a transformation of the previously idea held that authenticity could be found in a song text. Alan's theories of folk music became increasingly performance – centred in the 50s after his time working in Europe, 'A song is a complex human action –

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<sup>399</sup> Ibid.

<sup>400</sup> Peterson, Richard A. 1997. *Creating Country Music: Fabricating Authenticity*. University of Chicago Press. p. 209.

<sup>401</sup> Bendix, Regina. 1997. *In Search of Authenticity: The Formation of Folklore Studies*. University of Wisconsin Press. p. 198.

<sup>402</sup> Ibid.

music plus speech, relating performers to a larger group in a special situation by means of certain behaviour patterns, and giving rise to common emotional experience.'<sup>403</sup> Alan's collecting techniques were based on this context of disciplinary development, with anthropology playing a large part in the way he recorded performances, took photographs of performers, and recorded film, all to capture the performance as completely as possible. Rather than thinking of the continued, albeit changing, search for authenticity as a stumbling block for Lomax's work, this thesis argues that it was part of the discipline of folklore in which Alan was a participant, and the technological context of recording machines, and portable film cameras, which determined his collecting methods.

### 3.14: Smith and the Collecting Tradition

It may in fact be misleading to refer to a 'method' in Smith's work, since Smith was essentially just gathering records because of a personal interest. Unlike every other collector discussed in the thesis, who had a clear method to their collecting whether it was textual scholarship, transcribing, or audio recording, and a clear aim for their collection, Smith was simply buying old records from junk shops and bankrupt record shops. Although he was looking for a particularly unusual sounding records, good performances, or well – known songs, there was nevertheless very little method to his collecting, and certainly nothing in keeping with the context of the folklore discipline. In this respect, as in certain others, Smith was something of an anomaly in the American collecting tradition because his collecting did not follow on from any other collector. Smith does cite the 1941 78rpm collection *Smoky Mountain Ballads* as being part of his inspiration for collecting old 78s, and the content of the collection Smith produced shows a great degree of familiarity with the work of the Lomaxes, but again in terms of method Smith is unlike any of the collectors working in America. In fact, the only other collector in this thesis to have collected commercially produced 78s was Alan Lomax for his *List of American Folksongs on Commercial Records* in 1942. Smith also cites this as one of his inspirations, and this does seem likely given that some of the recordings on the Anthology, and all of the performers, are included in Lomax's list. In the introduction to his list, Alan records some of his selection criteria,

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<sup>403</sup> Cohen, Ronald. 2005. *Alan Lomax: Selected Writings 1934 – 1997*. Routledge Press, London. p. 140.

The choices have been personal and have been made for all sorts of reasons. Some of the records are interesting for their complete authenticity of performance; some for their melodies; some because they included texts of important or representative songs; some because they represented typical contemporary deviations from rural singing and playing styles of fifty years ago; some to make the list as nearly as possible typical of the material I examined.<sup>404</sup>

Although Alan had the aim of demonstrating the value of commercial recordings in mind when he examined these records, some of his reasons for including records are similar to those of Smith, such as important songs, good performances, and interesting playing styles. Although Smith did not have the same aims in mind as Lomax, a minor aspect of his collecting methods was based on prior work done by Lomax.

It is likely that a good deal of Smith's collecting took place in the immediate post-war years, and took place while Smith was living in New York on the fringes of the Beat movement. It is arguable that this atmosphere of post-war cultural subversion may have impacted on Smith's decision to collect records from the 20s and 30s, some of which were recycled during the war to recover the shellac used in their manufacture. These expendable artefacts, which were as much a record of the Great Depression's impact on the recording boom as they were a record of the recording boom itself, could be seen as an early reaction against the post-war prosperity of the 1950s. Cantwell suggests that this subversive agenda comes through in Smith's collection,

The Anthology in a sense ratifies, but at the cultural and not the ideological level, the program of subversion with which it has been associated historically. It anticipates the popular music that followed it in a more than musical sense.<sup>405</sup>

Smith's collecting may have been partly determined by this intellectual context of cultural subversion, and although there were very few inherited practices in his record collecting,

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<sup>404</sup> Lomax, Alan. 1942. *List of American Folk Songs on Commercial Records*. United States Government Printing Office, Washington.

<sup>405</sup> Cantwell, Robert. 1996. *When We Were Good: The Folk Revival*. Harvard University Press. p. 237.

like all the collecting discussed in this thesis it did not emerge from nothing, and in fact was somewhat dictated by the context in which Smith was working.

The talent scouts who recorded for companies like Columbia, Paramount, Brunswick, Okeh etc. always attempted to record the most commercially appealing material, often requesting songs that performers would not ordinarily sing, or using mannerisms that gave folksy authenticity to the recording.<sup>406</sup> It could be argued that Smith was working with less authentic material because of its commercial origin and associated manipulation, but the palimpsest of edited song texts Child was using were even more heavily manufactured, and often with a commercial agenda as well.<sup>407</sup> Also, such a criticism of the *Anthology* is predicated on the assumption that authenticity is always an important aspect of a collection. Although previous collectors have valued their own conception of authenticity, there is no objective standard of authenticity against which the *Anthology* can be measured. As Peterson points out, authenticity is a construct which invariably influences how something is received, but there are no legitimate grounds on which commercial recordings can be decried as inauthentic.<sup>408</sup> As Bendix points out, the idea of commercial records being inauthentic was slightly outdated by the time Smith was collecting, and when Alan Lomax compiled his list of commercial records. 'What has been gained in the two hundred years since Herder is an understanding that cultural relativity presents itself differently from one realm to the next.'<sup>409</sup> This understanding of cultural relativity was present in the work of Lomax, and his various criteria aside from authenticity demonstrate that he understood the same properties were in these commercial records as could be found in his own field recordings. Although Smith recalled in the 1969 interview that he learned there were better performers than John Jacob Niles available on recordings, this was less to do with authenticity than it was performance style and repertoire.

Although there was very little in Smith's collecting that resembled a methodology, especially one adapted from the context of the folklore discipline as the other collectors in this thesis did, Smith did still have principles which governed his collecting. Aside from the

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<sup>406</sup> Peterson, Richard A. 1997. *Creating Country Music: Fabricating Authenticity*. University of Chicago Press.

<sup>407</sup> Filene, Benjamin. 2000. *Romancing the Folk: Public Memory & American Roots Music*. University of North Carolina Press. p. 10.

<sup>408</sup> Peterson, Richard A. 1997. *Creating Country Music: Fabricating Authenticity*. University of Chicago Press. p. 5.

<sup>409</sup> Bendix, Regina. 1997. *In Search of Authenticity: The Formation of Folklore Studies*. University of Wisconsin Press. p. 199.



previously discussed desire to find records which had accomplished, or unusual, performances, and especially proverbial or venerable songs, Smith had more oblique principles as well. These involved tracing the connections Smith saw between objects, generally through the rudiments of occultism and important patterns of colour, shape, and sound. As Cantwell observes,

By background and training – he had studied anthropology at the University of Washington – the man who created the single most important oral anthology of the folk revival approached the world scientifically, habitually collecting and investigating, searching for patterns and the principles that linked them in aural and visual realms.<sup>410</sup>

This is a very important point, since Cantwell asserts that Smith's search for connections was a scientific practice, based on his training in anthropology, and this has implications for the idea that Smith had no real method. In fact, Smith may have had a deeply scientific method for gathering particular recordings, but this method was designed to look for patterns which are unclear to the user of the *Anthology*. Cantwell likens this system to the work of Robert Fludd, who developed a conception of a 'memory theatre' in which the totality of knowledge could be presented in an amphitheatre<sup>411</sup> In fact, it could be argued that Smith's intellectual context for his collecting work was loosely connected to the folklore discipline, and the work of Alan Lomax in particular, but was had far more to do with the science and mysticism of Robert Fludd, the occultism of Aleister Crowley, and Rosicrucianism and Theosophy.

### 3.15: Collecting Techniques in the American Tradition

The methods used by the American collectors were, like their theories of folk music, all ultimately dictated by the context in which they were working. In this instance, the technological context in particular had a large impact on the way collecting changed in the twentieth century, with John Lomax one of the earlier collectors to make use of a portable

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<sup>410</sup> Cantwell, Robert. 1996. *When We Were Good: The Folk Revival*. Harvard University Press. p. 204.

<sup>411</sup> *Ibid.*

recording device. This technological innovation resulted in a transformation of the method by which folk music was collected, and also arguably began to change the way collectors conceived of authenticity in folk music. Since capturing a complete performance was closer using recording technology, it became clear that the performance was as important as the object. Collecting methods were also governed by the intellectual contexts: both the folklore disciplinary context and the important intellectual trends of the period. The transformations from literary collecting to musical transcription, and from transcription to recording, were caused by these changing intellectual and technological contexts, as well as the social and cultural contexts. For instance, in the case of Sharp and John Lomax, fieldwork was necessary because the music they were interested in was still alive but was endangered by a variety of social and cultural factors. These transformations in methodology very much defined the collecting tradition, and the history of the folklore discipline is based on such changes.

The next chapter examines the collections produced by the American collectors, and their European predecessors, and discusses the transformations in the content, presentation, editing, and arrangement of collections, and also the transforming aims of a folk song collection from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries. This chapter argues that, like the theories, and methodologies, the output of collectors was determined by the intellectual context in which they were working, as well as the technological, social, and cultural contexts which dictated how they used the material they had collected.

## Chapter 4: Folk Song Collections

### 4.1: Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to demonstrate the transformations that occurred in the American collecting tradition in terms of the collections and other output produced by the collectors. In the same way that definitions of folk music, and collecting methodologies, were inherited from earlier collectors, so too were the conventions of a folk song collection. These conventions were grounded in the written collections and persisted into the twentieth century, and were even applied to certain collections of recorded material. These conventions were also ultimately determined by the context in which the various collectors were working, and this chapter shows how these contexts resulted in the manifold transformations that defined the American collecting tradition. Chapter 4 begins by examining the origins of these conventions in the literary collections of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, including those by Herder, the Grimms, Percy, and Motherwell. It discusses how these precedents were followed by the American collectors in many instances, and how they became a standard for folk song collections. The chapter explores the conventions peculiar to American folk song collections, and the differences between the collections assembled by the five collectors studied in this thesis.

### 4.2: Herder's *Volkslieder*: Setting the Standard

Like many of the recurring features of folk music collecting, the conventions of a literary collection of folk material originate in post – enlightenment Germany. Herder's collections of folk tales and songs from Latvia are among the earliest collections with an scholarly emphasis. Published in 1774 and 1778, these collections were assembled following a relatively short period of fieldwork in which Herder travelled around rural areas of Latvia and transcribed material from the rural 'folk'. The 1778 collection was simply titled *Volkslieder*, from which the term folk music reportedly emerged, and it established a template for a scholarly collection which was subsequently followed by many other

collectors. Filene records the importance of Herder's collection, 'In 1778 Herder himself published a collection of song lyrics he had gathered and transcribed in the German border region of Riga (present – day Latvia). In titling the work, Herder used a newly emerging word, *Volkslieder* – folk song.'<sup>412</sup> The template established by Herder consisted of a scholarly introduction, in which he largely focused on explaining what was meant by *volkslieder* and *kultur des volkes*, since these terms were not widely used. Even this explication became part of the conventions of a literary collection, since each collector needed to explain the conception of folk music which informed their work. Herder's introduction also has a certain amount in common with other Romantic era documents, like Wordsworth's *Preface to the Lyrical Ballads* of 1801, which establish many of the Romantic ideas which inform the work and function as a concise manifesto of the writer's own brand of Romanticism. This need to explain the work and the motivations behind it is common among many types of published material, but the motivations themselves clearly emerge from the intellectual context of the Romantic Movement, and in Herder's case the desire to find and demonstrate the value of the cultural purity of the folk. Bendix explains Herder's view concisely as, '...native song and poetry were...showing humans' blissful use of their reflexive capability – blissful in that the sentient aspects of being and thinking were not at the corroded stage of Herder's contemporaries.'<sup>413</sup>

Early American collections, including Child's *Ballads*, Sharp's *English Folk Songs*, and John Lomax's *Cowboy Songs*, all used this convention to introduce their work. In each case the collector, like Herder, had to explain the unfamiliar elements which comprise the collection. In the introduction to *Ballads* Child draws attention to the completeness of his collection, implied by the title,

By correspondence, and by an extensive diffusion of printed circulars, I have tried to stimulate collection from tradition in Scotland, Canada, and the United States, and no becoming means has been left unemployed to obtain possession of unsunned treasures locked up in writing.<sup>414</sup>

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<sup>412</sup> Filene, Benjamin. 2000. *Romancing the Folk: Public Memory & American Roots Music*. University of North Carolina Press. p. 10.

<sup>413</sup> Bendix, Regina. 1997. *In Search of Authenticity: The Formation of Folklore Studies*. University of Wisconsin Press. p. 37.

<sup>414</sup> Child, Francis. 1898. *The English and Scottish and Popular Ballads*. Boston, Houghton, Mifflin, and Co.

In this case, the unfamiliar aspect of the collection was the completeness it aspired to, and the introduction explains how this was achieved. It is interesting to note that, as mentioned previously, Child included no definition of the ballad in his collection, but instead used the introduction to explain his methods. However, as with Herder, the introduction still serves to explain the important and unfamiliar elements of the collection. Sharp's introduction to *English Folk Songs* served the same function as Herder's, introducing the folk who sing the songs, the types of folk song found in the region, the musical peculiarities of the songs, and their importance for the study of folk music. Sharp concluded his introduction with the claim that,

When he sings his aim is to forget himself and everything that reminds him of his everyday life; and so it is that he has come to create an imaginary world of his own, and to people it with characters quite as wonderful, in their way, as the elfish creations of Spenser.<sup>415</sup>

What is clear from this introduction is that it was being used to argue for the importance of this work and these songs. In this way it also followed on from Herder's example in *Volkslieder*, in which Herder established the importance of the songs he collected.<sup>416</sup> As Burke points out, 'Herder once called folksongs 'the archive of the people' (*Das Archiv des Volkes*)'<sup>417</sup> In the case of John Lomax, the introduction to *Cowboy Songs* followed the precedents established by Herder, and those introduced into the tradition by Child and Sharp. Like his predecessors, Lomax stressed the importance of his collection in academic studies, 'I beg the cooperation of all who are interested in this vital, however humble, expression of American literature.'<sup>418</sup> The convention of an introduction to a literary collection certainly persisted into the twentieth century, but this chapter discusses if it could be applied to different kinds of collection. Despite the obvious similarity being the presence of an introduction in the collections of Child, Sharp, and Lomax, the intellectual backgrounds that determined the content of the introduction were very different. Child's

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<sup>415</sup> Sharp, Cecil J. 1917. *English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians*. New York, G.P. Putnam and Sons.

<sup>416</sup> Herder, Johann Gottfried von. 1778. *Volkslieder*. Leipzig.

<sup>417</sup> Burke, Peter. 1978. *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*. Ashgate Publishing, Surrey. p. 129.

<sup>418</sup> Lomax, John A. 1910. *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads*. New York, MacMillan Press.

context was the post – Romantic ideas of the Grimms, aspects of Herder’s Romanticism, and the ballad scholarship of Grundtvig. In the case of Sharp many of the same ideas are discussed in the introduction, but added to this was Sharp’s Fabian socialist idea of using folk music for social improvement and conferring a heritage on the English people. The content of Lomax’s introduction was based on his Anglo – Saxon nativism, and aspects of Antimodernism pertaining to the decline of manhood and overcivilisation. These are the transformations in the content of introductions to folksong collections, although the introduction itself is a shared convention belonging to the folklore discipline.

Following this introduction, Herder’s *Volkslieder* featured a collection of folk songs arranged in no discernible order, for which only lyrics had been transcribed. This too became a convention of many literary collections, which focused on the lyrics and paid little or no attention to the tunes. Herder was treating the songs in *volkslieder* as a kind of folk poetry, and as such did not document tunes, and only recorded the lyrics in a common verse structure and meter. Child adopted the same method for the presentation of *Ballads*, although he organised his ballads according to subject, and provided an index.<sup>419</sup> He treated the ballads in his collection as popular poetry, and consequently did not record tunes for individual songs, although there were some tunes noted in the appendix to the collection.<sup>420</sup> This suggests that despite working in the same area as Herder, he had some awareness of the potential interest of readers in the tune of a song. However, the fact these tunes were placed in the appendix indicates he did not consider them especially important. As Harker notes, Child was inclined to relegate much material to an appendix for the benefit of casual readers.<sup>421</sup> Despite his improved organisation, the songs in *Ballads* mostly appear as a simple list of songs. This could be seen as a transformation brought about in part by the work of the Grimms, whose *Kinder – und Hausmärchen* collection first introduced some degree of organisation, more detail in the introduction, and took some thought for the potential readers of the collection. As Bendix points, ‘While there were earlier collections of tales in French and Italian as well as German, the preface and comparative notes in the *KHM* were a complete novelty in the publication of “simple folktales”.’<sup>422</sup> The transformations

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<sup>419</sup> Child, Francis. 1898. *The English and Scottish and Popular Ballads*. Boston, Houghton, Mifflin, and Co.

<sup>420</sup> Ibid.

<sup>421</sup> Harker, Dave. 1981. ‘Francis James Child and the ‘Ballad Consensus’’. *Folk Music Journal*. 4/2. p. 149.

<sup>422</sup> Bendix, Regina. 1997. *In Search of Authenticity: The Formation of Folklore Studies*. University of Wisconsin Press. p. 50.

introduced into the American collecting tradition by Child's *Ballads* were partly derived from technical aspects of *Kinder – und Hausmärchen* which resulted in a collection with more scholarly apparatus and more scope in catering to scholarly readers.

Sharp's *English Folk Songs* developed on the organisation of Child, and also included both the words and the tunes of folk songs. *English Folk Songs* is organised into ballads, songs, and nursery songs, and although the list format is identical to that of Child, these categories help in organising the songs to some degree.<sup>423</sup> The sections of his introduction which appear to explain his categories largely offer further observations on the state of song collecting,

The ballads have, probably, the longer history behind them; at any rate, they attracted the attention of collectors earlier than the songs – the reason, perhaps, why the ballads have suffered, far more than the songs, from the unscrupulous editing of literary meddlers.<sup>424</sup>

This assumption means that Sharp's organisation has limited use, and although it develops the arrangement used by Herder, it does not function particularly well as a guide. The simple listing conventions established by Herder were still favoured by the American collectors, although both Child and Sharp attempted to introduce their own organisational techniques. The major transformation Sharp introduced to the collecting tradition was of course his inclusion of tunes and texts for the songs he collected, and the determined 'balance' between these two aspects of a folk song. Although this was not a completely new innovation, since Child included some fragments of tunes in his *Ballads*, as did Motherwell in *Minstrelsy*, Sharp's equal attention to the words and tunes was a transformation of the conventions of a collection. Motherwell commented on his fragments of tunes,

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<sup>423</sup> Sharp, Cecil J. 1917. *English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians*. New York, G.P. Putnam and Sons.

<sup>424</sup> *Ibid.*

Whatever the Musician may think of its worth, the Antiquarian, it is believed, will not lightly pass it by, but on the contrary, rejoice with an exceeding gladness that some little has been done to transmit it purely and undefiled to posterity.<sup>425</sup>

Motherwell's tune fragments are included, much like Child's, for the sake of completeness, to show the scholarly reader, and the 'Antiquarian', that every aspect of the songs has been preserved to a certain extent. In the case of Sharp, *English Folk Songs* was intended more for use as a book for playing and learning from, and in this respect it is clear to see how Sharp's collection was dictated by his Fabian socialist intellectual grounding. Sharp's aim for his collection was to for it to be used as part of his efforts to educate folk music and dance into the people as a national culture, as a means of social improvement, and this could only be done by making his collections devices for playing and learning music.

Herder's *Volkslieder* established an important precedent of a folksong collection: the need for an explanation or justification. This convention is found in many folksong collections and in the details of the explanation can often be found important references to the intellectual context which informs the collecting work itself. In Herder's introduction there are useful indications of his Romantic ideas about the value of folk music, and also of its capacity for communication among communities. Although Herder's own theories of culture cannot be inferred from simply studying *Volkslieder*, it does offer an insight into the intellectual background to his work, and with a thorough understanding of this background it is possible to glean some of Herder's ideas by studying his collection. The transformation found in *Volkslieder* could be seen as one of the earliest treatments of folk music as a subject of serious study, and this transformation was induced by the Romantic Movement's fascination with the folk.

#### 4.3: *Kinder – und Hausmärchen* and the Science of Folklore

The collection of folk tales compiled by Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm is probably cited most frequently by Child as the basis for his own work. This is partly due to the theories of folk history which support the collection, as well as the editing techniques and assembly

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<sup>425</sup> Motherwell, William. 1827. *Minstrelsy Ancient and Modern*. John Wylie Publishing, Glasgow. Appendix, p. xxiv.



methods which constructed the collection. The collection published by the Grimm brothers was titled *Kinder – und Hausmärchen* or ‘Children’s and Household Tales’, which may reveal something about the intended audience of the collection. However, this does not necessarily detract from the scholarly ambition of the collection, since the Grimm brothers, like Herder, were established linguists and philosophers of language. In addition, the title may be slightly confusing because it may not speak to the suitability of the collection, or its intended use, but rather the origins of the folk tales. The tales themselves may have been gathered from the domestic settings described in the collection, and it has been shown by Dégh that this was indeed the source of much of the Grimms’ investigations. One of the important points to note about *Kinder – und Hausmärchen* is that, because of its success as a book for children, modern editions dispense with the introduction, without which the scholarly nature of the collection may be somewhat compromised. Dégh states, ‘The unacquainted reader, looking at the German title of Grimm’s *Household Tales – Kinder – und Hausmärchen* – will probably take for granted that it contains what it promises: tales for the nursery and the household.’<sup>426</sup>

Dégh goes on to argue that despite the surface appearance of the collection, it was meant as a scholarly collection, and in this capacity it has been very influential.

The *Household Tales* had set the model which was followed in similar basic collections by patriots of many European nations...the *Household Tales* soon became the standard work for international tale study, basic for comparative analysis...evidently *Household Tales* was originally intended for the scholarly reader.<sup>427</sup>

Bendix is in agreement with the transformations cited by Dégh, which included accompanying notes for the folk tales, and a more extensive introduction for the collection. Both Bendix and Dégh cite these innovations as important in the history of the folklore discipline, which was emerging as a branch of comparative literary analysis and these transformations reflected that. Given the extent to which Child was influenced by the work

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<sup>426</sup> Dégh, Linda. 1979. ‘Grimm’s *Household Tales* and its Place in the Household: The Social Relevance of a Controversial Classic.’ *Western Folklore*. 38/2. p. 83.

<sup>427</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 87 – 88.

of the Grimms, the structure of *Kinder – und Hausmärchen* likely contributed to Child's preferences for the structure of *Ballads*. Harker notes of Child that, 'Throughout his life he kept a picture of Wilhelm and Jakob Grimm on the mantel over his study fire – place.'<sup>428</sup> The *vorrede* (preface) which introduces *Kinder – und Hausmärchen* details the theories of the Grimm brothers regarding the origins of the tales in their collection, and their cultural importance for Germany. As Dégh observes, 'The gathering of tale materials, according to Jakob, would lead to a history of German poetry.'<sup>429</sup> Child's theories of folk music and his aims for *Ballads* are closer to those of the Grimms than any of the other collectors in the American tradition, all of whom inherited certain conventions from the Grimms, but were working in very different intellectual contexts. Child was aiming to document the history of popular balladry in England and Scotland, and to this end conducted research even more extensive than that of the Grimms, and based aspects of his collection on *Kinder – und Hausmärchen*. Child undoubtedly moved on from certain theories the Grimms advanced, such as his acceptance that ballads are composed by a person, although the composer may be anonymous, nevertheless Child still deferred to the Grimms in his collection.

As mentioned previously, Sharp argued for the importance of the work in his introduction and, like Jakob Grimm, suggested that the collection should be a contribution to national culture, 'this national type is always to be found in its purest, as well as in its most stable and permanent form, in the folk – arts of a nation.'<sup>430</sup> Although it is important to note that, despite the similarity in the desire to use folk music as national culture, the motivations were very different. The Grimms were working in a post – Romantic period, as Bendix describes it, in which recovering artefacts of the past was the most important thing, and preserving them as evidence of a more authentic life. In Sharp's case the motivation was own idea of Fabian socialism, in which folk music and dance could become national culture through education, and in doing so the culture and society of the nation could be improved. Sharp's efforts were geared more towards social improvements rather than preserving artefacts, and this is shown in Sharp's folk song and dance curriculum which he designed for schools in England and America. There is also the state of the nation to consider during the period in which the collectors were working: in 1812 when *Kinder – und*

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<sup>428</sup> Harker, Dave. 1981. 'Francis James Child and the 'Ballad Consensus''. *Folk Music Journal*. 4/2. p. 149.

<sup>429</sup> Dégh, Linda. 1979. 'Grimm's *Household Tales* and its Place in the Household: The Social Relevance of a Controversial Classic.' *Western Folklore*. 38/2. p. 85.

<sup>430</sup> *Ibid.*

*Hausmärchen* was first published the Holy Roman Empire had recently been dissolved following its defeat in the Napoleonic Wars and there was still no unified language or culture of Germany, which was partly responsible for the Grimms pushing their folktales forward as national culture. In the case of early twentieth century England there was not the political fragmentation, but there was social upheaval with the Suffrage Movement, and in a thoroughly industrialised society there was an Antimodern feeling that the nation had lost touch with its roots. Progressive reformers attempted to reintroduce folk culture to the industrialised working – classes and halt the seeming cultural decline.

The structure of the Grimms' *Kinder – und Hausmärchen* contributed to the conventions of a literary folk song collection, with the introduction being responsible for much of its scholarly weight. The aspect of the tradition that the Grimms built on more significantly is the use of the introduction to assert the importance of the material for national culture, and both Child and Sharp used this technique, though in different ways. Sharp used this convention to promote the material he was collecting as ideal national culture, and Child conceived of popular ballads in a similar way. However, Child believed the ballads had previously been a kind of national culture but had declined in popularity and been superseded by inferior types of popular culture. He described the situation in which this popular balladry appeared as being without the rigid class structure that exists now, and little division in culture.<sup>431</sup>

John Lomax used the introduction to *Cowboy Songs* in a manner similar to the precedent established by the Grimms and continued by Sharp. He argued for the importance of the songs in *Cowboy Songs*, stating in his introduction,

They are chiefly interesting to the present generation, however, because of the light they throw on the conditions of pioneer life, and more particularly because of the information they contain concerning that unique and romantic in modern civilisation, the American cowboy.<sup>432</sup>

Once again, though, it is essential to note that despite Lomax and the Grimms both using the introductions to their collections to promote the music, Lomax's intellectual context was

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<sup>431</sup> Child, Francis. 1900. 'Ballad Poetry'. *Johnson's Universal Cyclopaedia*. New York.

<sup>432</sup> Lomax, John A. 1910. *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads*. New York, MacMillan Press.

the Antimodernist reaction to overcivilisation in late nineteenth and early twentieth century, and the promotion of an Anglo – Saxon American cultural hegemony. The scope of Lomax’s introduction is governed by the Antimodernism and Anglo – Saxon nativism promulgated at Harvard during his education and his early work with cowboy songs. The idea of using the music as national culture is, at its most rudimentary level, something many collectors had in common, and using the introduction of a collection to promote this idea is similarly common. However, each of the collectors is very much distinguished by the intellectual and political context in which they were working, and this dictated the content of their introductions and how they conceived of a national culture. The history of the folklore discipline is populated by numerous conventions like the arrangement of collections, but the transformations introduced to these conventions are determined by whatever political, cultural, and intellectual trends are influencing the collector.

#### 4.4: The Aims of Folk Song Collections

The use of the introduction in this way raises the issue of the aims of collections and their collectors, and if these aims are made clear, or can be discerned, within the collection itself. Herder does not make the aims of *Volkslieder* clear, but Filene offers a summation of his ambitions more generally, ‘To Herder, folk culture offered a way to escape the Enlightenment’s stifling emphasis on reason, planning, and universalism in cultural expression. Folk forms could cleanse culture of the artificiality that, he felt, was poisoning modern life.’<sup>433</sup> However, this does not make the aims of *Volkslieder* any clearer, since the collection does not appear to be a popularisation effort in any way. The most obvious aim would be the more general preservation of a sample of folk culture, but if Filene’s judgement is taken to be accurate then preservation would not be Herder’s primary concern. In fact, Herder’s aim may have been simply to compile a collection of folk songs, and to use this to demonstrate the inherent value of the music of the folk. Again, it is injudicious to examine *Volkslieder* without considering the context of Romanticism, and the Romantic notion that the purity of folk culture could be an antidote to the rationality of the Enlightenment, and could be a culture for a nation recently defeated in war by a near

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<sup>433</sup> Filene, Benjamin. 2000. *Romancing the Folk: Public Memory & American Roots Music*. University of North Carolina Press. p. 10.

neighbour, and lacking political or linguistic unity. Bendix describes this widespread Romantic impulse as, ‘...a budding bourgeoisie searching for an authentic culture to replace civilisation’s inauthenticities.’<sup>434</sup> If civilisation during this period was equated with the Enlightenment emphasis on reason, knowledge, and a scientific understanding of the world, then Romanticism was opposed to overcivilisation, and Herder’s *Volkslieder* was a device for demonstrating the values of an authentic culture overlooked by civilisation. The aims of any collection of folk music must be studied with due consideration of the context in which the collection was produced.

*Kinder – und Hausmärchen* has an ostensibly clearer aim of popularisation, since it is designed for domestic consumption, and introducing folk tales to a middle and upper class audience. Dégh, however, argues that the title of the Grimms’ collection is misleading since, ‘the collection as a whole is not for children and not for the household. Neither is it a homogenous body of tales.’<sup>435</sup> Dégh identifies two major aspects of the collection and the work of the Grimm brothers which supports her contention, one of which is national identity,

Their interest turned specifically toward the national poetry of the folk. Tales, songs, and beliefs of the German peasant were, for the Grimms, splintered remnants of the mythology of pagan ancestors suppressed by the medieval church. Their aim was to reconstruct this mythology by piecing together the splinters for the education of the people. According to the brothers, language, religion, and poetry, as well as heroic virtues manifested in the ancestral epic, would make the Germans conscious of their national values and effective in the struggle for national survival and independence in their age of political turbulence.<sup>436</sup>

She also suggests an aim of the collection entirely contrary to the title,

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<sup>434</sup> Bendix, Regina. 1997. *In Search of Authenticity: The Formation of Folklore Studies*. University of Wisconsin Press. p. 33.

<sup>435</sup> Dégh, Linda. 1979. ‘Grimm’s *Household Tales* and its Place in the Household: The Social Relevance of a Controversial Classic.’ *Western Folklore*. 38/2. p. 83.

<sup>436</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 84 – 85.

The Grimm brothers were primarily scholars – linguists, historians of religion and literature, and students of customary law. Although their nationalistic vocation was obvious, the comparative method they initiated opened a new chapter in philology. They established a new discipline: the science of folklore...evidently *Household Tales* was originally intended for the scholarly reader. Only under the pressures of success and popular demand did the Grimms turn more and more to the audience of children.<sup>437</sup>

This scholarly aim for the collection seems to be what links the conventions of *Volkslieder* and *Kinder – und Hausmärchen*. Neither collection contains a great deal of accompanying analysis for the songs or tales, but both can be used as scholarly reference works, and both collections clearly share a scholarly emphasis in their introductions. This connects the collections of the Grimms and Herder to many of the collections produced by the American collectors. Although the scholarly aim is not universally present, the design of the collection which allows it to function as a reference work can be found in most of the collections. Like Herder though, the Grimms were also demonstrating the importance of folk tales as evidence of the authentic culture of the folk. These artefacts represented a historical period in which language was common and not divisive, folk songs and tales were created by communities, and there was greater ‘purity’ in the lifestyles of the people. Although *Kinder – und Hausmärchen* is clearly meant as a reference work for scholars of language, it is also meant to demonstrate the value of the folk tales as a national culture.

Child conceived of the *Ballads* as a comprehensive reference work, for the use of other literary scholars. As Kittredge states in his preface to the collection,

Each ballad has an introduction dealing with the history and bibliography of the piece, and containing a full account of parallels in foreign languages, and, in general, of the diffusion of the story, with other pertinent matter. There are also exhaustive collations, elaborate bibliographies, an index of published ballad airs, a collection of tunes – and, in a word, all the apparatus necessary for the study of this kind of literature.<sup>438</sup>

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<sup>437</sup> Ibid. p. 88.

<sup>438</sup> Child, Francis. 1904. *The English and Scottish and Popular Ballads*. Boston, Houghton, Mifflin, and Co.

Although the literary collections of Sharp and John Lomax cannot claim to have the same level of scholarly rigour, and they clearly are attempts at popularisation, they can still function as reference works. Sharp's *English Folk Songs* has many of the important components of a folk song reference, including a bibliographic entry for each of the 122 songs in the collection and explanatory notes, a full bibliography of reference works consulted, and a complete index of songs. Although this collection was still an attempt to popularise the songs, it retains many of the characteristics of Child's collection. The difficulty in using Lomax's *Cowboy Songs* as a reference work is the lack of an index, contents page, or any explanatory notes. In its layout, *Cowboy Songs* is basically identical to Herder's *Volkslieder*: both have a scholarly introduction, and then have the song texts and their titles, with no discernible arrangement, or explanatory details. However, *Cowboy Songs* is resolutely popular in its approach, and by Lomax's admission, 'the volume is meant to be popular.'<sup>439</sup> Although there is some confusion regarding the purpose of Herder's *Volkslieder*, it appears that the more popular – leaning a literary collection is, the fewer elements of a reference work it possesses. This may also have little to do with the components of a literary collection, since Sharp's collection was also intended for use as a music book for home and school, and yet it keeps the references guides listed above. Lomax's cowboy songs could also be used as a music book, since it includes the tunes and texts, but does not have the explanatory detail of Sharp's collection. Both Sharp and Lomax put fieldwork and research into their collections, but the varying results do not reveal much by themselves about the intention of the collector. As previously discussed, the important consideration when studying the collections is the context in which they were produced, and it has been shown that both Sharp and Lomax were interested in changing the prevailing culture of the period. As such, these both transform literary collections by introducing tunes, so they can be used as music books and the songs can be learned. However, the main aim may simply be to demonstrate the existence of these songs, and their value, as examples of the racial heritage of the English people in Sharp's case, and in the case of Lomax the robust and manly culture which was endangered in America.

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<sup>439</sup> Lomax, John A. 1910. *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads*. New York, MacMillan Press.

#### 4.5: Popular and Scholarly Collections

However, there are numerous collections, some of which precede Herder's *Volkslieder* which are completely popular in their approach, and yet share many of the same conventions as the Herder and Grimm collections. Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* contained sixty – four song texts supposedly adapted from an ancient manuscript. As Filene points out, '*Reliques* also drew considerably on printed broadsides and on the popular *Collection of Old Ballads*. Ignoring these low and middlebrow antecedents, though, Percy depicted his ballads as works of high culture. He attributed the songs to early medieval minstrels who, he insisted, had been respected artists in medieval courts.'<sup>440</sup> Filene quite rightly observes that Percy speculatively distorts the origins and purpose of the songs in *Reliques*, but this distortion is appreciably different from that of Herder or the Grimms. He presents the songs as originating in high culture, composed and performed for medieval aristocracy by professionals with distinguished patrons,

The reader is here presented with select remains of our ancient English bards and minstrels, an order of men who were once greatly respected by our ancestors...the greater part of them are extracted from an ancient folio manuscript, in the Editor's possession, which contains near 200 poems, songs, and metrical romances.<sup>441</sup>

Percy further romanticises the origins of the songs in *Reliques* by ascribing them to an ancient 'order of men', and referring to his own discovery of the document which included the songs. However, despite these obvious methods of popularisation, *Reliques* features the same parts as collections previously looked at. It includes a lengthy introduction which takes the form of an 'Essay on Ancient Minstrels', from which a considerable amount of his romanticising emerges; and accompanying notes for each of the songs, which are also extensive and detailed. Despite the seemingly popular use of these conventions, *Reliques* remains a notably popular collection but with a scholarly apparatus. As discussed earlier in

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<sup>440</sup> Filene, Benjamin. 2000. *Romancing the Folk: Public Memory & American Roots Music*. University of North Carolina Press. pp. 10 – 11.

<sup>441</sup> Percy, Thomas. 1765. *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*. J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd., London. p. 3.



the thesis, Percy's collection was intended for a noble patron, with all the flattery and decorum associated with noble patronage, and consequently one of the requirements of the collection is to be furnished with detail which legitimises the songs and ennoble them as skilled compositions for noble patrons, echoing the arrangement between Percy and the Duchess of Northumberland. In addition, Percy was working during the Romantic era which valued expressions of authentic folk culture, and during the general eighteenth century interest in the culture of rural history. Williams, in studying some of the English poetry of the eighteenth century, concludes, 'Thus in the poems we have been looking at there is no historical reference back. What we find, nevertheless, is an idealisation of feudal and immediately post – feudal values...'<sup>442</sup> These are the values Percy represents in his collection through the depiction of an ancient order of minstrels who composed folk songs for noble patrons. It might be misleading to refer to Percy's *Reliques* as popular, since its production was governed by this patronage system, and regardless of any romanticisation, it did employ many conventions which would become common in scholarly collections. This implies that a term like 'popular' has little meaning in discussions of folk song collections, but this is explored further below.

Lomax's *Cowboy Songs* as previously discussed contains only the introduction as a scholarly tool, and no other scholarly apparatus, and yet Kittredge in the preface suggests it is, 'a real contribution, both to literature and to learning.'<sup>443</sup> Ostensibly there seems to be a similar attitude towards Percy's *Reliques*: the prevailing attitude from other collectors and poets into the nineteenth – century is one of scholarly and cultural endorsement. Child cites Percy's collection as precedent on which serious collecting in Europe is based,

The first impulse to the collecting of this poetry was given by the publication of Percy's *Reliques* in 1765. The *Reliques* inspired Bürger and Herder, through whom, and especially through Herder's *Volkslieder* that interest in the literature of the people was awakened in Germany which has spread over the whole of Europe, and has led to the collecting and study of the traditional songs and tales.<sup>444</sup>

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<sup>442</sup> Williams, Raymond. 1985. *The Country and the City*. Hogarth, London. p. 35.

<sup>443</sup> Lomax, John A. 1910. *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads*. New York, MacMillan Press.

<sup>444</sup> Child, Francis. 1900. 'Ballad Poetry'. *Johnson's Universal Cyclopaedia*. New York.

This indicates that the response to the collection is also dictated by the context, and since Percy's *Reliques* was published during a period in which folk culture was valued and coveted it received widespread endorsement from Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Walter Scott who apparently based *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* on Percy's collection. Similarly, Lomax's collection was supported by folk song collectors and Harvard scholars, with the combined interests of folk poetry and the 'cult' of manhood at Harvard, of which the cowboy was a personification. Barrett Wendell, whose introduction refers to important aspects of manhood and Antimodernism, 'At times when we yearn for polite grace, ballads may seem rude; at times when polite grace seems tedious, sophisticated, corrupt, or mendacious, their very rudeness refreshes us with a new sense of brimming life...'<sup>445</sup> supported the work of Lomax during his graduate studies at Harvard, and encouraged him to pursue his collecting work. Even though Lomax's collection does not contain the erudition of Child's *Ballads* it is still taken as a work of scholarly importance partly due to the context in which it was published.

#### 4.6: Literary Conventions in Recorded Collections

The conventions of a collection established by the literary works of Herder and others are questioned by the use of audio recording technology to assemble a collection. It is uncertain when recording devices were first used to capture folk song performances, but undoubtedly some of the most effective collectors who used recording technology were the Lomaxes. Their 1933 collecting expedition was the first in which they used a portable recording device, and during this summer they had considerable success in their endeavour. In John Lomax's first report as honorary curator of the Archive of American Folk Song he stated,

During this last summer's work we recorded about 100 songs which showed differences worthy of note. In doing so we used 25 aluminium and 15 celluloid disks. The subject matter of these songs relates to the life of the prisoner; his

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<sup>445</sup> Lomax, John A. 1910. *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads*. New York, MacMillan Press.

longing for freedom and home; labour on the farm, the levee, the railroad, and in the river bottoms; the tragedies, the comedies, and the loves of the Negro.<sup>446</sup>

He also seemed pleased with the efficacy of the recording machine, stating, 'The machine we have used, and machines similar to it, will produce fairly satisfactory records even under the unusually unfavourable conditions which were unavoidable in prison camps, working with ignorant and often much – excited individuals.'<sup>447</sup> Although the conventions of the collections assembled by the Lomaxes changed over 10 – 15 of years fieldwork experience, they consistently differ from the traditional literary conventions. Initially the collection was simply the records, deposited in the archive with hastily scribbled notes explaining the place of recording, date, and usually performer and song title. Soon the Lomaxes began taking field notes and including these in the archive collection, which better explain the course of their fieldwork. These notes do not enumerate every song recorded, but provide a narrative instead. There is no introduction for the collection, instead there are notes which persistently explain the aim of the collecting trip and the ideas about folk music that inform the collecting efforts. However, this may be the result of fieldwork and not necessarily the intervention of recording technology in folk collecting practices. Although, other collections based on fieldwork but produced as a literary collection, like Sharp's *English Folk Songs*, do still include an introduction in the same style of that of the Grimms and Child. The important transformation here may indeed be the introduction of recording technology to fieldwork, which results in a collection of objects in a radically different form than those transcribed or taken from manuscripts, broadsides etc. Despite this innovation, these objects still require explanatory notes in the same way that those in literary collections do, and the journals accompanying many of the Lomaxes recording expeditions are evidence of this. Ultimately, there are more important differences between literary and recorded collections than the introduction, and these will be discussed further below.

The journals which accompany the recorded collections in the Archive of American Folk Song generally just describe the way the fieldwork developed throughout the recording trip. In the journal for John and Ruby Terrill Lomax's 1940 Southern States recording trip,

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<sup>446</sup> Lomax, John A. 1933. *Annual Report of the Librarian of Congress*. United States Government Printing Office, Washington. p. 99.

<sup>447</sup> Ibid.

John Lomax makes numerous references to the difficulties involved in fieldwork, 'Our pride was not solved by the thought that the ballad – hunting job was not classed as an occupation undertaken by decent people! Perhaps, too, the feeling had its basis because our search was mainly among negroes.'<sup>448</sup> Consequently, many of the notes for this recording trip were explanations or justifications for concentrating their search on African – American folk music, which as Lomax suggests was not considered the most valuable material. This need to justify the collecting decisions can also be found in the collections of Herder, Sharp, and Motherwell, who felt the need to explain why they were collecting folk music. The conventions of literary collections, namely the introduction and accompanying notes, are still found in the recorded collections of the Lomaxes, albeit combined in the journal for the collecting trip. The transformation inherent in using recording technology is in the process of collecting and the objects gathered rather than the collection produced. There is an obvious difference in format, but the recordings still require annotation in the same way that folk song texts require accompanying notes. John Lomax, in a 1935 letter to the Carnegie Corporation, stated the need for annotation of field recordings, 'I call your attention particularly to two matters that should receive your immediate attention: (a) Provision for the proper transcription, translation and annotation of the records we are placing in the Library of Congress.'<sup>449</sup> Clearly the recordings of songs do not provide a folk song object that requires no ancillary detail, and in this respect certain conventions of literary collections do carry over to recorded collections. However, the transformation of the Lomaxes is partly in using recording technology to compile a collection, and also in depositing the collection in an archive for use by students and other interested parties.

#### 4.7: Representation in Folk Song Collections

John Lomax's comments about the success experienced while using the recording device raises questions about the objectivity of the collection's representation of folk music. Filene refers to advice given by the Library of Congress to John Lomax,

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<sup>448</sup> Lomax, John A. 1940. 'John and Ruby Terrill Lomax 1940 Southern States Recordings Collection'. American Folklife Centre, Washington DC.

<sup>449</sup> Lomax, John A. 1935. 'Letter to Carnegie Corporation, 18/01/1935'. In Lomax Papers, American Folklife Centre, Washington DC.

“Don’t take any musicians along with you: what the Library wants is the machine’s record of Negro singing, and not some musician’s interpretation of it.” At the end of his first summer of recording, Lomax concluded that he had successfully maintained his studied detachment from the recording process.<sup>450</sup>

This is particularly apposite when looked at in relation to the work of the Grimms, and assertions like those made by Dégh, ‘they established a new discipline: the science of folklore.’<sup>451</sup> Folklore as a scientific discipline is arguably given greater credibility through the use of a recording machine, which can capture completely accurate performances of a folk song. There are fewer opportunities for manipulation of the song, thus providing a collection which is more representative of its subject. The recorded collection also demands extensive fieldwork, which could contribute to the scientific legitimacy of the work. Although the Grimms did transcribe a large number of their tales from informants, Dégh points out that these informants were generally not the ‘folk’ themselves,

Evidently, the Grimms recorded tales seldom, if ever, came originally “from the lips of the German folk.” Narrators retold stories from the fashionable literary collections of Musaeus, d’Aulnoy, Perrault, and others. Even tales from early German sources were selected for inclusion: the exemplum books and jestbooks of Montanus...Johannes Pauli, Prätorius, Hans Sachs, and Froschmäuseler, among others.<sup>452</sup>

This kind of misrepresentation could be seen to detract from the scientific credibility of literary collections like *Kinder – und Hausmärchen*.

Although Dégh raises an important issue, in reality the collecting methods of the Grimms and the way in which they represent the material in their collection are part of the way in which the folklore discipline and folk music collecting have developed. Rather than it

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<sup>450</sup> Filene, Benjamin. 2000. *Romancing the Folk: Public Memory & American Roots Music*. University of North Carolina Press. p. 56.

<sup>451</sup> Dégh, Linda. 1979. ‘Grimm’s *Household Tales* and its Place in the Household: The Social Relevance of a Controversial Classic.’ *Western Folklore*. 38/2. p. 88.

<sup>452</sup> Ibid.

being misrepresentation, the presentation of folk tales as examples of the authentic folk culture of the past is part of the Romantic tradition of searching for folk purity as an antidote to the inauthenticity of the prevailing culture. The very idea of the 'folk' is a construct, based on a Romantic separation of the country and the city and rural and urban culture. This makes misrepresentation a problematic issue in folk music, since the very idea of an 'authentic' folk music is based on a Romantic construct, and depicting songs or tales gathered from other collections or 'non – folk' sources as 'authentic' material does not compromise the idea of authenticity simply because it is part of the ways by which collectors have assembled their collections and contributed to the developing idea of folk culture. In addition, the social interaction of the middle – classes is important in the history of the folklore discipline, as discussed previously, since most of the collecting done in Europe and America involved some degree of interaction between the middle classes and the working classes. If the majority of the research of the Grimms came from sources within their own social circles, this reflects the nature of collecting as an attempt to bridge the social gap, or in the case of the Grimms to perhaps believe that fieldwork would not yield the desired results because of the decline of folk culture. This can also be seen in the work of Child, who was ostensibly documenting a tradition sustained by the rural folk, but his research was through written sources or his own network of learned correspondents. Far from being a misrepresentation, these aspects of collecting are simply part of the history of the folklore discipline.

However, recorded collections are not necessarily free from manipulation or misrepresentation: when recording work songs in southern segregated penitentiaries the Lomaxes sometimes asked the inmates to recreate the rhythmic work sounds of chopping logs or breaking rocks by slapping on tables or clapping hands.<sup>453</sup> These are represented as recordings of work songs in archival collections, when in fact they are artificial recreations of work songs. Lomax alluded to their quality as disappointing, 'We had never been able to record track lining, tie tamping, steel laying songs while men were actually doing the work. Our staged records were never entirely satisfactory.'<sup>454</sup> This could be seen to amount to the same kind of misrepresentation as the Grimms sourcing their material in previous

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<sup>453</sup> Porterfield, Nolan. 1996. *The Last Cavalier: The Life and Times of John A. Lomax*. University of Illinois Press.

<sup>454</sup> Lomax, John A. 1940. 'John and Ruby Terrill Lomax 1940 Southern States Recordings Collection'. American Folklife Centre, Washington DC.

collections. Both kinds of concealment are attempts to enhance the authenticity of the material in the collection. However, as stated above, even the Lomaxes conscious manufacturing of the appropriate sounds of work in their recordings of work songs are based on their own construct of what authentic work songs should sound like. This is not so much misrepresentation of folk culture, as it is part of the process of collecting and the associated presentation of folk culture. There is no intrinsic factual authenticity in folk music, but instead there has been a series of transformations in what constitutes authenticity by collectors and scholars of folk music. Clearly the Lomaxes believed that an authentic work song needed the sounds of work, and attempted to add these sounds so the recording would conform to their idea of authenticity.

This ties in with one of Peterson's definitions of authenticity, 'A common sense of the idea of "authenticity," especially among critics and moralists, centrally involves the act of certifying what can be judged *authentic*, rather than *inauthentic*, a *fake*, a *forgery*, or a *pretence*.'<sup>455</sup> The Lomaxes certified the authenticity of their own collection, but only after manufacturing this authenticity during their recording sessions. The same could be said of Percy's collection, in which he manufactured the authenticity of the ballads in the introduction, using the anecdote of the ancient manuscript. Percy also certifies the authenticity of his own collection using the same anecdote and alleged exhortations from contemporaries to produce the collection. It is essential to note that, while it could be seen as misrepresentation, if there is no original there is nothing to misrepresent. There is certainly no fact of the matter about Percy's collection, and while there may be reasonable doubt regarding Percy's history of the 'Minstrel Order', it is difficult to suggest Percy has misrepresented anything in *Reliques*. Again, this is simply part of the process of the collector constructing their own idea of authenticity, which is often explicated in their collection. Percy's transformation of this idea of authenticity is in the depiction of these songs as belonging to 'high' culture and having been commissioned by noble patrons, and as such they address noble subjects.

While there are some elements of truth to Lomax's introduction to the singing cowboy, much of it is a misrepresentation of the lifestyle of the cowboy. He does not appear to distort the descriptions of the activities of the cowboy on the trail to a great degree, but

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<sup>455</sup> Peterson, Richard A. 1997. *Creating Country Music: Fabricating Authenticity*. University of Chicago Press. p. 206.

it is in the colour he adds to the descriptions where the misrepresentation lies. Despite this coloured depiction of the origins of the songs, Lomax also showed an awareness of the romanticisation of the cowboy, referring to him as ‘that unique and romantic figure in modern civilisation’<sup>456</sup>. He also debunks some myths about the cowboy in his introduction, reminding the reader, ‘Not nearly so often, however, as one might suppose, did he die with his boots on. Many of the most wealthy and respected citizens now living in the border states served as cowboys before settling down to quiet domesticity.’<sup>457</sup> Lomax was essentially constructing his own image of the cowboy, inserting some of his own myths in place of traditional ones, which reflected the content of the collection. It seems likely that this was a conscious misrepresentation to enhance the appeal of the collection, since it was a commercial venture, but it is important to note this as another example of misrepresentation in a folk song collection. In this respect, the American collecting tradition is defined by a series of transformations in the idea of authenticity, rather than a series of misrepresentations of a subject. Since the idea of ‘Volkslieder’ was created as a way of representing the apparent ‘authenticity’ found in rural folk culture, it is clear how the notion of misrepresentation cannot apply to Herder’s *Volkslieder* collection. The same applies to all other collections studied in this thesis, which are all based on the collector’s idea of authentic folk songs, and as such cannot be called misrepresentations of a subject, because they essentially invent the subject they are documenting. As Cantwell observes, ‘the folk are simply what humanity appears to be from the prospect of social pre-eminence, as it gazes down on its dependents. Nobility in principle implies that dependency, to which nobility responds, in principle, with obligation...’<sup>458</sup> Cantwell identifies the fundamental social interaction at the heart of this invented idea of the folk, which is the collector who is generally middle – class finding ‘authenticity’ in the culture of the working classes and presenting it in collected material that the collector feels best represents this culture. This social interaction is an essential part of the collecting tradition, and the intellectual trends that have the biggest impact on the middle – classes during certain periods are what determine how ‘authenticity’ is presented. Walkowitz also points out the social interaction and invention of the idea of the folk,

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<sup>456</sup> Lomax, John A. 1910. *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads*. New York, MacMillan Press.

<sup>457</sup> Ibid.

<sup>458</sup> Cantwell, Robert. 1996. *When We Were Good: The Folk Revival*. Harvard University Press. p. 38.



In tracing this history of folk song collectors, it is important to remember that these people were as much creating as discovering a tradition. This was an “imagined folk,” a “peasant” folk as seen through the class perspective of an elite, as most historians have come to appreciate.<sup>459</sup>

Walkowitz also notes that despite folk being invented, it loses none of its importance,

The folk need not be ancient or only of a peasantry, and the cultural life of an urban bourgeoisie is no less “genuine.” A folk tradition is no less “real” for being constantly revised or “invented” in ways that are fundamental to its essence.<sup>460</sup>

Therefore it would be misleading to see the American collecting tradition as a series of misrepresentations of a subject. Instead, it is a series of transformations in the invented ‘authenticity’ that determines much of the content of collections.

#### 4.8: The Issue of Editing and Selection

The apparatus of a literary collection differs in some key areas from an audio collection. Audio collections, like those assembled by the Lomaxes for the Archive of American Folk Song, are not arranged in the same way as Herder’s *Volkslieder* or the Grimms *Kinder – und Hausmärchen*. However, audio and literary collections do share conventions of editing and selection, and again this could be said to limit their capacity for representation. Pearce refers to the process of editing and selection as one of the most important elements in building a collection, ‘The selection process clearly lies at the heart of collecting’ and also describes the conditions of selection as, ‘the world of potential collection objects, that is, the ordinary world of things organised into sets, and the creation of the collection.’<sup>461</sup> This can be used to describe, for example, Child’s process of selection in which he worked with

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<sup>459</sup> Walkowitz, Daniel J. 2010. *City Folk: English Country Dance and the Politics of the Folk in Modern America*. New York University Press. p. 36.

<sup>460</sup> *Ibid.* p. 4.

<sup>461</sup> Pearce, Susan M. 1995. *On Collecting: An Investigation into Collecting in the European Tradition*. Routledge Press, London. p. 23.

the ordinary world of things organised into the ballad set, and determined which would be part of his collection. Pearce describes entry into a collection as a kind of elevation,

One way of describing this quality of separateness or ‘set – apart’ is to say that collection objects have passed from the profane – the secular world of mundane, ordinary commodity – to the sacred, taken to be extraordinary, special and capable of generating reverence.<sup>462</sup>

It is clear from looking at the American tradition that the quality which merits elevation of a folk song is generally authenticity, and the inauthentic, popular, or spurious are not elevated. As Peterson argues, ‘Because the claim of authenticity imputes value relative to inauthenticity, one of the most effective ways to assert authenticity is to claim that an action, object, or person is “natural” and without “artifice”.’<sup>463</sup> The idea of editing and selection misrepresenting a subject is again misleading, since the subject is determined by the collector and consequently the collector cannot depict it inaccurately by excluding some material. Editing and selection are tools that many collectors have used to furnish their idea of what constitutes folk music, and through this many notions of folk music have been formed and impacted on other collectors. The practice of selecting and editing material to include in a collection is part of the history of collecting and the folklore discipline.

Much of the selection criteria employed throughout the American collecting tradition is based on the dismissal of ‘artifice’ in folk music. The Lomaxes always went through a process of auditioning at work farms and penitentiaries, ‘the Lomaxes would audition as many singers as they could...after selecting the best singers, the Lomaxes would set up their recording equipment and, usually with Alan manning the controls, have the prisoners sing for the machine.’<sup>464</sup> After auditioning singers, there is an additional process of editing where the Lomaxes selected on the songs which seemed the most ‘authentic’. The journals of their field trips make numerous references to their preference for ‘authenticity’ in their recorded materials, such as John Lomax’s correspondence with Alan during the 1940

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<sup>462</sup> Ibid.

<sup>463</sup> Peterson, Richard A. 1997. *Creating Country Music: Fabricating Authenticity*. University of Chicago Press. p. 211.

<sup>464</sup> Filene, Benjamin. 2000. *Romancing the Folk: Public Memory & American Roots Music*. University of North Carolina Press. p. 51.

Southern States recording expedition. He complained to Alan, 'You will recall how often we were disappointed, after following a promising lead, with the material we found.'<sup>465</sup>

Child similarly selected the ballads he believed were the most authentic, and also edited their content to make it suitable for publication. Harker offers these assessments of Child's editing and selection,

Child knew what an 'original' ballad looked like, and so understood when it had been 'corrupted'. More, he already had a hierarchy of what was to be esteemed 'important', and felt no qualms in relegating 'all those pieces which are wanting in general interest' to an appendix, for the benefit of 'readers of pleasure'.<sup>466</sup>

He also notes that, 'When we consider that Child's chosen ballads silently condone sadism, butchery, murder, and any amount of physical violence, it is curious that sexual relations had either to be apologised for or silently omitted.'<sup>467</sup> Evidently collections like those the Lomaxes deposited in the Archive of American Folksong, and Child's *Ballads*, only selectively represented their subjects. The reason for such editing and selection was the pervasive idea of authenticity in folk music, which precluded the use of seemingly inauthentic songs, and necessitated the extirpation of inauthentic content. Alan Lomax declined the opportunity to record anything he felt was too populist during his 1938 Ohio and Indiana recording trip, noting,

Nashville, in Brown County, generally regarded as the folk – lore centre of Indiana, was quite disappointing. It has the sleek look and greasy palm of all tourist towns and one felt that the real Brown County people have been made so suspicious by the artists and Bohemians who have flocked there that it would be a difficult matter to get their traditional lore.<sup>468</sup>

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<sup>465</sup> Lomax, John A. 1940. 'John and Ruby Lomax 1940 Southern States Recordings Collection'. American Folklife Centre, Washington DC.

<sup>466</sup> Harker, Dave. 1981. 'Francis James Child and the 'Ballad Consensus''. *Folk Music Journal*. 4/2. p. 149.

<sup>467</sup> *Ibid.* p. 150.

<sup>468</sup> Lomax, Alan. 1938. 'Journal of the Ohio and Indiana Field Trip.' Entry dated 1<sup>st</sup> of April.

This means that a collection apparently representing the folk music of Ohio and Indiana is in fact only a partial representation of the music of these regions. Child's *Ballads* demotes a large number of ballads to an appendix, edits the content of many ballads included in the main collection, and dismisses others entirely. Editing and selecting material for inclusion in a collection is a convention which is common across literary and recorded collections, and the fact that it is a necessary part of the collection despite the difference in format shows that the collector needs to be selective to represent his subject. What the collection represents is the collector's invented idea of folk music, based on direct observation and on the important intellectual movements of the period, and these transformations in what folk music should be are what define the collection tradition. The transformations have resulted in the canonisation of various ideas of folk music since the eighteenth century, and what is canonised is the result of this essential process of invention, selection, and representation.

#### 4.9: What Makes a Successful Collection?

The continued use of these conventions established in the mid – eighteenth century may in some instances limit the success of some of the American collections. If success is measured by the extent to which the collection fulfils the aim(s) of the collector, then it is clear that some could be seen as not having fully achieved their aims. Whether this is a legitimate basis for suggesting the collection was unsuccessful is discussed in this section. If Child's *Ballads* is taken first, it was an attempt to assemble a complete reference work for the subject and in doing so further the study of British balladry. The collection is also an attempt to preserve evidence of the supposed 'ballad culture' by gathering it as comprehensively as possible into a single collection. Kittredge sums up the need for a collection like Child's,

Ballad – making, so far as the English – speaking nations are concerned, is a lost art; and the same may be said of ballad – singing. A few of the ballads in Mr. Child's collection are still in oral circulation; but most of them are completely forgotten or are known only in versions derived from print.<sup>469</sup>

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<sup>469</sup> Child, Francis. 1904. *The English and Scottish and Popular Ballads*. Boston, Houghton, Mifflin, and Co.

Filene quotes Child's claim from the introduction to *Ballads*, in which he stated that he did not wish to use his title until it was justified by the comprehensiveness of his collection.<sup>470</sup> This gives some indication of the aim of comprehensiveness for *Ballads*, and it is perhaps most appropriate to examine the success of Child's collection in relation to such aims. Pearce refers to this type of collecting as 'systematic', 'In systematic collection, an ostensibly intellectual rationale is followed, and the intention is to collect complete sets which will demonstrate understanding achieved.'<sup>471</sup> Child's status as the foremost authority on ballads in mid – to – late nineteenth century America shows that, as Pearce suggests, the work of the systematic collector demonstrates their understanding of the subject. The status of most of the collectors in the American tradition as experts in their field shows the systematic approach, whether in a broad or narrow area of folk music, can characterise much of the work in the American collecting tradition. The status of these collectors is discussed in chapter 5.

In keeping with this systematic approach, the research that produced *Ballads* effectively lasted throughout Child's academic career which began in 1846, increasing in intensity from 1876 when he was appointed Professor of English at Harvard, to the publication of the first volume of *Ballads* in 1882.<sup>472</sup> From this research he published his collection in ten parts between 1882 and 1898, consisting of 305 ballads he had judged to be 'genuine'. There are conflicting opinions regarding Child's selection criteria, complicating the debate over the success of *Ballads*. Harker, despite his harsh criticisms of Child on this very point, states that Child could indeed identify an 'original' or genuine ballad.<sup>473</sup> Filene makes the point that, 'The loftiness with which Child treated his subject sometimes butted up against his drive to document the British ballad tradition in its entirety.'<sup>474</sup> Harker's claim suggests that Child's judgements on ballad authenticity were sound, and if his aim was to document every 'genuine' ballad, then this selection process would not damage the success of the collection. However, Filene's suggestion that the selection criteria stymied the

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<sup>470</sup> Ibid.

<sup>471</sup> Pearce, Susan M. 1995. *On Collecting: An Investigation into Collecting in the European Tradition*. Routledge Press, London. p. 32.

<sup>472</sup> Harker, Dave. 1981. 'Francis James Child and the 'Ballad Consensus''. *Folk Music Journal*. 4/2. p. 147.

<sup>473</sup> Ibid. p. 149.

<sup>474</sup> Filene, Benjamin. 2000. *Romancing the Folk: Public Memory & American Roots Music*. University of North Carolina Press. p. 15.

ambition of completeness would seem to indicate that the Child's aims were not fulfilled. Kittredge asserts his own belief in the success of Child's collection,

Professor Child's great collection...comprises the whole extant mass of this material. It includes three – hundred and five pieces, most of them in a number of different versions, with full collations and other pertinent apparatus. A few variants of this or that ballad have come to light since the publication of this admirable work, but no additional ballads have been discovered.<sup>475</sup>

Despite Filene's criticisms, he still acknowledges the impressiveness of *Ballads*, arguing that Child's ballad canon determined most of the subsequent work on folk music.<sup>476</sup> However, the comprehensiveness of the collection, and consequently its success, is undermined by Child privileging some ballads above others. Child himself often referred to this privileging when discussing *Ballads*, 'No words could express the dullness and inutility of a collection which should embrace all the Roxburghe and Pepys broadsides.'<sup>477</sup>

*Ballads* is therefore only as comprehensive as he allowed it to be, because of his disposition to dismiss anything too popular or artificial. This is another aspect of collecting which is connected to the collector's invented notion of folk music, and naturally Child's collection is an expansive document of the popular ballad as conceived by Child. There is a clear difference between the bearing Child's collection has had on folk music in America, as described by Filene, and the collection being comprehensive. The very idea of comprehensiveness in a collection of folk music is somewhat misleading, since no collection can comprehensively represent the matter – of – fact about any kind of folk music. This is because, as discussed previously, the idea of folk is a series of transformations of a constructed idea, rather than some kind of homogenous culture which could be represented with enough research and collecting work. What is more important in judging the success of Child's collection is his own standards and criteria, and how consistently he stuck to his own standards when compiling ballads for his collection. Although, this raises some problematic points, in particular the criticism that Harker and James have made, that Child's criteria are

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<sup>475</sup> Child, Francis. 1904. *The English and Scottish and Popular Ballads*. Boston, Houghton, Mifflin, and Co.

<sup>476</sup> Filene, Benjamin. 2000. *Romancing the Folk: Public Memory & American Roots Music*. University of North Carolina Press. p. 15.

<sup>477</sup> Harker, Dave. 1981. 'Francis James Child and the 'Ballad Consensus''. *Folk Music Journal*. 4/2. p. 148.

very difficult to determine, and the process by which he evaluated a ballad is confusing. At their most fundamental level, Child's ballads were part of the English and Scottish popular ballad culture, were not professionally composed (though neither were they communally composed), and contained no material that was not introduced as part of the popular ballad culture. Child used these most basic standards for measuring the suitability of a ballad for inclusion in his collection, but finding out any greater detail in his appraisal methods is difficult. However, if one of the collections Child dismissed, the *Book of Roxburghe Ballads* (1847), is examined, it may provide some insight into ballads Child considered unsuitable. For instance, the first ballad in the Roxburghe collection is 'Death's Dance', which is introduced with these observations,

It is, perhaps, not now possible to arrive at any greater certainty respecting the age of this moral and satirical ballad than it must have been written some time after the opening of the Royal Exchange in 1570, that building being mentioned, in the third stanza, as the common resort of merchants.<sup>478</sup>

This was demonstrably a collection of composed songs, as stated in the introduction, 'The main purpose of the ensuing collection is to shew (sic) in their most genuine state, the character and quality of productions, written expressly for the amusement of the lower orders, in the reigns of Elizabeth, James, and Charles.'<sup>479</sup> If *Death's Dance*, the first entry in the Roxburghe collection, is compared to the first ballad in Child's collection, the material differences are not immediately apparent. They are both written in a poetic meter, with a rhyme scheme, and are in a narrative style. The authenticity that Child saw in *Riddles Wisely Expounded* which he did not see in *Death's Dance* is unclear, and Child stated that the Roxburghe collection was one of the sources he dismissed in his research,

The immense collections of Broadside ballads, the Roxburghe and Pepys...on the whole they are veritable dung – hills, in which, only after a great deal of sickening

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<sup>478</sup> Collier, John Payne. 1847. *The Book of Roxburghe Ballads*. Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, London. p. 1.

<sup>479</sup> *Ibid.* p. vii.

grubbing, one finds a very moderate jewel. Some of the later Robin Hood ballads I have scarcely patience or stomach to read...<sup>480</sup>

What is important here is that Child's collection was a success by his own standards, in the sense that it collected everything he considered to be a true popular ballad of England and Scotland. Judging the success of 'Ballads' according to objective standards of comprehensiveness or representativeness is problematic because there are no objective folk music standards against which to measure the collection. Ultimately what is most important is Child's own idea of what constituted an authentic ballad, and on this basis his collection was successful in documenting these ballads as fully as possible.

#### 4.10: The Success of Sharp's *English Folk Songs*

Sharp's focus in his American collection was far more localised than Child's *Ballads*, as indicated by the caveats in the title *English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians*. However, this did not prevent him from expressing a desire to be as comprehensive as possible in his collecting, and to possibly compile and publish these efforts. Sharp stated in the introduction to *English Folk Songs* that he and his collaborators, 'are, of course, only at the beginning of our labours and that the contents of this book are but a first instalment.'<sup>481</sup> He also claimed that he would not, 'rest content until all of this material has been collected, either by ourselves or by others, published, and made generally available.'<sup>482</sup> This shows that comprehensiveness in a collection was a pressing concern after Child's *Ballads* had established itself as one of the precedents for an American collection. Sharp defers to the authority of Child in his study *English Folk Song: Some Conclusions*, 'It is unnecessary to indicate more than one authority on the subject of ballads. Professor Child of Harvard...has collected all known ballads, with all accessible variants, and has illustrated them with an extraordinary wealth of knowledge of many literatures.'<sup>483</sup> However, unlike Child's *Ballads*, Sharp's collection was part of an attempt to popularise folk songs through publication and

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<sup>480</sup> Harker, Dave. 1981. 'Francis James Child and the 'Ballad Consensus''. *Folk Music Journal*. 4/2. pp. 154 – 155.

<sup>481</sup> Sharp, Cecil J. 1917. *English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians*. New York, G.P. Putnam and Sons.

<sup>482</sup> Ibid.

<sup>483</sup> Sharp, Cecil J. 1907. *English Folk Song: Some Conclusions*. London, Simpkin & Co. Ltd. p. 90.



education. An address to given students in 1920 showed his belief in the need for popularisation through education.<sup>484</sup>

Sharp also criticises what he sees as the existing neglect of folk music in education or a nascent national curriculum,

I cannot withhold the criticism – advanced with the greatest diffidence – that the educational authorities of some of the larger cities in the United States are too ready to ignore the educational and cultural value of that national heritage which every immigrant brings with him to his new home, and to rest too confidently upon their educational system, which is often almost wholly utilitarian and vocational, to create the ideal American citizen.<sup>485</sup>

This addition to the collection conventions in the American tradition means the success of the collection should be judged according to its achievements in this regard. Despite his ambitions for *English Folksongs* and his work in general, the collection is far more familiar to scholars now than to the general public. Imogen Holst argued,

Although Cecil Sharp's actual name will not stand out above all others, his work will stand out, for it will have been immortalised in the best of the English music that has been written and is still to be written during this century.<sup>486</sup>

This suggests that within educated circles Sharp's work was well – regarded, but the awareness of his work does not appear to extend beyond these circles.

Sharp acknowledged that his collecting was a means of financial support, but also that it was not much of a commercial prospect,

There is really an enormous lot of work to be done here in popularising the subject, but it would take ages to do it – in fact, it would be doing over again all

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<sup>484</sup> Karpeles, Maud. 1967. *Cecil Sharp: His Life and Work*. Routledge Ltd., London. p. 179.

<sup>485</sup> Sharp, Cecil J. 1917. *English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians*. New York, G.P. Putnam and Sons. p. xxi

<sup>486</sup> Holst, Imogen. 1959. 'Cecil Sharp and the Music and Music – Making of the Twentieth Century.' *Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society*. 8/4. p. 190.

that I have done in England, and this I have neither the time to do nor the inclination to attempt. It all convinces me that I am not cut out to make money – I haven't that right temperament for that sort of thing.<sup>487</sup>

His opinion on the prospect of popularising folk music changed considerably after four years in America, and a teacher at Pine Mountain Settlement School in Harlan County recalled how important his educational efforts were for their folk curriculum.<sup>488</sup> It is important also to bear in mind that Sharp's educational efforts in folk culture were also focused on dance, perhaps even more so than music, and as Walkowitz points out Sharp's work had a lasting effect in this area, 'Virtually every schoolgirl educate in the United States in the twentieth century grew up doing folk dancing, though few probably thought of it as a substantive part of their educational experience.'<sup>489</sup> Walkowitz also notes that Sharp's American collection was not responsible for discovering English folk music in America,

Only a few years earlier in 1911, a Transylvania University professor had published an article in the *Sewanee Review* documenting what he called "British Ballads" in the Cumberland Mountains and noting a veritable cottage industry of newly organised Southern State Folklore Societies... Rather than pioneering or "discovering" the Appalachian ballads, then, Sharp's contribution consisted of the sheer volume of songs and variations he collected and "in his ability to crystalize and extend trends," most especially in building a folk song and dance movement around them.<sup>490</sup>

The testimony of the teacher at Pine Mountain, along with Walkowitz's observations, suggests a considerable success in Sharp's efforts to introduce a folk song and dance curriculum, and his *English Folk Songs* collection was a part of this successful effort. In judging the success of *English Folk Songs*, the totality of Sharp's work must be taken into account, and the collection should be viewed as a component in his efforts to promote the

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<sup>487</sup> Karpeles, Maud. 1967. *Cecil Sharp: His Life and Work*. Routledge Ltd., London. p. 124.

<sup>488</sup> Ibid. p. 162.

<sup>489</sup> Walkowitz, Daniel J. 2010. *City Folk: English Country Dance and the Politics of the Folk in Modern America*. New York University Press. p. 1.

<sup>490</sup> Ibid. p. 117.

education of folk song and dance. Since Sharp's folk dance education programs have continued in many American schools, although they may not have the significance Sharp intended in terms of national culture, Sharp's work should be considered at least a partial success.

#### 4.11: The Collections of the Lomaxes

The Lomaxes maintained the tradition, continued by Sharp, of having scholarly conventions in their collections and using these conventions to introduce their own transformations to the American collecting tradition. The multiple collections assembled by the Lomaxes are indicative of a trend in folk music collecting which can govern the scope of a collection: of the five collectors studied in this thesis, those who conducted fieldwork to assemble their collection(s) tended to produce collections which focus on a specific geographical area or style of folk music. John Lomax's early collections were concerned with cowboy songs and other folk music apparently originating in traditions associated with cattle – herding. Lomax largely built these collections from, 'scrapbooks, newspapers, and the responses he had received from the thousand circulars he had mailed.'<sup>491</sup> Although in his introduction to *Cowboy Songs*, Lomax claimed,

The songs of this collection, never before in print, as a rule have been taken down from oral recitation. In only a few instances have I been able to discover the authorship of any song. They seem to have sprung up as quietly and mysteriously as does the grass on the plains.<sup>492</sup>

Despite the conflicting reports on the research which produced *Cowboy Songs*, it was assembled after a prolonged period of investigation, and is an attempt to provide a sampling of a relatively narrow musical field. Subsequent recorded collections assembled by the Lomaxes were always themed according to musical style or region. John and Ruby Lomax's 1940 Southern States Recording Trip is a collection which was deposited in the

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<sup>491</sup> Filene, Benjamin. 2000. *Romancing the Folk: Public Memory & American Roots Music*. University of North Carolina Press. p. 32.

<sup>492</sup> Lomax, John A. 1910. *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads*. New York, MacMillan Press.

Archive of American Folksong, as was Alan Lomax's 1938 Ohio and Indiana Collection, and his 1936 – 37 Haiti recording trip. Collections released on 78rpm records or in books were similarly themed, such as the 1936 recorded collection *Negro Folk Songs as Sung by Lead Belly*, and books like *The Folk Songs of North America*, and *The Land Where the Blues Began*. Every collection, archival or otherwise, produced by the Lomaxes was extensively researched, mostly through recording fieldwork, and was titled to reflect the area of research. This narrow focus is very similar to Sharp's *English Folk Songs*, since it too had narrowed its subject by focusing only on English songs, and only those that could be transcribed in the Southern Appalachians. It is debatable how this influences the effects of the collections on the public, and whether a diffuse series of collections covering narrow fields are more effective than a single collection with a broad focus, like the Child's *Ballads* or Smith's *Anthology*. However, even in these localised collections, the collector often strives for comprehensiveness through subsequent collections, or through the work done subsequently by other collectors.

In such regionalised or specialised collections it is also worth looking at the way in which the music is divided within certain collections to see how the Lomaxes categorised songs. In *American Ballads and Folk Songs* the songs are divided into 25 categories according to their origins, function, content, and ethnic background. This allows the focus of the collection to be further refined, and demonstrates the extent to which the Lomaxes were aware of differences in the form and function of folk songs. This is a transformation of the arrangement of a collection, moving on from Child who organised some of his ballads by subject, and Sharp's use of 'ballads' and 'songs' as organisational categories. The Lomaxes went beyond this to include numerous categories that revealed the cultural origins of the songs to a certain extent, and this must have been partly dictated by the Lomaxes experiences in fieldwork, and also by Alan's grounding in anthropology which produced a greater interest in the culture that produced the songs than many other collectors. If Alan's aim with his collections was to give a voice to groups who generally have none, then he was successful to a certain extent, since collections like 'American Ballads and Folk Songs' provide details about various groups and communities, and give an insight into an aspect of their cultures.

The previous section shows that Sharp ultimately wanted collecting work in the Appalachians to be done as completely as possible, by him and his collaborators, or by other

collectors. The Lomaxes adopted a similar attitude towards much of their collecting work, hoping it would form the basis of a complete cultural picture of an area or musical style. In a report to Congress, John Lomax suggested that it would be necessary to have a continuously functioning repository of folk music which could be used by students.<sup>493</sup> This shows that Lomax believed the individual collections in the Archive to comprise part of a single complete collection, the 'great body of American folk tunes' which could eventually 'be brought together'. In his report to Congress in 1942, Lomax claimed, 'the Archive of American Folk Song has begun to function as a centre for oral music, literature, and history.'<sup>494</sup> The Archive made duplicates of the Lomaxes field recordings available for purchase during the 1930s and 40s, thus making the archive materials more accessible to the public. Alan Lomax, in his capacity as Assistant in Charge of the Archive, answered numerous inquiries pertaining to the material in the collections, and the possible use of it in various projects. Also, the Archive encouraged Lomax to use the recordings in his radio broadcasts with CBS, and in doing so reach a relatively wide audience with his field recordings. It is clear that neither John nor Alan Lomax simply deposited the recordings in the Archive with no thought of how the public would be able to listen to them. They both regarded the accumulation of field recordings as a continuing project to document numerous styles of folk music, and this was one of the transformations in the conventions of collections introduced by the Lomaxes. The Archive of American Folksong was the focal point of the Lomaxes project, and the idea of this repository functioning as a centre of folk music knowledge and learning was a transformation of the idea of collecting work going into a single written collection.

The archival collections of the Lomaxes achieved the aim of preserving samples of the music for posterity, and their recordings are still present in the reorganised American Folklife Centre. Their collecting expeditions became discrete collections within a centre for the study of folk music, but also comprised a small part of the totality of the archives of American folk culture. Many of John Lomax's collections are invaluable records of African – American blues, work songs, and spirituals, and although they share some of the conventions of literary collections, including the explanatory notes and/or introduction, the

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<sup>493</sup> Lomax, John A. 1935. *Annual Report of the Librarian of Congress*. United States Government Printing Office, Washington. pp. 161 – 162.

<sup>494</sup> Lomax, John A. 1942. *Annual Report of the Librarian of Congress*. United States Government Printing Office, Washington. pp. 114 – 115.

technological context of portable recording technology allowed Lomax to produce collections which captured music from various locations, in various styles, and using a multitude of informants. Many of Alan's collections from the 50s added moving and photograph images to the collections of audio recordings, thereby enhancing the capacity of the collection to reveal details about the people who create the music. Alan eventually came to conceive of a massive archive of folk music styles from all over the world, which he called the 'Global Jukebox',

What was needed was an "intelligent museum," an easy – to – use, interactive computerised audiovisual system that would allow anyone to access the databases he was still developing. It would be called a global jukebox, and "jukebox" was the perfect word for what he had in mind, as it was the electrical playback device that first brought music created in distant places to groups of people in small towns and big cities alike, a machine that Alan and his father once feared would destroy local and regional styles and bury folk song.<sup>495</sup>

This was one of the most important transformations the Lomaxes introduced in the way collectors used their material: technological innovations like portable recording technology, and eventually film cameras, enabled them to piece together an image of American folk culture in its myriad ethnic, regional, and stylistic variations. This image still required the explanatory notation that most folk collections have included, but most importantly this technological context, as well as the intellectual context of socialism and behavioural science motivating Alan, meant that their collections were components in a much larger collection.

#### 4.12: The Success of Smith's *Anthology*

Smith's *Anthology* is another instance of a collection of which the success is difficult to measure by any objective criteria. In his 1969 interview Smith retroactively ascribes certain

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<sup>495</sup> Szwed, John. 2010. *The Man Who Recorded the World: A Biography of Alan Lomax*. William Heinemann, London. p. 384.

aims to the collection, such as the impact on popular music, and the desire to reintroduce these neglected recordings back into the public domain. It is difficult to give any credence to these claims, since Smith was a notoriously capricious self – mythologiser and tended to extemporise during interviews. It has been suggested that the idea for the collection actually came from Moe Asch rather than Smith, and Smith had simply been looking to sell his record collection to Asch. Following this Asch proposed a collection based on a selection from his collection, which would follow on from some of Asch’s earlier anthologies of Jazz. The aim of the collection then became to assemble a sampling of music that could be released as an anthology which would represent different styles of folk music. Smith took this idea of an anthology and turned it into something which can be seen as an avant – garde art object, a manifesto for the folk revival, and a subversion of 1950s popular culture. Determining the aim of the *Anthology* is difficult because its creation is obscured by conflicting reports and ideas. Even if it was Smith’s intention for the *Anthology* to disseminate the records as broadly as possible, it was not his work that achieved this, and it was purely coincidental that the *Anthology* did become popular within certain revivalist circles. Skinner notes the important contribution of these circles in what she calls the ‘canonisation’ of the *Anthology*,

Place (2002), who worked on the 1997 reissue, told NPR *Morning Edition* host Bob Edwards that ‘in its earlier years’, the *Anthology* moved into public view more ‘like a tortoise as opposed to a hare. It kind of snuck out there.’ Place notes that ‘certain in – group people got it’, and these individuals slowly spread the word to others who were interested in Southern commercial recordings from the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>496</sup>

Revivalists John Cohen and Ralph Rinzler also contributed to the awareness recordings from this period, and the *Anthology* to a certain extent, by making copies of Smith’s remaining records which had been deposited in the New York Public Library. These copies were distributed among ‘certain in – group people’ as well, which aided the *Anthology* in becoming more of an underground revival document. The *Anthology* was further canonised

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<sup>496</sup> Skinner, Katherine. 2006. ‘‘Must Be Born Again’’: Resurrecting the *Anthology of American Folk Music*.’ *Popular Music*. 25/1. p. 63.

by the 1997 reissue, which places it at the centre of the folk revival and applauds the work of Smith and Asch. Commentators have also taken issue with this, with O' Reilly's complaints that Smith and Asch had been somewhat neutered by the notes in the *Anthology* and the subversion of 1950s popular culture had also been overlooked. Regardless of the actual aim of the *Anthology*, roughly sixty years of interaction with it has rendered it very difficult to determine.

Smith's *Anthology* does still employ some of the established conventions of literary folk song collections, including an introduction and explanatory notes, and in Smith's referencing system he is clearly drawing on the most eminent collections in his research, including Child and Sharp. His 'Ballads' and 'Songs' organisational categories could conceivably be lifted from Sharp's *English Folk Songs* collection, which uses the same terms to describe its own songs. 'Social Music' is a term Smith uses to describe the dance music, religious songs, and other miscellaneous material that does not fit into 'Ballads' or 'Songs', and it seems to follow the functionalist route taken by the Lomaxes in some of their collections. In this respect the *Anthology* can be used as a reference work in the same manner that Child's collection can, but it is doubtful if Smith or Asch intended the collection as a reference work. However, it is important to bear in mind that Asch seemingly had little to do with the composition of the notes for the collection, and the research into other collections was done by Smith. Smith was clearly working within the intellectual context of the folklore discipline and using this to put together parts of his collection, like the notes, and the categorisation of songs, but the *Anthology* was seemingly not intended to be a reference collection like that of Child.

The aim Asch clearly had in mind for the collection was for it to be an assemblage of esoteric records, in the style of his anthologies of jazz, but with the input of Smith to create an avant – garde aspect to the collection. Skinner notes that Asch had very little thought for the *Anthology* as a commercially successful release,

...Asch's releases were almost always deliberately non – commercial and not intended to sell in large quantities. 'The more obscure a recording', notes



Goldsmith (1998, p. 234), 'the happier Asch was about releasing it – at least he could not be accused of pandering to mass – market tastes.'<sup>497</sup>

This suggests that O' Reilly is correct in ascribing culturally subversive aims to the *Anthology*, since Smith was determined to collect these records, going against the trend of neglect for them, and Asch was equally determined to release them because they were obscure, and sounded strange. The subversive agenda would be further served by having Smith compile the notes, knowing Smith as an avant – garde artist and filmmaker, with few connections to folk music aficionados, or with leftist people or organisations. As discussed previously, Smith had more connections with the Greenwich Village Beat scene than any political or folk music scenes. As Perchuk and Singh contend Smith, '...was resolutely suspicious of politics in either its avant – garde or its bohemian inflection.'<sup>498</sup> Asch's subversive agenda could be further seen in Skinner's contention that since the master copies of many recordings had been destroyed by the record companies,

Asch believed that the public had the right to obtain these historically significant recordings under a clause of the US Constitution regarding the public's right to information. Using this reasoning, Asch justified his decision to produce professional 'bootlegs' of songs originating from other labels on his Folkways label.<sup>499</sup>

Clearly, despite Smith's apparent disinterest in politics, the *Anthology* came from politically and socially aware ideas on the part of Asch, and in this sense the context of the extant leftist folksong movement, as well as 1950s Anticommunism, were partly behind Asch's aims for the collection to be a countercultural document, and a dismissal of the copyright claims of the record companies.

An additional aim for the collection could be seen as the transfer of the songs from the outdated format of 78rpm records to the recently developed LP record format. This

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<sup>497</sup> Ibid. pp. 68 – 69.

<sup>498</sup> Perchuk, Andrew, and Singh, Rani, eds. 2010. *Harry Smith: The Avant – Garde in the American Vernacular*. Getty Research Institute, California. p. 5.

<sup>499</sup> Skinner, Katherine. 2006. "Must Be Born Again": Resurrecting the *Anthology of American Folk Music*. *Popular Music*. 25/1. p. 68.

involved a leap in legitimation on the part of Smith and Asch, who were working with outdated recordings which had little value in the 1950s, and conferring on them the status afforded by an LP transfer. In a similar way to the act of collecting itself being a way of conferring value or legitimacy, this was one of the ways in which the collection itself confers legitimacy on the recordings. If the LP technology in the early 1950s was connected with high – fidelity recordings and ‘art’ music, the *Anthology* was the antithesis of this: scratchy, muffled, obscure folk recordings made 20 – 30 years prior, but given the cultural legitimacy of a transfer to LP. The technological context in this instance is the main factor in the legitimation enacted by the *Anthology*, and the transformation of the collecting tradition is in adopting another new technology to use with folk music. It seems likely that this idea of transferring the recordings to LP would be Asch’s idea, since he was an experienced engineer of audio systems, and would be aware of the benefits of using LPs to make a six – LP set rather than having dozens of 78rpm records. Asch’s interest in legitimation for his Folkways collections, including the *Anthology*, extended to the market he was aiming at which was not the usual record retailers. Skinner states,

Asch composed the marketing strategy for Folkways in April of 1952. He broke his chief clientele into three groups: librarians, teacher, and museums. Asch knew that by concentrating on such conventions as the American Library Association and the Music Library Association, he could sell the eclectic Folkways recordings to a viable market. Educators could be expected to support his often obscure and esoteric work. As Asch commented, ‘Librarians are the best evaluators of folk music...[they] must be responsible for the maintenance and accumulation of recordings of the best and most typical music of the world’s many peoples.’<sup>500</sup>

Clearly institutional legitimation was something Asch sought for his collections, and in this respect one of the aims of the *Anthology* was to have these recordings legitimised by educators, and what has become known as the ‘heritage’ area. By achieving institutional legitimacy, the *Anthology* could sit alongside other important works on folk music.

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<sup>500</sup> Ibid.

It is appropriate that in discussing the collection itself, rather than the theories that dictated the collecting, or the collecting practices, the focus is actually on Asch rather than Smith, since Asch was such an important part of the creation of the collection. Smith's research into other important collections created much of the scholarly apparatus of the notes, and his avant – garde sensibilities and preoccupation with patterns in different cultures created much of the appearance. However, the initial idea for the collection seems to have come from Asch, and this idea had the weight of previous anthologies, Asch's cultural subversion and legitimation, and LP technology behind it. The transformations introduced by the *Anthology* collection were partly this idea of subversion of 1950s culture, while being legitimised by educational and heritage institutions as an important document. This was brought about partially by a period of leftist folksong activism, and although Asch was always careful to avoid drawing too much attention to himself, Skinner notes that,

Asch was a much – admired figure within the urban folk revival. His recording label was not a large enterprise, but it held a prominent position in the urban folk revival environment of the 1950s and 1960s. Most accounts of the Greenwich Village scene, both contemporary and retrospective, refer to Asch and to Folkways.<sup>501</sup>

The technological context that dictated the transformation introduced by the *Anthology* was the development of the LP. This technology was reportedly introduced by the Columbia recording company in 1948, and Asch and Smith changed the records in the *Anthology* from artefacts of an outdated period of the recording industry to the newest recording technology. While this was conferring legitimacy on these recordings, it was also subverting the recording industry which used this technological innovation as a vehicle for high – fidelity, higher class music. In essence, the aims of the could be summed up by this dual process of legitimation and subversion, and it could be said that the subsequent canonisation of the collection has obscured this to a certain extent.

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<sup>501</sup> Ibid. p. 69.

#### 4.13: Arrangement and Presentation of the Collections

Fahey made these comments about Smith's arrangement,

Smith was acutely aware of a fairly simple truth...certain musicultural traditions were sympathetic to each other while others were not...Smith had an encyclopaedic knowledge of 78's and a preternatural feel for the connections between them – across race and ethnic boundaries – not only to codify them for us but also to have this collection persist...<sup>502</sup>

Among the few commentators there are on Smith, there is a commonly noticed preoccupation in his work, which is his interest in the connectedness of cultural objects of one kind or another.<sup>503</sup> His arrangement of the records in the *Anthology* is distinguished considerably from their original commercial categorisation, since he dispenses completely with the 'Hillbilly' and 'Race' tags used to market the records in the 20s and 30s. Smith even suggests this as a function of the collection, 'Before the *Anthology* there had been a tendency in which records were lumped into blues catalogues or hillbilly catalogues. That was one thing the *Anthology* was for...'<sup>504</sup> He goes on to state that this obscured the content of the records in some ways, 'everybody was having blindfold tests to prove they could tell which was which. That's why there's no such indications of that sort in the albums. I wanted to see how well certain jazz critics did on the blindfold test. They all did horribly. It took years before anybody discovered that Mississippi John Hurt wasn't a hillbilly.'<sup>505</sup> The fact that Smith's collection muddied the content of the records in this way gives weight to the assertion that the *Anthology* was intended to subvert certain established standards, in this case the typical classification of recordings. Cantwell refers to this type of subversion in the arrangement of the *Anthology*,

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<sup>502</sup> Fahey, John. 1997. *A Booklet of Essays, Appreciations, and Annotations Pertaining to the Anthology of American Folk Music*. Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, Washington D.C.

<sup>503</sup> Perchuk, Andrew, and Singh, Rani, eds. 2010. *Harry Smith: The Avant – Garde in the American Vernacular*. Getty Research Institute, California. p. 7.

<sup>504</sup> Singh, Rani, ed. 1999. *Think of the Self Speaking: Harry Smith – Selected Interviews*. Elbow/Cityful Press, Seattle. p. 83.

<sup>505</sup> *Ibid.*

These distinctions, which had lain over folksong collections like lines of latitude and longitude, have been effaced in favour of three simple musicological classes: ballads, or songs that tell a story; social music, secular and religious; and songs, including blues, which are lyric structures or traditional phrases and verses – all functional distinctions, with implications for poetic form.<sup>506</sup>

Clearly the arrangement of Smith's collection is an important element in its subversion not only of racial distinctions made by record companies, but some of the distinctions enforced by other collectors.

The successful impact of the *Anthology* in certain circles does seem to have been influenced by the arrangement of the records and unusual the collection seems because of this. Smith arranged the records into three different two – LP sets, titled 'Ballads', 'Social Music' and 'Songs'. These arrangement titles are part of Smith's response to traditional categories of folk music, which depend on things like ethnicity and region. As Pearce points out, this process of titling and arrangement is one of the fundamental aspects of a collection, 'Collecting (among many other activities) depends upon the ascription of names and categories to the collected material. At a very simple level, people do not take into their collections things to which they cannot give a name.'<sup>507</sup> The *Anthology* undoubtedly depends on this 'ascription of names and categories' to provide the impression of strangeness in the collection, but Pearce's assertion that people only collect things which they can name is debatable. In terms of fieldwork recording and the Lomaxes searching for authenticity in recorded material, the necessity of categorising material seems to have been less urgent, and the focus was on accumulating anything sufficiently authentic. A memo from Alan Lomax to Harold Spivacke, head of the Music Division in the Library of Congress, in 1940 shows how late they attended to naming and categorisation of songs,

Mr. Lomax wishes to come to Washington and work for fifty days annotating the hundreds of records he has made for the Archive... Mr. Lomax has been so constantly engaged in field work and the Archive has been operated on such a

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<sup>506</sup> Cantwell, Robert. 1996. *When We Were Good: The Folk Revival*. Harvard University Press. p. 193.

<sup>507</sup> Pearce, Susan M. 1995. *On Collecting: An Investigation into Collecting in the European Tradition*. Routledge Press, London. p. 181.

small scale over the period of seven years that he has been Curator that there has been little or no opportunity for proper annotation of his field recordings.<sup>508</sup>

Evidently naming and categorisation of collected material was not the priority for the Lomaxes and their recorded collections, but for Smith the use of 'social music', 'ballads', and 'songs' gave his collection a useful coherence. As Smith stated, these allowed the *Anthology* to re – distribute the music without using the 'Race' and 'Hillbilly' tags.

However, this was not a departure from the academic tradition of arrangement conventions, since ethnicity was rarely used as a means of arrangement. As previously shown, Child's arrangement, while limited, focused on the content of ballads to aid navigation of the collection. For instance, Robin Hood ballads were placed together to make them easier to find amongst the numerous other ballad subjects. Sharp employed 'ballads', 'songs' and 'nursery songs' as terms for the arrangement of his collection. While he does not clearly delineate the differences between these categories, Smith uses two of the same categories in arranging his collection, showing that arrangement and classification according to song type and content was common in academic collections. The Lomaxes, in their song book *Our Singing Country* embraced the classification technique known as 'functionalism', early examples of which can be found in Child's *Ballads* and especially in Sharp's *English Folk Songs*. Functionalism entailed arranging songs according to the function they served, thus distinguishing between dance music, religious music, work songs, etc.<sup>509</sup> Smith's *Anthology* was arranged according to the conventions established by academic collections in the American collecting tradition, and although Smith did diverge from the 'hillbilly' and 'race' classification system of the commercial record companies, these were not used by the collectors in the American tradition.

Using a tag like 'Ballads' to incorporate Child ballads, and newly composed cautionary songs about the sinking of the Titanic, does indicate a differing conception of what constitutes an 'authentic' ballad on the part of Smith. As suggested by Perchuk and Singh this demonstrates Smith's favouring of structure over authenticity. According to Child's definition of an authentic ballad, songs like *When that Great Ship Went Down* are

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<sup>508</sup> Lomax, John A. 1940. 'John and Ruby Lomax 1940 Southern States Recordings Collection'.

<sup>509</sup> Lomax, Alan, and Lomax, John A. 1941. *Our Singing Country: A Second Volume of American Ballads and Folk Songs*. MacMillan Press, New York.

inauthentic because they are composed and because they are new. Smith presented these songs as being connected through function and structure rather than notions of authenticity and value. As Smith noted, the songs were not necessarily included because of their quality,

For example, there were things from Texas included that weren't very good.

There was a Child ballad, "Henry Lee" [Child 68]. It's not a good record, but it was the lowest – numbered Child ballad. Then there were other things put in simply because they were good performances, like "Brilliancy Medley" occurs to me.<sup>510</sup>

Keenan describes the disparate connections Smith used in arranging the *Anthology*,

Smith's collections feel like attempts to map the flux of ancient – modern consciousness in its most 'ephemeral' manifestations...correspondences between temporally and geographically isolated outposts of humanity through seeming incalculables like rhythms, arcs, colours, movement, patterns of circle and line, all of which were deep organising factors...<sup>511</sup>

He was arranging the records using his own system, which depended as much on previous collecting work as on his own understanding of the records. The aspects of the collection which Keenan identifies are very much connected to the contexts which impacted on Smith's work. The idea of 'correspondences' is an important point regarding Smith's preoccupation with connectedness between objects, and the notion that these correspondences came from 'rhythms, arcs, colours, movement, patterns of circle and line' points towards certain elements of the *Anthology*. For example, the three double – LP sets that make up the collection are also organised by colour: red, blue, and green. Smith characterised these as representing elemental forces, though precisely how this figures in the arrangement of the collection is another aspect of Smith's organisation which is unclear. It appears that the context of occultism impacted on Smith's work in this respect, since

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<sup>510</sup> Ibid.

<sup>511</sup> Keenan, David. 2006. 'Georgia Stomps, Atlanta Struts, and Imperium Falls: Harry Smith Anthology Remixed', Article Written for 'Harry Smith Anthology Remixed' Exhibition, Glasgow. p. 6.

devices like the colour – based organisation of the LP sets is derived from aspects of mysticism and reverence of the natural elements.

As previously shown, Smith adopted many of the arrangement methods of Child, Sharp, and the Lomaxes, and extrapolated them to include the material he had collected. As he stated, he used Child's ballad arrangement to choose the first song in his collection, and combined this with connections he saw with other narrative songs. Some of these ballads do feature in Child's collection, or are variants of Child ballads, and others are more recent compositions dealing with American folk and historical figures. Cole Younger, infamous as a member of the James/Younger gang in which Jesse James rode, appears as the subject of a ballad, as does Charles Giteau, the assassin of President Garfield.<sup>512</sup> Amongst these historical figures are folk figures whose exploits have some loose basis in fact, such as John Hardy, who was executed for killing an opponent in a game of craps, and Stackalee, or Stagger Lee, a notorious misanthrope and killer at the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>513</sup> These are all narrative songs, and Smith extended the definition of the ballad gleaned from other collectors to include such diverse material. He did something very similar with the second double – LP in the *Anthology*: by describing the songs as 'social music' he could include instrumental dance music, church music, and some Cajun tunes.<sup>514</sup> Again, this is a functional category, lifted from the collections of Sharp and the Lomaxes, and used broadly to include a diverse selection of music. As much as the *Anthology* was an extrapolation of existing arrangement methods and classification practices, it was also a subversion of these conventions by mixing records together, and making the most important organisational method basically unfathomable to anyone except Smith. The transformation the 'Anthology' introduced to the American collecting tradition was to make the arrangement of the records as important as their content, or even, as Marcus suggests, that the arrangement was even more important than the content. For a collection with little discernible arrangement, aside from the three categories of music, it is surprising that so many commentators have given considerable attention to the arrangement. Smith's arrangement was partly based on prior work on folk music, but was determined more by the 'correspondences' Smith saw between 'deep organising factors'.

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<sup>512</sup> Smith, Harry. 1952. *Anthology of American Folk Music*. Folkways Records, New York.

<sup>513</sup> Ibid.

<sup>514</sup> Ibid.



#### 4.14: The Appearance of the Collection

While accessibility is governed to a large extent by the arrangement of the collection, the presentation or appearance of a collection may also have an effect on its popularity and consequently influence the survival of the music. Populist American collections of the early twentieth – century, such as *Folk Songs of the Kentucky Mountains* and *Twenty Kentucky Mountain Songs* demonstrate an emphasis on attractive presentation of traditional songs. The collectors who assembled these books were amateur folk music enthusiasts who conducted collecting expeditions similar to those undertaken by Sharp. These collecting trips involved looking for singers of traditional songs and transcribing their performances, including music and lyrics, as Sharp did for *English Folksongs*. The collectors Josephine McGill, and Loraine Wyman and Howard Brockway, all concentrated their efforts on finding Child ballads still being sung in rural America, and all travelled from New York to attempt their collection mission. Filene suggests that their amateur background influenced the presentation of their work, ‘McGill, Wyman, and Brockway could embrace a less esoteric purpose for their work largely because they were not academics but private collectors and enthusiasts.’<sup>515</sup> This implies a connection between amateur collecting and popularisation, something which has been discussed by other folklorists. West calls attention to a divide between the ‘professional’ and the ‘populariser’ in folk music, and the associated elitism of the ‘professional’ collectors.<sup>516</sup> West claims that,

The conflict goes back at least to the time of Bishop Thomas Percy and his cavalier disregard of procedures now held to be sacred...he was a dilettante, by some standards; he was certainly unprofessional (in the best sense of that word); and he produced a book of far – reaching popularity.<sup>517</sup>

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<sup>515</sup> Filene, Benjamin. 2000. *Romancing the Folk: Public Memory & American Roots Music*. University of North Carolina Press. p. 18.

<sup>516</sup> West, John O. 1975. ‘The Professional – Amateur – Populariser Feud in Folklore’. *Journal of American Folklore*. 88/349. p. 299.

<sup>517</sup> Ibid.

He identifies Percy's *Reliques* as an example of amateur collecting working together with popularisation, and its presentation certainly distinguishes it from collections like Herder's *Volkslieder*. The inside – cover featured a heavily stylised illustration, and the material in the collection was prefaced by a highly coloured depiction of the origins of the songs. *Reliques* popularised much of its content through its presentation, which relied heavily on romanticism to enhance the appeal of the songs. The collections of McGill, Wyman, and Brockway also used highly coloured images of the material to increase the appeal of the collection, as Filene explains,

McGill's, Wyman's, and Brockway's interest in popularising the music they collected shows through in the very form of the songbooks they published...they have elaborate and colourful covers, designs mean to face forward and be seen as part of a parlour's décor. All three feature floral patterns, and, perhaps most significant, both McGill's book and Wyman's and Brockway's feature images of the home.<sup>518</sup>

Clearly presentation is important in attempts to popularise folk music, and in the case of *Reliques* can make relatively dry material appear more appealing.

John Lomax's *Cowboy Songs* employs this technique of popularisation through presentation since, by his own admission, the collection was intended to be popular.<sup>519</sup> The cover of *Cowboy Songs* used a stylised illustration of a cowboy lassoing a steer to help create Lomax's image of the traditional cowboy, and the introduction contributes further to this image, complementing the illustration with phrases like, 'That the cowboy was brave has come to be axiomatic. If his life of isolation made him taciturn, it at the same time created a spirit of hospitality, primitive and hearty as that found in the mead – halls of Beowulf,<sup>520</sup> and, 'They loved roving; they loved freedom; they were pioneers by instinct; an impulse set their faces from the East, put the tang for roaming in their veins, and sent them ever, ever Westward.'<sup>521</sup> Lomax also attached a copy of a letter from Theodor Roosevelt

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<sup>518</sup> Filene, Benjamin. 2000. *Romancing the Folk: Public Memory & American Roots Music*. University of North Carolina Press. pp. 18 – 19.

<sup>519</sup> Lomax, John A. 1910. *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads*. New York, MacMillan Press.

<sup>520</sup> Ibid.

<sup>521</sup> Ibid.

expressing his interest in Lomax's collecting work and endorsing the authenticity of cowboy songs. The illustrations and romanticised introduction all contribute to the use of presentation in achieving popularisation, to provide popular appeal to a collection which might otherwise appear dry and dull.

John Lomax's *Cowboy Songs* does not seem to be governed by the same amateur tendencies which produce collections like *Folk Songs of the Kentucky Mountains* and Percy's *Reliques*. Lomax had an emerging scholarly reputation, and his collection seemed to indicate scholarly interest in the music. *Cowboy Songs* managed to combine elements from collections like *Folk Songs of the Kentucky Mountains* such as the illustrations and the romantic tone, and from scholarly collections like Child's which focus on the literary value of the songs rather than presenting them as performance material. Wendell commented on the literary significance of *Cowboy Songs* in his introduction to the collection,<sup>522</sup> and this gave the collection the benefit of scholarly standing, being endorsed by prominent literary folk – song scholars, but this also seems to serve popular appeal rather than scholarly appeal. Lomax uses this endorsement to increase the overall impressiveness of the collection: rather than having an informative scholarly introduction which establishes the underlying thesis of the collection, Lomax used the introduction to present another endorsement which makes *Cowboy Songs* more appealing. Regardless of Lomax's desire for the collection to become popular, there are important forces at work in the creation of *Cowboy Songs* beyond popular music parlour collections and Child's *Ballads*. The demonstrations of support from Barrett Wendell and Theodore Roosevelt are indications of the context of Harvard and its cult of manhood. Both Wendell and Roosevelt were exponents of the idea of manhood developed at Harvard, and the approval they granted *Cowboy Songs* was partly due to the cowboy being a symbol of traditional manhood, in which men live a strenuous life of work and forbearance. Many of the elements of *Cowboy Songs* emphasise the life of the cowboy as one of strenuous work and duty,

He faced the wind and the rain, the snow of winter, the fearful dust storms of alkali desert wastes, with the same uncomplaining quiet. Not all his work was on

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<sup>522</sup> Ibid.

the ranch and the trail. To the cowboy, more than to the goldseekers, more than to Uncle Sam's soldiers, is due the conquest of the west.<sup>523</sup>

There is also an Antimodernist lamentation of the decline of the cowboy, and more importantly the society which sustained the cowboy, in Lomax's collection which was also determined by the intellectual context in which Lomax was working. Antimodern sentiments also found an outlet at Harvard, where the cult of manhood was tied to modern overcivilisation and the feminisation of American society, 'The changing and romantic West of the early days lives mainly in story and in song. The last figure to vanish is the cowboy, the animating spirit of the vanishing era.'<sup>524</sup> Roosevelt and William James especially were critical of overcivilisation and the decline of the culture of manhood, and it is from this context that *Cowboy Songs* emerged. Although Lomax did wish for the collection to become popular, it was not solely this impulse which determined the introduction, the frontispiece, and the endorsements from Wendell and Roosevelt.

The emphatic approval of Roosevelt is also made clear his letter to Lomax, and as Roosevelt says, 'You have done a work emphatically worth doing, and one which should appeal to the people of all our country.'<sup>525</sup> It would be difficult for Lomax to find an endorsement more likely to increase the popular appeal of his collection than that of Theodore Roosevelt. In his letter, Roosevelt clearly believed the cowboy song itself has considerable popular appeal, and Lomax did hope for the collection to be popular, but with Lomax and Roosevelt the impulse for popularity was brought on by an Antimodernist feeling. Roosevelt's letter reveals a great anxiety about the modern conditions which would not allow the survival of the cowboy song, 'Under modern conditions however the native ballad is speedily killed by competition with the music hall songs; the cowboys becoming ashamed to sing the crude homespun ballads...'<sup>526</sup> More important than the popular appeal of the collection is intellectual context which fostered the creation of *Cowboy Songs*, and Lomax's demonstration of the manliness of the cowboy, his Anglo – Saxon roots, his strenuous life, and the regrettable circumstances of the decline of the cowboy. Although these aspects may indeed have enhanced the popularity of the collection, by appealing to

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<sup>523</sup> Ibid.

<sup>524</sup> Ibid.

<sup>525</sup> Ibid.

<sup>526</sup> Ibid.

the imagination of readers with a picture of the life of the cowboy, the appearance of the collection was ultimately due to Lomax's background at Harvard, where he received encouragement to pursue the project, and which was the institutional home of many of the intellectual trends which governed the collection. Like many other aspects of the American collecting tradition, the context was the determining factor in the collecting work: in this case ideas of manhood, the strenuous life, and Anglo – Saxon nativism combined with an undercurrent of Antimodernism to create a portrait of the American cowboy, and is partly why the collection is remembered.

Smith's *Anthology* used presentation to great effect, and much of the commentary on the collection is based on Smith's presentation. Marcus shows his fascination with this presentation in 'The Old, Weird America',

Visually it was dominated by a queer schema: heavy, black, oversized numbers, marking each of the 84 selections as if their placement altogether superseded their content...the booklet was decorated with art from record sleeves advertising "Old Time Tunes"...with woodcuts from turn – of – the – century catalogues of musical instruments, and with faded, hard – to – make – out photos of performers.<sup>527</sup>

He argues that, 'The whole bizarre package made the familiar strange, the never known into the forgotten...'<sup>528</sup> The extent to which this analysis of the *Anthology* is based on the presentation shows how much influence Smith's design can have on the listener. His original cover design was an illustration of the celestial monochord, taken from diagrams by seventeenth century scientist and mystic Robert Fludd. The celestial monochord supposedly linked the Ptolemaic universe with musical intervals, and Smith's use of this design is indicative of his preoccupation with establishing connections between different aspects of a culture. Smith equated this search for connections with cultural disciplines, 'I try to be a musicologist or something like that. I believe in the kinship of all life.'<sup>529</sup> However, if the

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<sup>527</sup> Marcus, Greil. 1997. *A Booklet of Essays, Appreciations, and Annotations Pertaining to the Anthology of American Folk Music*. Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, Washington D.C.

<sup>528</sup> Ibid.

<sup>529</sup> Singh, Rani, ed. 1999. *Think of the Self Speaking: Harry Smith – Selected Interviews*. Elbow/Cityful Press, Seattle. p. 26.

presentation of *Anthology* was part of Smith's continuous attempt to tease out connections and show the 'kinship of all life', this may not be important for the audience of the *Anthology*. Marcus sees the presentation as part of the pervasive unfamiliarity of the collection, 'The *Anthology* was a mystery – an insistence that against every assurance to the contrary, American was itself a mystery.'<sup>530</sup> As Keenan points out, Smith's collection seems like 'an attempt to map the flux of ancient – modern consciousness...' and this is made clear in his connection of Fludd to Ptolemy and of these scientists to the American folk music of the 1920s and 30s through the Celestial Monochord. Establishing connections between facets of culture which may be separated by hundreds of years was one of Smith's ambitions with his work, not only in the *Anthology* but in his paintings, some of which were attempts to represent Dizzy Gillespie performances visually. Even if Smith's system for making these connections or his understanding of how they work is not fathomable to the listener, what the 'Anthology' does is to create an impression of strangeness through its presentation. This impression is accentuated by some of the songs which are not typical fare in a collection purporting to be 'American Folk Music', such as Didier Hebert's *I Woke up One Morning in May* or *Saut Crapaud* by Columbus Fruge.

The notes accompanying the collection are the most notable example of Smith combining scholarly conventions and the strangeness of the 'Anthology' in his presentation, and this is partly what makes the 'Anthology' appear so strange. The photographs of performers, illustrations taken from catalogues and magazines, and the oversized numbering scheme, all contribute to the impression of strangeness, and also seem to suggest connections between the records which are not apparent simply from listening to them. While the design of the notes is creating this impression of strangeness, the arrangement is working to remove the records from their former 'Race' and 'Hillbilly' tags, which heightens the impression of unfamiliarity by removing the records from their recording industry context to a certain extent. The *Anthology* also managed to be a practical reference work, as well as a device for de – contextualising the records, by including a comprehensive bibliography and discography in each song entry, plus an index and overall bibliography and discography for the collection. It is clear from this aspect of the collection that Smith did not neglect his research in assembling the *Anthology*, and consulted

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<sup>530</sup> Marcus, Greil. 1997. *A Booklet of Essays, Appreciations, and Annotations Pertaining to the Anthology of American Folk Music*. Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, Washington D.C.

important collections like *Cowboy Songs*, Sharp's *English Folk Songs*, and Child's *Popular Ballads*. It is simple to cross – reference using Smith's, Sharp's, and Child's collections, and observe the differences between variants of certain songs.

Another thing which distinguished the presentation of the *Anthology* from previous collections was, as Smith remarked, 'The whole *Anthology* was a collage. I thought of it as an art object. It took a long time to do. Naturally it gets cut up.'<sup>531</sup> Clearly he conceived of his collection as a single object, rather than a product of a continuing endeavour, and consequently paid more attention to the presentation of his collection than previous collectors. Although care should be taken with Smith's retroactive claims regarding the *Anthology*, the idea of the collection being an art object connects with Smith's avant – garde art leanings. While collecting records in the 1940s Smith was also painting representations of jazz he heard in the clubs in Greenwich Village, and trying to find the connections between particular scales and modes, and colours and shapes. This may come through in the composition of the *Anthology* which has a great deal of accompanying visual material which has little or no observable connection to the music. This may be based on connections Smith saw between his records and ephemera he had collected, but it does make the *Anthology* seem very different from LP collections assembled by Alan Lomax for instance. This is fundamentally dictated by Smith's life on the fringes of both the Beat Movement and the Avant – Garde art community in Greenwich Village in the 1940s. In the same way that the presentation of *Cowboy Songs* was governed by Lomax's intellectual background at Harvard, the strangeness of the *Anthology* was partly determined by Smith's Beat and Avant – Garde affiliations, even though he was not an avowed member of either group. While the presentation of the collections has influenced their reception, they were not necessarily constructed with this in mind, and the aforementioned intellectual contexts were more responsible for how the collections were presented.

#### 4.15: Collection Conventions in the American Tradition

Through the discussion in this chapter, it is clear that the collections produced within the American collecting tradition were subject to an array of conventions established by several

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<sup>531</sup> Singh, Rani, ed. 1999. *Think of the Self Speaking: Harry Smith – Selected Interviews*. Elbow/Cityful Press, Seattle. p. 81.

European collectors and built upon by their American successors. The conventions of introductions, explanatory notes, and indices have remained important components of most American collections, even recorded collections like Smith's *Anthology*. However, to these conventions have been added developments like Sharp's balanced attention to both the tunes and text of songs, the Lomaxes use of journals and correspondence to illustrate the narrative of their collecting trips, and Smith's amalgamation of numerous conventions to accompany a collection of commercial records. The conventions that connect the American collections, such as the introductory and explanatory notes; overlapping aims of preservation, contribution to scholarship, and more varied aims such as Smith and Asch's cultural subversion and Sharp's social improvement through education; content oriented arrangement of material; and presentation of the collection, are all ultimately determined by the various contexts in which the collection was produced. Even when the arguably biggest development was made with recording technology, the archival collections produced by the Lomaxes still required a considerable amount of explanatory apparatus, the basis of which were the conventions of literary collections. The important intellectual trends of the various periods had arguably the biggest impact on the way the collections were constructed, from Child's post – Romantic textual scholarship of the Grimms, right through to Smith's Avant – Garde and Beat influenced idea of art and culture in post – war America. These intellectual trends dictated how the collection was edited, arranged, and presented, and what apparatus were used in the application of these practices. The historical context was also vitally important to how the collection was assembled, as in the case of *Cowboy Songs* which, romanticism aside, was compiled when the ranching culture of the rural South was somewhat in decline, or Sharp's *English Folk Songs* which sought to re – establish traditional values during a period of social change, particularly in gender politics. In both cases the collection was assembled with the promotion of traditional folk culture in mind, and was intended to be used, to differing extents, to address the cultural decline.

The final chapter in the thesis examines the issue of influence in the collecting tradition, with particular focus on how the political, socio – cultural, ideological, and technological contexts could have such an impact on the work of the American collectors. It also discusses the importance of the work done by the collectors, and how much impact it has had on the continued performance of folk music. Chapter 5 aims to conclude the discussion on the American collecting tradition by drawing together these two discussion



points to demonstrate that the collecting tradition is defined by a series of transformations in every aspect of collecting, from theory, to collecting techniques, to output, and that these transformations are what has enabled folk collecting to have an impact on American culture.

## Chapter 5: The Importance of the American Collecting Tradition

### 5.1: Introduction

This chapter concludes the discussion of the American collecting tradition by drawing together the previous discussions of the importance of context on the various aspects of the collecting tradition. It will examine exactly why these contexts are so important for the work of the collectors, and consequently how these intellectual, political, socio – cultural and technological contexts have dictated the understanding of American folk music in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Chapter 5 examines the 1950s and 60s folk revival movement and discusses how the intellectual contexts that inform the work of the collectors are also operative in the revival to a certain extent, and dictate some of the revival trends such as its tendency to look to the past for cultural resources, and its idealisation of the rural folk and their lifestyle.

Chapter 5 concludes that the most important and consistent thing which determined the work of the collectors was the context in which they were working. It argues that if it is credible to speak of an American collecting tradition, then the most integral aspect of this tradition must be the series of transformations introduced by the collectors. These transformations in the theories of folk music, methods for collecting folk songs, and collections and associated output, are what fundamentally define the American collecting tradition and actually characterise it as a tradition. Rather than a succession of different collectors working independently, the way in which each collector introduces transformations into the prior work on the subject validates this as a tradition. Chapter 5 ultimately concludes that since these transformations are what define the work of the collectors as a tradition, then the context in which they were working is the most important factor in the collection tradition, because the context determines the transformations.

## 5.2: Analyses of Influence in Collecting

The five American collectors are often judged in terms of their impact and influence, and it is interesting to note in what areas their influence is claimed to be greatest, such as Szwed's summary of Alan Lomax's importance, 'Lomax was arguably one of the most influential Americans of the twentieth century, a man who changed not only how everyone listened to music but even how they viewed America.'<sup>532</sup> He prefaces this by saying, 'This was a remarkable achievement for a man who never held an academic post or a high government position, or received an international or even a national award for his work until the very end of his life.'<sup>533</sup> This suggests that despite Lomax's academic work his influence was much more significant outside the academic community, and Szwed makes significant claims about the broadness of such influence. Commentators on the influence of Child focus on his scholarly legacy rather than any popular influence, 'The effect of Child's great compilation must not be left out of account. Its prestige ran so high that for decades the "Child ballads" were virtually synonymous in learned circles with balladry itself...'<sup>534</sup> His influence is also apparently present in all modern study of culture,

The modern study of culture begins with the study of ballads. The eighteenth century 'discovery' of ballads in popular tradition (that is, the putting of ballads into scholarly books) began an enduring debate which was crucial in defining what came to be called Romanticism. All modern theories of culture and poetics trace their ancestry to this debate...<sup>535</sup>

Commentators on Smith's *Anthology* have made ambitious claims about the influence it exerted on popular culture,

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<sup>532</sup> Szwed, John. 2010. *The Man Who Recorded the World: A Biography of Alan Lomax*. William Heinemann, London. p. 388.

<sup>533</sup> Ibid.

<sup>534</sup> Coffin, Tristram P., and Leach, MacEdward. 1961. *The Critics and the Ballad*. Southern Illinois University Press. p. 5.

<sup>535</sup> Cheesman, Tom, and Rieuwerts, Sigrid. 1997. *Ballads into Books: The Legacies of Francis James Child*. Peter Lang Publishers, Berne.

I'd match the *Anthology* up against any other single compendium of important information ever assembled. Dead Sea Scrolls? Nah. I'll take the *Anthology*. Make no mistake: there was no 'folk' canon before Smith's work. That he had compiled such a definitive document only became apparent much later, of course. We record – collecting types, sifting through many more records than he did, eventually reached the same conclusions: these were the true goods.<sup>536</sup>

Clearly advocates of the collectors and their work promote the idea of influence as a measure of their success, and most of the collectors are presented as being extremely influential. This chapter discusses if such claims are well – founded, and if so how this can be definitively established.

### 5.3: Why Intellectual Context is Important in Collecting

Examining the work of a collector can provide an indication of the influences which inform this work, but as a means of gauging the extent of such influence a close examination of a collector's work may not produce much information. Most of the collectors discussed in this thesis adapt aspects of others work to use in their own collections, often resulting in a confused agglutination of techniques and theories, as in the case of Smith. He consistently used Child's *Ballads* as a source for reference, consulted and cited various Lomax collections and books and adapted elements of their functionalist approach to song classification, and also included Sharp's *English Folksongs* in his sources.<sup>537</sup> It is difficult to determine the major influences on Smith's work since he used elements from so much work on folk music, and this is a problem with gauging influence among collectors, especially collectors like Smith who used pieces of various works on folk music. However, consulting sources other than the *Anthology* itself can provide a further indication of which collectors influenced Smith's work, such as the Cohen interview in which he states the importance of Child's *Ballads* in determining his arrangement.<sup>538</sup> This shows that Smith was willing to include a

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<sup>536</sup> Fahey, John. 1997. *A Booklet of Essays, Appreciations, and Annotations Pertaining to Anthology of American Folk Music of Anthology of American Folk Music*. Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, Washington D.C.

<sup>537</sup> Smith, Harry. 1997. *Anthology of American Folk Music*. Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, Washington D.C.

<sup>538</sup> Singh, Rani, ed. 1999. *Think of the Self Speaking: Harry Smith – Selected Interviews*. Elbow/Cityful Press, Seattle. p. 68.

record in the *Anthology* because of its status as a Child ballad, despite his opinion that it was not a good recording. Smith also acknowledged the influence of the Lomaxes on his work, attributing his familiarity with the Carter Family to their work, again in the Cohen interview.<sup>539</sup> While it may not be apparent in the collection itself how influential the Lomaxes and Child were on Smith, interviews and other commentaries can demonstrate this influence.

As previously noted, Smith's interviews must be treated with scepticism because of his revisionist tendencies, and his propensity to mislead and confuse interviewers. However, it remains essential to consult sources beyond the collection itself to determine why it was constructed in this way, why Smith collected records, and how he conceived of folk music and how this conception influenced his work. Some of the commentators on Smith have contributed to his own mythologising, and obfuscated the details of the history of the *Anthology* to a certain extent, which is partly what prompts articles like Skinner's which attempts to reconstruct the process of canonisation the *Anthology* underwent. Despite this, Singh's foreword to Smith's collected interviews makes an important point about his interview behaviour depending on his mood and his state of intoxication. In order to determine what impacted on Smith while he was collecting, and working on the *Anthology* it is necessary to look at the type of environment in which he was working. Smith was a relatively close acquaintance of Allen Ginsberg in Greenwich Village in the 1940s and 50s, who in turn was part of a group of writers and countercultural thinkers including Gregory Corso, Jack Kerouac, and Lucien Carr. Thus Smith was on the fringes of a scene which was dissatisfied with post-war American culture and sought an antidote through forms of cultural disobedience. In addition, Smith was also on the fringes of the Greenwich Village Avant-Garde artistic movement, and his own paintings and films are generally abstract in form. These intellectual and cultural settings invariably had an impact on aspects of Smith's work, and as the previous chapters have argued, his recording collecting has a clear countercultural impulse behind it, and the *Anthology* is an art object that draws heavily on the avant-garde art scene. These contexts are important because they partly dictated Smith's reaction to 1940s culture, and the *Anthology* can be seen as a product of this reaction. Working in an environment that advocated alternatives to modern middle-class

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<sup>539</sup> Ibid. pp. 72 – 73.

culture, not only working on his record collection but on paintings and experimental films, must have encouraged Smith to pursue old 78s as an antidote to the music of the late 1940s. Although his interview responses must be treated with scepticism, Smith did state that while collecting he was searching for records which were as different as possible from 'high class' music of the period. Ultimately, the most important thing which resulted in the creation of the *Anthology* was this context of counterculture and the avant – garde which determined what the *Anthology* looked and sounded like, and for a collection like Smith's these are the most important impressions it made.

Similarly, the collectors whose work influenced Child can be gleaned from *Ballads*, but the extent of their influence can only be partly determined from Child's correspondence and other ancillary materials. Harker's study of Child argues how influential collectors and scholars like Grundtvig were on Child's work, citing Child's own insecurities as part of the reason for such dependence, 'a closer inspection of the theoretical foundations of Child's edifice will reveal...a distinct lack of self – confidence.'<sup>540</sup> Harker suggests that a single work of Grundtvig's was the most influential and informed everything that Child worked since he was first exposed to it,

What focused Child's theory and practice was the appearance of Grundtvig's *Danske Folkeviser*. Though he saw it 'quite late', he spent the rest of his life adapting himself to Grundtvig's ideas, and apologising for his own earlier efforts, such as the inclusion of longer pieces in his first ballad collection, because they were 'not of the nature of ballads'.<sup>541</sup>

In the letters discussed by Harker, it is clear that Child was advised considerably in his work by correspondents, and he often acquiesced to Grundtvig's instruction due to his stature in the field of balladry. Through his examination of the correspondence Harker is able to point out the areas in which Child's *Ballads* displays the effects of Grundtvig's influence,

Grundtvig's advice and example was crucial, not only to the contents of Child's magnum opus, but even to its structure. Every problem Child had encountered

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<sup>540</sup> Harker, Dave. 1981. 'Francis James Child and the 'Ballad Consensus''. *Folk Music Journal*. 4/2. p. 143

<sup>541</sup> *Ibid.* p. 149

was gone over thoroughly in their correspondence, with the American placing himself explicitly in the posture of a willing disciple: 'With your help I feel sure that I could do the work somewhat as it ought to be done'.<sup>542</sup>

The influence Grundtvig had on *Ballads* is clear when the correspondence is available, but the difficulty lies in determining the influence from the work alone. There are obvious differences between the first collection Child published, *English and Scottish Ballads*, and the subsequent *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, but it is difficult to establish any influence at work in the collections. As Harker points out, 'The debt to Grundtvig is acknowledged, but only sparingly; yet Hustvedt believed that not only the plan but even the *contents* of the work published by Child were attributable to Grundtvig...'<sup>543</sup> Without the ancillary knowledge of his collaboration with Grundtvig it would be very difficult to identify Grundtvig's influence in *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*. However, such a qualification may be redundant since gauging influence present in the work of a collector may only be possible with prior knowledge of such influence.

When examining Child's definition of ballad poetry the influence of German philology and literary scholars like Grundtvig may be more apparent since the entry is naturally more expansive than any commentary in *Ballads*. Pearce argues that influence in the work of a collector is important in order to ground the collection in established forms, 'In order to achieve imaginative constructions of material which stand some chance of keeping us within the pale of 'normal' we require some generally understood overarching metaphors to act as mental and emotional scaffolding.'<sup>544</sup> In the case of the American collecting tradition, this 'scaffolding' is adopted from the work of previous collectors and used to structure and solidify a collection. Within this folk collecting tradition, it is important to cite precedents either explicitly or in the collection to demonstrate the importance of the work and its continuation.

Although the definition in Johnson's *Cyclopaedia* does have greater detail and scope for citing influences, it still cannot reveal as much about Child's motivations for 'Ballads' as an investigation of the intellectual context in which Child was working, which is especially

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<sup>542</sup> Ibid. p. 154

<sup>543</sup> Ibid. p. 159

<sup>544</sup> Pearce, Susan M. 1995. *On Collecting: An Investigation into Collecting in the European Tradition*. Routledge Press, London. p. 181.

important since Child work was conducted in a scholarly environment as Professor of English Literature at Harvard. As Bendix observed, Child's graduate studies were conducted in Berlin where he came into contact with the post – Romantic textual scholarship and linguistic theory of the Grimm brothers, and the history of German folklore scholarship including Herder's *Volkslieder*. The scholarly grounding in textual folklore scholarship was integral to Child's own approach to ballad scholarship, which emphasised the text and the establishment of a genuine ballad text. Child's 'Ballads' can be said to exemplify the same principles as 'Kinder- und Hausmärchen' which Bendix describes as: preserving the remains of an idealised period of cultural purity, using systematic methods to document this period, and compile a collection which could be of use to scholars of language and literature. This intellectual context in which Child studied is the most important thing which determined his work because, like Smith, it represented the environment in which he conducted his ballad research, and in this environment of rigorous textual scholarship Child was impelled to make his collection as rigorous and complete as possible. Although it is debateable how much the work of the Grimms impacted on literary scholarship in mid – nineteenth century America, Child remained involved in European folklore scholarship during his research, with a variety of correspondents in Europe transcribing ballads for his collection, and scholars like Grundtvig consulting on the creation of 'Ballads'. Although Child was a Harvard professor in the mid – eighteenth century American north – east, his ballad scholarship was rooted in early to mid – eighteenth century Europe, and this accounts for Child's theories of folk music, the way he collected ballads, and the form that 'English and Scottish Popular Ballads' eventually took.

The influence of Child and European collectors on the work of John Lomax is also difficult to determine simply by examining Lomax's work, even his earliest work. The initial impression left by the *Cowboy Songs* collection is its difference from Child's *Ballads*, in its subject, layout, and apparent purpose. Lomax seemed to be documenting a very different type of folk song from Child, and compiling a different kind of collection with a view to some commercial success via publication. However, this impression is only left by the body of the collection itself; the introduction to *Cowboy Songs* reveals how much influence Child indirectly actually had on Lomax. Filene points out that, 'Even though Lomax challenged the boundaries of Child's canon and disregarded his collecting methods, as a student of Wendell



and Kittredge he still very much located his work within the Child tradition.<sup>545</sup> When the introductory sections of *Cowboy Songs* are examined, it becomes clear that Lomax was following on from Child's work, in his understanding of folk music and its traditions. The introduction by Wendell situates the collection clearly in the Child tradition of ballad scholarship, arguing that,

In this collection of American ballads, almost if not quite uniquely, it is possible to trace the precise manner in which songs and cycles of song – obviously analogues to those surviving from older and antique times – have come into being.<sup>546</sup>

Wendell also regards the collection as a purely literary endeavour, and a contribution to literary ballad scholarship similar to Child's *Ballads*.<sup>547</sup> This gives some idea of the influence Child, through Wendell and Kittredge and his *Ballads* collection, had on John Lomax and the extent to which the American collecting tradition impacts on subsequent collectors. Lomax, in his own preface to *Cowboy Songs* underlines the same point Wendell makes about the ballad connection in cowboy songs, comparing them to pre – medieval English ballads in their content.<sup>548</sup> Lomax's reference to this pre – medieval ballad tradition in Britain connects his work very clearly to Child's ballad collecting and his conception of a similar history of British balladry. In order to discover this connection to Child the reader must examine the introduction and the preface to see where the influence lies. The body of the collection does not include anything which clearly links it to Child or any of his predecessors but, as with Child himself, studying the accompanying material provides some idea of Child's influence on Lomax. These references to Anglo – Saxon qualities in the cowboy and his songs are also evidence of a more important factor which impacted on Lomax's work. John Lomax's graduate studies were at Harvard, 1906 – 1907, when Barrett Wendell and George Lyman Kittredge were teaching, as was William James, although he retired in 1907. James and Wendell especially were proponents of the idea that the best stock in America came from Anglo – Saxon roots, and that an Anglo – Saxon heritage was the measure of a man. Harvard

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<sup>545</sup> Filene, Benjamin. 2000. *Romancing the Folk: Public Memory & American Roots Music*. University of North Carolina Press. p. 33.

<sup>546</sup> Lomax, John A. 1910. *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads*. New York, MacMillan Press.

<sup>547</sup> Ibid.

<sup>548</sup> Ibid.

was a centre for theories of Anglo – Saxon nativism and the idea of racial heritage and as Townsend points out this was during an extended period of immigration to America from all over Europe,

As these “authorities” witnessed thousands of peoples of other races landing in America, many – especially those who were determined to trace their ancestry back to what Bernard Berenson (a Latvian immigrant Jew, class of 1887) called the “Angry Saxons” – feared being overwhelmed.<sup>549</sup>

Lomax’s depiction of the cowboy as Anglo – Saxon, his references to the ‘mead halls of Beowulf’, and further references to the Arthur legend, are all instances of Lomax espousing these theories of Anglo – Saxon nativism and racial heritage. Lomax’s nativism lies in his insistence that cowboy songs, which are essentially Anglo – Saxon, should be accorded status as American literature, and that the cowboy ‘knight of the plains’ should figure heavily in the idea of an ideal American. This is tied in with the idea of racial heritage, since Lomax is advocating the songs as a kind of ‘poetry of the people’ which is part of the heritage of every American. Townsend argues that,

What is at stake is nothing less than the American family as it was defined by most of the men in this study during this period. The cowpunchers’ songs are part of an oral tradition that is passed down and altered by men on the move.<sup>550</sup>

In addition to these ideas, Harvard was a focal point for the invocation of proper ‘manhood’ and for a correspondingly manly lifestyle, and Lomax’s cowboy is the personification of these notions. The cowboy was active, healthy, and honest, and Lomax suggests the reader forgive him for his indiscretions when he is in town, since the hard life of the trail means the cowboy values recreation even more. It is essential to note that Lomax was encouraged to pursue his cowboy song collection during his graduate studies, and so this environment of manhood and nativism maintained by some of his teachers invariably impacted on how he conceived of his work. For this reason the intellectual context of Harvard in the first decade

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<sup>549</sup> Townsend, Kim. 1996. *Manhood at Harvard: William James and Others*. Norton, London. p. 230.

<sup>550</sup> *Ibid.* p. 271.

of the twentieth century was the most important determining factor in Lomax's focus on cowboy songs, and how he presented his collection.

#### 5.4: Political and Historical Context in Collecting

In the case of Sharp's work, the political and historical context in which he was working had an overriding impact on his theories of folk song and dance, his collecting work in these areas, and what he did with the material he had collected. Sharp began his work in a period in which industrialisation had already made a significant effect on population distribution and as Williams and others have noted this marked the decline of the feudal system of tenancy and the noble/peasant relationship. As Williams argues,

Rural Britain was subsidiary, and knew that it was subsidiary, from the late nineteenth century. But so much of the past of the country, its feelings and its literature, was involved with rural experience, and so many of its ideas of how to live well, from the style of the country – house to the simplicity of the cottage, persisted and even were strengthened, that there is an almost inverse proportion, in the twentieth century, between the relative importance of the working rural economy and the cultural importance of rural ideas.<sup>551</sup>

This was during a period of Progressivism and a Socialist reform impulse which created great anxiety about the corollary of the marginalisation of rural culture: the development of the city. Walkowitz identifies some of the concerns of reformers regarding the city, 'economic and social transformations animated reformers' concerns with the body, both personal and political...worker bodies called on to make the industrial machine work could be disruptive and dangerously unhealthy. Against them, these elites celebrated the "respectable" body.'<sup>552</sup> Sharp could be counted among these reformers, since he was a conservative socialist and believed in the value of improving the lives of people through instruction and education. Working in this context of rural marginalisation had convinced Sharp that folk

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<sup>551</sup> Williams, Raymond. 1985. *The Country and the City*. Hogarth, London. p. 248.

<sup>552</sup> Walkowitz, Daniel J. 2010. *City Folk: English Country Dance and the Politics of the Folk in Modern America*. New York University Press. p.50.

songs were also in decline as the people who sang them were losing their cultural identity, and the next generation of the rural working classes were not interested in singing traditional songs.

In addition to the cultural unsettlement caused by the growth of cities and the marginalisation of the country, there was also political uncertainty caused by the growing women's suffrage movement, which questioned traditional gender roles: the sort of conventions and roles Sharp found in the songs and dances he collected. As Walkowitz points out Sharp often found himself collaborating with female teachers and dancing instructors in his educational efforts, and this brought him into conflict with some of his collaborators who were suffragettes. Sharp had little patience for competitors in his fields of folk dance and song, and even less for women who were challenging gender roles, especially since aspects of Sharp's work instructing folk dance was about reaffirming traditional gender roles. Walkowitz connects many of these anxieties about the place of women and the working classes in cities with a concern about respectable 'bodies' and the proper forms of exercise for a healthy body. Walkowitz notes one of the established systems by the time Sharp was instructing folk dancing,

...a fourth exercise system that followed the work of the Frenchman Francois Delsarte (1811 – 1871) gained currency at the turn of the century as a system of "harmonious gymnastics" for the female body. Less a form of physical exercise than a set of gentle movements and breathing techniques, the Delsarte method reflected how gendered and class – specific routines came to characterise turn – of – the – century concerns with the healthy body: it was thought the most appropriate for elite female bodies, for which hard physical work was considered neither appropriate nor usual.<sup>553</sup>

Instruction in folk dancing seems to have been partly about developing a healthy female body through something which was both decorous and appropriate for ladies, and was traditional and might counteract the marginalisation of the country.

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<sup>553</sup> Ibid. p. 28.

Since Sharp was working in a political and historical context which was rife with anxieties about the effects the industrial city would have on the working classes, and what the suffrage movement might do to the respectable female body, it is clear how this context would motivate Sharp to collect folk songs and dances from rural areas and instruct people using this material. He also found similar trends to these when he visited America, in which growing numbers of European immigrants were making up parts of the work force in cities, and the Anglo – Saxon ‘peasant’ Sharp was looking for could only really be found in the rural South of the country. As Walkowitz notes, these trends also prompted Sharp to work to reintroduce these rural traditions to the cities,

As “experts,” men such as Cecil Sharp expressed conventional patriarchal and benighted class attitudes of the day. They did so not to demean but to uplift, to transform urban newcomers from worrisome immigrants into respectable Anglo – American citizens with an infusion of what they saw as the vital spirit of the race that they believed to be innate in “simple” rural peoples.<sup>554</sup>

These historical and political contexts were vitally important in Sharp’s work because they determined the terms of his search for folk song and dance in rural areas, they informed many of his ideas about how folk traditions should be used, and most importantly they prompted his educational and instructive efforts regarding folk song and dance. There are intellectual contexts tied in with the period in which Sharp was working but most of his anxieties, which ultimately drove his work, were caused by the political and historical context in which he was working.

Much of Alan Lomax’s work was dictated by the political contexts in which he worked, and throughout his career his work was variously aided by large – scale liberal projects like Roosevelt’s New Deal initiative, and hindered by Cold War anticommunism and McCarthyism. Lomax’s work also coincided with, and contributed to, important historical contexts like the 1940s labour movement, and the 1950s and 60s folk music revival. Alan Lomax’s first recording expedition with his father in 1933 was undertaken in the same year Roosevelt took office, while the Depression had not yet abated and Alan saw many of the

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<sup>554</sup> Ibid. p. 116.

effects of the depression on tenant farmers and rural labourers, and African – Americans in particular, which was partly responsible for Alan’s desire to record folk music and in doing so give a voice to the poor and downtrodden. This context of extreme poverty and deprivation must have had an impact on Alan’s decision to continue collecting folk music, in an attempt to raise awareness of the culture of the rural working classes, and to raise awareness of the conditions in which they lived. As Alan later commented in the journal for his 1938 Ohio and Indiana collecting trip, ‘The more Elizabeth and I see of back – country America, the more we are amazed at how the fine people who exist in it stand their wretched lives at all.’<sup>555</sup>

This collecting trip, along with others undertaken from 1935 – 1938 such as the Haitian expedition, were conducted while the Works Progress Administration and the Federal Writers Project were at their most productive, and some of Alan’s associates like Zora Neale Hurston were funded by these initiatives. In addition, John Lomax was employed for a time with the Federal Writers Project, and Szwed notes the importance of these initiatives in folklore studies,

The Works Progress Administration was one of the most important parts of this development, a massive corps of unemployed workers being put to work. Within its ranks folklorists were trained, created, and set to work in the various federal theatre, writers, arts, and music projects. Even John Lomax himself would join them in 1936, becoming the director of the Folklore Studies Division of the Federal Writers Project...<sup>556</sup>

Some of Alan’s projects were conducted under the auspices of the WPA and FWP, including his work with his father and Charles and Ruth Crawford Seeger on the book which would eventually become *Our Singing Country*. These initiatives, along with the Farm Security Administration, were responsible for much of the work conducted with folk culture during the mid to late 1930s, and this political environment of institutionalisation of folk culture enabled Lomax to work, and also encouraged him that his work was worthwhile since it was

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<sup>555</sup> Lomax, Alan. 1938. Journal of the Ohio and Indiana Collection, March 26 – April 16, 1938. American Folklife Centre.

<sup>556</sup> Szwed, John. 2010. *The Man Who Recorded the World: A Biography of Alan Lomax*. William Heinemann, London. p. 107.

contributing to the recovery of the nation. The leftist culture of many of these projects also solidified Alan's burgeoning leftist tendencies, and his politics and belief that folk music collecting was a worthwhile venture heavily impacted on his future career. If this is combined with Alan's focus on the poorest rural working class people during this period, it is clear what shaped many of his theories of folk music, why he continued collecting, and his work in radio, television, and his book and record collections of music.

Conversely, Alan was also a victim of the Anticommunism concerns in the late 1940s and 50s, which severely curtailed his work in America and hindered some of his projects. One of the earliest instances of Alan's contact with Anticommunist investigation was being asked to appear at the FBI headquarters in D.C., and to answer questions pertaining to his affiliations with the Communist Party and other 'anti – government' groups. He denied membership of the Communist Party, although he did not deny, nor see the need to deny, involvement with other progressive groups such as the American Youth Congress. No action was taken against him following this interrogation, and Alan reportedly found it perplexing that he was called for questioning while he had been working on wartime radio programmes and other means of helping in the war effort. Alan became involved with the Office of War Information (OWI) during this period, and in 1944 when he was leaving the OWI after its budget had been slashed the FBI began another investigation which concluded that while he was not directly affiliated with any communist groups, he should still be monitored. It was partly because of these persistent anxieties over domestic communism that Alan travelled to Europe in the 1950s and continued his collecting work in Britain, Spain, and Italy. One of the most disruptive occurrences for Alan's work is reported by Szwed,

In June 1950 *Red Channels: The Report of Communist Influence in Radio and Television* appeared, a seven – page pamphlet issued by a group of ex – FBI agents who edited the magazine *Counterattack*, and added 151 performers and entertainment figures to the Hollywood blacklist of alleged subversives that had emerged shortly after the end of World War II.<sup>557</sup>

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<sup>557</sup> Ibid. p. 250.

This blacklisting is the main reason Alan travelled to Europe, and it was during his time in Europe that his theories regarding song style and culture developed, and his ideas of vocal techniques and speech being connected to the culture which these things are practiced. In this sense, although Anticommunism restricted Alan's work, it also indirectly resulted in his theories of folk music developing considerably, and this in turn produced some of his projects in the 1950s and 60s. These significant political trends repeatedly impacted on Alan Lomax's work, and these contexts are important because they constitute part of the environment in which he was working, and the environment in which work is done invariably effects the work itself. It could be argued that Lomax continued collecting folk music because of the receptive environment of the New Deal, and perhaps his most enduring motivation of providing a platform for the underprivileged and ignored also emerged during this period of extreme social deprivation. Similarly, the political context which forced him to begin collecting in Europe broadened his view of folk music, and helped him formulate new ideas regarding folk music and societal beliefs.

### 5.5: The Importance of Technological Context

Another of the most important contextual factors in the work of collectors is the technological context in which they were working, and this can be seen clearly in the work of Smith and Asch in the *Anthology*. It is uncertain when the majority of Smith's record collecting took place, but it does seem to have been done largely during the 1940s, during World War II and perhaps up to around 1950 or 1951 when Smith contacted Asch with the offer to sell his record collection. During World War II Szwed notes that, 'the shellac used in records was now rationed'<sup>558</sup> and Smith also recalled that 78rpm shellac records were being recycled for the war effort, which is partly how he came to collect these records. It is clear that the 78rpm record in the 1940s was a technology in decline, and Smith was gathering particularly unusual recordings made using this declining technology. This was a technology which enjoyed a period of sustained use during the 1920s and 30s recording boom, but the Depression had severely dented the sale of records from the mid – 1930s onwards, and the War also disrupted their production, so Smith's records were effectively artefacts of a

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<sup>558</sup> Ibid. p. 198.



lapsed technology. This is a part of the technological context in which Smith was doing his collecting, and which impacted on his retrieval of records from junk shops and failed record shops, and the sense of urgency in his collecting since the records were soon to be cannibalised for their shellac.

Szwed documents the other important technological context for Smith's work,

At Columbia Records the long – playing record had just been perfected, first in a ten – inch version and then a twelve – inch form that allowed some twenty to twenty – five minutes of music to be contained on each side. Though it had been developed to record classical music – no one in the industry believed that ten or twelve pop songs could be sold as an album...<sup>559</sup>

Szwed points out that Alan Lomax, at a folklore conference in 1950, proposed the idea of a vast LP record library compiled by folklorists from every region and country, but there was little support for the idea. One of the most evident things about the LP record was that it was developed as a format for capturing 'art' music and little else: because it was the best available technology it should be used for the most artistically worthy music. In this context of technological innovation Smith and Asch worked against the trend of using the LP for 'art' music by transferring esoteric and unusual folk recordings from their original format to LP records, and in doing so reframed the music and commandeered the new technology for their own ends. Some of the obvious practical benefits of using this new technology include the opportunity to release this as a manageable collection, with six LPs replacing 84 separate 78rpm records, which allows the *Anthology* to function as a cohesive document like Asch's jazz anthologies. While the transfer to LP may have brought problems, it could also result in a slightly improved sound for the songs, which again goes against the trend of 'high fidelity' being associated with 'art' music in the late 1940s and early 50s. In a sense, although the music of the *Anthology* wasn't 'art' music like the classical orchestral pieces recorded to LP were, the use of LP technology reframes it as a kind of art music. This reinforces to a certain extent the idea of the *Anthology* as an avant – garde art object, since it was delivered on the 'art' record technology, but its music was esoteric and strange folk

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<sup>559</sup> Ibid. p. 247.

music from the 20s and 30s. Although there are numerous elements of the production of the *Anthology* which are culturally subversive, much of this subversion was made possible by the technological context in which the collection was produced. The act of collecting a lapsed technology in itself was subverting post – war culture by looking backwards and, like the Beats, looking for something beyond the increasing middle – class cultural homogeneity. The decline of the 78rpm record produced the situation in which Smith collected his records, and in this sense Smith’s cultural subversion was partly facilitated by the technological context in which he was collecting. In addition, the avant – garde artistic aspect of the *Anthology* collection itself was also enabled by the introduction of a new technology which could be subverted by using it for folk music rather than ‘art’ music. This changing technological context is especially important to Smith because his collecting involved no fieldwork or interacting with performers; instead Smith was working with technologies, and the technological context of the 1920s – 1950s dictated how Smith worked.

Aspects of the work of Alan Lomax were also determined by technology, and he also made a different use of technologies than what they had often been used for, and in doing so made effective use of much of the folk material he had been gathering. As Szwed notes, Alan was initially very dismissive of radio as an educational tool, ‘Alan had never been particularly interested in radio, thinking it at best a waste of time and at worst a tool with the potential for fascistic manipulation.’<sup>560</sup> This conception was partly based on radio as it existed in the 1930s, ‘most of the owners of the first radio networks saw their companies as extensions of the entertainment business, whose profits lay in providing what they thought people wanted to hear and what advertisers wanted to support.’<sup>561</sup> However, Szwed also points out that this was forced to change in the mid – 1930s,

It was not until 1934, when the Communications Act was passed and the Federal Communications Commission was created, that the networks began to fear that unless they improved the variety and quality of broadcasting they might become subject to governmental control.<sup>562</sup>

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<sup>560</sup> Ibid. p. 152.

<sup>561</sup> Ibid. p. 151.

<sup>562</sup> Ibid.

Radio technology had developed to such a degree that it was having an impact on the lives of a substantial percentage of the population, and consequently the legislation had to catch up with the technology. In 1938 Lomax first became involved with radio after being approached by a producer at CBS and his misgivings were allayed by listening to the programs of radio dramatist Norman Corwin who wrote some of the most successful radio scripts of the 1930s. Alan composed a series of radio programs in which,

He was to be the principal singer, on – air commentator, and the adviser on the script for a program that would reach 120,000 classrooms across the country. Each week, he would present a new musical and social theme: British ballads in America, the gold rush, love songs, lumberjacks, railroads, sailors, the American Negro, the blues.<sup>563</sup>

In this instance Alan's work was very much dictated by the technological context in which he was working, since the radio had developed to a point at which large – scale educational projects like this could be undertaken. This development resulted ultimately in the creation of programming which convinced Alan that radio could be used effectively to communicate important ideas to the public, and this realisation in turn produced a substantial body of radio work from Lomax which made use of his field recordings and included a great deal of explanatory material. This technological context was important because it convinced Alan to work with a new technology, and this technology had a significant impact on how he used the folk material he had gathered.

The reason that these intellectual, historical and political, and technological contexts were so important to the American collecting tradition is that they form the environment in which the collector is work, and the work is inevitably impacted by this environment. The way in which the collector interacts with the world fundamentally governs every aspect of their work, from the theory to the output, and these contexts represent some of the most important elements of the world with which the collector interacts.

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<sup>563</sup> Ibid. p. 153.

## 5.6: How Collectors Have Influenced the Public

One of the most eminent examples of a collector influencing the public is John Lomax and *Cowboy Songs*, specifically the song 'Home on the Range' and the popularity it enjoyed as a result of *Cowboy Songs*. The song itself is a romanticised tribute to the countryside of the American west, which was won from the Native American inhabitants and settled.

Where the air is so pure, the zephyrs so free, the breezes so balmy and light, that I would not exchange my home on the range, for all of the cities so bright. The Red Man was pressed from this part of the West, He's likely no more to return, To the banks of Red River where seldom if ever, Their flickering camp – fires burn.<sup>564</sup>

'Home on the Range' became extremely popular in subsequent years, and this popularity was helped considerably by President Roosevelt's endorsement, as Filene states, 'The president, too, did his part to bestow respect on folk music...named "Home on the Range" his favourite song...'<sup>565</sup> Roosevelt's letter to Lomax, reprinted in the first edition of *Cowboy Songs* seems to strengthen Roosevelt's interest in 'Home on the Range': 'Your subject is not only exceedingly interesting to the student of literature, but also to the student of the general history of the West.'<sup>566</sup> Filene later claims that Lomax's collection assisted in the popularity of 'Home on the Range', and when this was combined with a Presidential endorsement it created a trend of great popularity, 'Lomax's book helped popularise "Home on the Range," which soon became a nationwide hit.'<sup>567</sup> This raises the question of whether Lomax was responsible for the awareness and popularity of a song like 'Home on the Range', and if this is reliable evidence of the influence collectors can have on the public.

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<sup>564</sup> Lomax, John A. 1910. *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads*. New York, MacMillan Press.

<sup>565</sup> Filene, Benjamin. 2000. *Romancing the Folk: Public Memory & American Roots Music*. University of North Carolina Press. p. 134.

<sup>566</sup> Lomax, John A. 1910. *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads*. New York, MacMillan Press.

<sup>567</sup> Filene, Benjamin. 2000. *Romancing the Folk: Public Memory & American Roots Music*. University of North Carolina Press. p. 242.

'Home on the Range' could be an instance of the rise and fall in popularity experienced by many styles of popular music, and in this case Lomax's influence may be limited or a minor contributing factor. One of the issues which complicate answering this question is the problem of ownership, or authorship, which has arisen in the case of 'Home on the Range'.

Letters found in the 'Lomax Papers' collection in the American Folklife Centre give some insight into the situation which arose concerning 'Home on the Range'. An undated letter from David W. Guion begins with an announcement of admiration for Lomax,

I have known Mr. John A. Lomax for many years, and having been born in the very heart of the great cattle country of Texas makes me doubly appreciative of the splendid work Mr. Lomax has done in preserving many fine American folk tunes – some of which might otherwise have been lost to the general public had it not been for the untiring effort of this collector of tunes.<sup>568</sup>

Guion goes on to question Lomax's veracity on the subject of 'Home on the Range',

...regarding the origin and success of the song Home on the Range, Mr. Lomax with – held much important information concerning this particular song. In fact it is my belief that he, for personal reasons, deliberately evaded the whole truth regarding this much publicised song of recent weeks.<sup>569</sup>

The letter soon becomes quite vehement in its ownership claims, and consequently to whom the popularity of the song is attributable, 'I only want credit where credit is due. America learned Home on the Range from my pen – not that of John A. Lomax, or from any other source...'<sup>570</sup> The credibility of these claims are uncertain, but Guion's insistence of his own authorship of 'Home on the Range' and his references to its success do show that the public was very familiar with the song. In a further letter to the Southwest Review, again undated, Guion sounds even more frustrated with the 'Home on the Range' situation, announcing, 'David Guion says – my 'Home, home on the range, Where the deer and the

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<sup>568</sup> Guion, David W. Undated letter, found in *Lomax Papers* collection in the American Folklife Centre, Library of Congress, Washington DC.

<sup>569</sup> Ibid.

<sup>570</sup> Ibid.

antelope play' is none of Mr. Lomax's business!<sup>571</sup> Also, after initially voicing support for the work of Lomax in general, Guion decries Lomax's collecting and his attitude towards 'song – tinkerers',

Mr. Lomax abhors "song tinkerers" and wants all folk tunes to remain folk tunes – untouched, COLLECTED by John A. Lomax, mind you! In other words, Mr. Lomax wants credit for songs he got from the public domain and has now given back to the public domain, but all labelled and stamped with his (Lomax's) approval. And according to Mr. Lomax, these songs must remain folk tunes, never to be fashioned into classic art songs, concertos and symphonies, by "song tinkerers". Seemingly Mr. Lomax does not believe in progress.<sup>572</sup>

Guion's criticisms of Lomax's work are quite incisive, noting that Lomax does happily take credit for traditional songs, although Guion seems to misunderstand the business of collecting, assuming claims of ownership which may not be present. Lomax was reportedly frustrated by his failure originally to acquire copyright over 'Home on the Range', once it began to experience success in the 20s and 30s.<sup>573</sup> Filene notes that, 'A half – million – dollar lawsuit established that the song had actually been composed by a Kansas doctor in 1873.'<sup>574</sup> Regardless of the authorship of 'Home on the Range'; its popularity, disagreements over who popularised it, and Lomax's heightened profile because of its popularity all demonstrate that a collector can have some degree of influence over popular music tastes. Lomax's collection itself may not have been sufficient to popularise the song as extensively as it was, but in combination with other influences *Cowboy Songs* did prove to be influential on the public.

Peterson also cites *Cowboy Songs* as an important antecedent of the film depiction of the cowboy, and most importantly the singing cowboy, who was a regular feature in westerns in the 1930s and 40s. For instance, John Wayne made a film for Monogram Pictures in the 1930s and his singing cowboy persona owed a great deal to the singing

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<sup>571</sup> Ibid.

<sup>572</sup> Ibid.

<sup>573</sup> Porterfield, Nolan. 1996. *The Last Cavalier: The Life and Times of John A. Lomax*. University of Illinois Press.

<sup>574</sup> Filene, Benjamin. 2000. *Romancing the Folk: Public Memory & American Roots Music*. University of North Carolina Press. p. 242.

cowboy as he appeared in Lomax's collection. Gene Autry and Roy Rogers also devoted part of their careers to depicting singing cowboys for Republic Studios, who followed Monogram in the production of singing cowboy films. This was in response to a popular trend for singing cowboy films in the 1930s, but this trend went into decline with the proliferation of the television, and singing cowboy stars like John Wayne had moved on to other kinds of western film. Importantly, the popularity of *Home on the Range* and the singing cowboy means the intellectual context of Harvard manhood, the strenuous life, and Anglo – Saxon nativism indirectly had an impact on the public, since Lomax's collection was constructed using this intellectual framework, and the songs he included in the collection, and his image of the cowboy, are instances of these ideas. Although 'Home on the Range' in isolation is simply a song concerning the life of the cowboy, as part of Lomax's collection it is a component in the cowboy as the personification of manliness and the strenuous life. The song itself espouses the lifestyle of the outdoors and contrasts this to the life of the cities, which in the intellectual framework of Harvard Antimodernism represents overcivilisation, softness and privilege. Although it is unlikely the majority of the popularity can be attributed to *Cowboy Songs*, the fact that it aided the popularity of the song does indicate Lomax's brand of Antimodernism and nativism entering the public consciousness. Parts of John Lomax's image of the singing cowboy can be seen in the singing cowboys shown in films by Monogram and Republic, which depict the cowboy as honest and straightforward, living a manly life outdoors. Although the singing trend in westerns declined to a large extent after the 1940s, the cowboy was still depicted using these traditional elements of manliness, honesty, and stoicism. The cowboy may be an agent of civilisation, but is also an Antimodern figure because he represents an intellectual movement against overcivilisation, comfort, and the feminisation of American culture. For example, this can clearly be seen in Sergio Leone's 1968 film *Once Upon a Time in the West* which according to Leone is about the last remnants of an ancient race of men who built 19<sup>th</sup> century America, before they were superseded by the women who took over the process of building the country. This idea of the cowboy being part of an ancient race, and the subsequent feminisation of culture following the end of this ancient race, are closely linked to the intellectual context in which Lomax assembled *Cowboy Songs*. The 'ancient race' could be seen as the Anglo – Saxon cowboy that Lomax promoted in his collection, and although Leone never made an allusion to the Anglo – Saxon heritage idea, the fact that the cowboy was seen as part of an

ancient race of men shows this idea continued to impact on depictions of the cowboy even after the decline of singing cowboy films.

Alan Lomax is sometimes cited as one of the most significant influences on twentieth century American popular music, and advocates of this position refer to his extensive work in blues and jazz, and the influence those musical forms have had on other popular music. Szwed claims, 'While Alan's public influence reached its peak between 1940 and 1960, when he was the single greatest force in bringing folk songs to American awareness, it continues today in any number of cultural domains...'<sup>575</sup> If the case of Lead Belly's *Goodnight Irene* is taken as an example of public influence, then Lomax could be viewed as an influential collector in the same way that his father was. Alan and his father John first recorded Lead Belly in 1933 in Angola Prison in Louisiana, and were immediately enthused by his impressive repertoire of seemingly authentic folk songs. Filene cites John Lomax's retrospective comments,

John Lomax would later write, "From Lead Belly we secured about one hundred songs that seemed 'folky,' a far greater number than from any other person." Although Lead Belly did know some popular songs, the Lomaxes felt that "his eleven years of confinement had cut him off from both the phonograph and the radio."<sup>576</sup>

After Lead Belly was released from prison the Lomaxes brought him to New York and arranged numerous concerts and publicised him as much as possible. He received considerable exposure during this period, and one of the songs that he recorded was 'Goodnight Irene'. This song, recorded in 1936 for the Library of Congress, was covered by the Weavers in 1950 and enjoyed great success, as documented by Szwed,

"Goodnight Irene" had been played 100,000 times in one month on radio and TV, and as it was also on most of the jukeboxes in the country, it was heard an estimated two million times a day. From the time of its release on July 3<sup>rd</sup> to

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<sup>575</sup> Szwed, John. 2010. *The Man Who Recorded the World: A Biography of Alan Lomax*. William Heinemann, London. p. 391.

<sup>576</sup> Filene, Benjamin. 2000. *Romancing the Folk: Public Memory & American Roots Music*. University of North Carolina Press. p. 51.



October, fifteen versions of it had been recorded, by everyone from Frank Sinatra to Red Foley, and more than two million of those singers' records had also been sold.<sup>577</sup>

Many more versions of 'Goodnight Irene' have subsequently been recorded, making this an obvious case of popularisation of a folk song, but the question remains regarding how much Lomax can be credited with influencing the public. It may be significant that 'Goodnight Irene' began experiencing such extensive dissemination and performance after 1950, and versions preceding the Weavers' recording were scarce except for Lead Belly's recordings. This suggests Lomax was only influential, concerning 'Goodnight Irene', indirectly through the Weavers' popular recording. However, within the American collecting tradition it is generally this indirect influence which is the most enduring, as noted in the case of John Lomax and 'Home on the Range'. Also, it is important not to dismiss the work Lead Belly did independently to promote and popularise the song, although the extent of Lead Belly's exposure would have been severely reduced if Alan Lomax had not helped publicise his music. It is reasonable to speculate that if Alan Lomax had not assisted in the popularisation of 'Goodnight Irene' it would have remained familiar only to people who had heard Lead Belly perform it. In such a case, the song may have remained a resolutely obscure folk song rather than an extremely successful pop song. One of the contextual factors which governed Alan's work impacted on the public to a certain extent through his work in promoting folk performers and their songs: his socialist impulse to give a voice to the poor, marginalised, or neglected groups in American society. This can be seen in his promotion of Lead Belly, even after John Lomax no longer worked with him, and his determination to secure Lead Belly a living from his music, and also to promote the cultural importance of this music. As Szwed states, after John Lomax ended his association with Lead Belly Alan, '...made a quick decision that he would continue working with Lead Belly in whatever way he could...he and Alan would be part of each other's lives until Lead Belly's death fourteen years later...'<sup>578</sup> Alan made more recordings with Lead Belly, in which he solicited fragments of narration detailing the history of the songs, and also some oral history of Lead Belly's life and how he learned

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<sup>577</sup> Szwed, John. 2010. *The Man Who Recorded the World: A Biography of Alan Lomax*. William Heinemann, London. p. 249.

<sup>578</sup> *Ibid.* p. 76.

songs. This was part of Alan's overall attempt to make people aware of the life and culture of marginalised groups, to demonstrate how they comprise part of the culture of the nation as much as anything else does. One of the most eminent examples of his socialist belief in cultural equity entering the public's understanding of folk music is in his work with Jelly Roll Morton. Alan felt that Morton was extremely under – represented in the general history of jazz, and should be acknowledged as one of the earliest performers in a style that could be called jazz. He made some recordings with Jelly Roll, and this gave Lomax the idea of documenting Jelly Roll's story in recordings, thereby redressing the extent to which he was overlooked as one of the founders of jazz, demonstrating the history of this style of music, and contributing further to his overall picture of African – American culture in the twentieth century. As Alan recalled, he later referred to the process of recording recollections and giving them importance as the cultural system, and suggested that was how oral history began.<sup>579</sup> Szwed elaborates on the process of recording, 'What ensued was a performance that lasted for over a month, a recitation of Homeric proportions, with Morton accompanying himself on a piano instead of a lyre. It was the longest recording session anyone had ever tried...'<sup>580</sup> His aim of giving a voice to someone who in this case had been somewhat muted comes through clearly in this instance, and the subsequent success of Alan's book 'Mister Jelly Roll: New Orleans Creole and Inventor of Jazz' is an example of the socialist context of Alan's work impacting on the public understanding of jazz. The book was an attempt to give Morton his deserved representation in the history of jazz, but it was also another contribution to Alan's socialist picture of American culture, in which the culture of marginalised and neglected groups is as important as the current cultural hegemony.

## 5.7: The Folk Revival

Mitchell identifies some of the trends which induced the folk revival movement, which include its basis in white, urban, middle – class youth, and the conception of it as a reaction against the homogeneity of 1950s popular culture.<sup>581</sup> This idea of cultural homogeneity in

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<sup>579</sup> Ibid. p. 124.

<sup>580</sup> Ibid.

<sup>581</sup> Mitchell, Gillian. 2007. *The North American Folk Music Revival: Nation and Identity in the United States and Canada, 1945 – 1980*. Ashgate Publishing Ltd., Hampshire. p. 68.

the 1950s is central to certain explanations of the *Anthology's* popularity, such as Marcus in 'The Old, Weird America'.<sup>582</sup> Marcus goes on to insist that, 'The *Anthology* was a mystery – an insistence that against every assurance to the contrary, America itself was a mystery.'<sup>583</sup> In a setting of cultural homogeneity, the *Anthology* would appear to be the complete antithesis of 50s popular culture and consequently its presentation of American folk music would appeal to those who were dissatisfied with such popular culture. Mitchell traces the beginning of the 'great boom' of the revival, in the late 1950s, to the popularity of The Weavers and their succession of 'pop – folk' commercial hits. She makes several observations about the style of the Weavers, noting that, 'Their songs...were crisply arranged and sung with the mellifluous polish usually associated with a 1950s pop balladeer.'<sup>584</sup> Mitchell also importantly shows that, 'Their folk – based style proved utterly compatible with the demands of the popular market.'<sup>585</sup> The contribution of Pete Seeger, through The Weavers, The Almanac Singers, and his own solo music and promoting work, was integral to the creation of the folk revival movement, and also partly important for its demographic. Many of the participants were white, college – educated and middle – class like Seeger himself, and as Mitchell notes,

If Seeger did not succeed to raise the awareness of folk music of all young Americans – at least those who were white and middle class – then, by 1958, with the release of The Kingston Trio's single 'Tom Dooley', virtually every member of the 'baby boom' generation would be equipped to enter the mysterious world of the folk.<sup>586</sup>

The increasing popularity of 'pop – folk' music among the urban middle – class youth of the 1950s created a popular trend of performing and listening to folk music, and one of the most important hubs of this activity was Greenwich Village in New York. The revival movement, and one of its bases in Greenwich Village, were important in popularising the

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<sup>582</sup> Marcus, Greil. 1997. *A Booklet of Essays, Appreciations, and Annotations Pertaining to Anthology of American Folk Music of Anthology of American Folk Music*. Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, Washington D.C.

<sup>583</sup> Ibid.

<sup>584</sup> Mitchell, Gillian. 2007. *The North American Folk Music Revival: Nation and Identity in the United States and Canada, 1945 – 1980*. Ashgate Publishing Ltd., Hampshire. p. 65.

<sup>585</sup> Ibid.

<sup>586</sup> Ibid.

work of Child, Sharp, the Lomaxes, and Smith as sources from which songs and playing styles could be learned. Much of the continued relevance of the American collecting tradition was due to the popular use of the American collections by the folk revivalists. It is important to bear in mind Seeger's connections to the political and intellectual contexts in which some of the American collecting work was done, and how these impacted on his own work, and the political awareness of the folk revival. Pete Seeger grew up exposed to the work of his father, Charles Seeger, who was one of the most prominent musicologists in the country and was an occasional collaborator with the Lomaxes, and a supporter of the work of Alan Lomax. Charles Seeger was left – leaning in his politics, and was part of the Composers Collective group which, '...attempted to create music for the proletariat, who they assumed lacked an appropriate music for their political situation.'<sup>587</sup> When Pete was nineteen he worked with Alan Lomax on what would eventually become the 'List of American Folk Songs on Commercial Records', and during this project he was exposed to some of Alan's ideas about folk music allowing the poor and downtrodden to be given a voice. When Pete moved to New York in 1938 Szwed comments that, 'Alan became Pete's guide to the city, enthusiastically introducing him to Aunt Molly, Lead Belly, and the rest of the folk crowd.'<sup>588</sup> Pete's politics remained resolutely leftist during his career, and the groups he was involved with like the Almanac Singers were concerned with aiding folk performers and promoting the value of folk music. Much of Pete's work was impacted indirectly by the leftist political context that governed the work of his father and Alan Lomax, and this context found its way into the folk revival through Pete's collaborative work with other musicians and his protest songs. It could be argued that, although the left – leaning politics of the folk revival were different from the leftist politics of the 1930s and 40s, the foundations of the 50s and 60s folk revival were built on the political context in which Charles Seeger, Pete, and Alan were working.

Citing the influences of musicians is always difficult to substantiate, and this is especially true in the case of the folk revival. The revival was a period of particularly busy activity in covering songs, changing elements of songs, claiming the copyright for altered

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<sup>587</sup> Szwed, John. 2010. *The Man Who Recorded the World: A Biography of Alan Lomax*. William Heinemann, London. p. 87.

<sup>588</sup> *Ibid.* p. 145.

folk songs, and popularising versions of folk songs. Szwed recounts an example of a British folk revivalist engaged in these processes of amendment and popularisation,

One day while walking through Piccadilly, Alan [Lomax] passed a music store window where he saw a copy of the sheet music to “Bring a Little Water, Sylvie,” composed, it said, by Lonnie Donegan. This was a song he and his father had recorded with Lead Belly...“When I looked into the story back of this piece of outright knavery,” Alan recalled, “I found myself involved in a tangle of lies, legal chicanery, and outright dishonesty.” Lonnie Donegan, he discovered, was copying Lead Belly’s songs, along with his performance style and introductory remarks, profiting from both his performances of these songs and his claim to being their composer.<sup>589</sup>

This could be regarded, as Lomax clearly did, as a case of straight plagiarism knowingly committed for profit. However, although Lomax did reportedly trace the origin of the song back to Arkansas musician Kelly Pace<sup>590</sup> this example could also be viewed as precisely the kind of influence and revision which characterised the revival both in America and Britain. *In fact the song was created by a gospel group that included Pace, in response to a contest started by the railroad company for a song to be used for advertising. Alan was initially outraged by what he had found, and his subsequent discovery that a publishing company was copyrighting songs from one of the books he and his father had published, but as Szwed notes he found himself thwarted by copyright law, ‘Alan’s first impulse was to sue them, but when he sought legal counsel he was advised that it was far more complicated, difficult, and expensive than he thought to protect the rights to these songs, and probably impossible.’<sup>591</sup> Since copyright law was lax in the area of folk songs, it made the process of revision easier meaning many more versions of songs were recorded, but it also meant that composers of folk songs were often not properly credited. This did not sit well with Alan, who was always looking for ways that folk singers could receive some kind of recognition for their songs, either financial or legal.*

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<sup>589</sup> Ibid. pp. 293 – 294.

<sup>590</sup> Ibid.

<sup>591</sup> Ibid.

Stampfel attests to this revival process in his comments on the *Anthology*,

Henry (Texas) Thomas, playing the most archaic pre – blues guitar ever recorded, accompanying himself with panpipes held in a harmonica holder! The mythological blues! His ‘Fishing Blues,’ from Volume Three, has been covered by the Holy Modal Rounders, the Lovin’ Spoonful, and Taj Mahal, and his sound is the basis for Canned Heat’s ‘Going up the Country.’ Hearing all these people for the very first time, it was as if a veil was lifted, and I was finally aware of what seemed to me to be the very heart of American music. That’s what I was born to do, I thought. Play and sing like those guys.<sup>592</sup>

Mitchell argues that the kind of revival described by Stampfel is part of a move towards ‘cultural pluralism’,

It was, partially, at least, inherited from the ‘first wave’ of the revival in the 1940s and early 1950s, and from the cultural movements which had originally informed this initial revival – most notably, the activities of early folklore collectors, and the inclusive, folk – cultural spirit of the Great Depression era. However, the revivalists of the late 1950s and early 1960s would enhance the attempts at cultural pluralism and diversity of the earlier revival, and would, as a result, create a movement with far wider boundaries.<sup>593</sup>

Alan Lomax, when he returned to America from Europe in 1958, noted many of the same trends that had existed since he first began working with folk music, but some were now reframed by the context of the 1950s and 60s ‘baby – boomer’ generation. Szwed argues that,

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<sup>592</sup> Stampfel, Pete. 1997. *A Booklet of Essays, Appreciations, and Annotations Pertaining to Anthology of American Folk Music of Anthology of American Folk Music*. Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, Washington D.C.

<sup>593</sup> Mitchell, Gillian. 2007. *The North American Folk Music Revival: Nation and Identity in the United States and Canada, 1945 – 1980*. Ashgate Publishing Ltd., Hampshire. p. 67.

The business of the thirties lay unfinished, as he saw it, with new players on the stage in old roles: now an even younger generation was trying to define the nation, and it was still speaking of finding roots, and of justice and freedom.<sup>594</sup>

This assertion, coupled with Mitchell's belief that the earlier revival period informed much of the revival, suggests that the political and historical context in which Alan and John Lomax worked continued to impact on folk music during the 50s and 60s revival. Cantwell observes that aspects of these earlier politics, and some of the earlier revival participants, surfaced during the 50s and 60s revival after being forced into hiding by post-war Anticommunism,

In the end it was fortuitous, for the revival, that folksong had in the early days been joined to the left, and that the repression of the left had extended to singers of folksongs – for it drove them underground, not to party cells or clandestine meetings in the coal camps and mill towns but to the seedbed of elite American culture in schools, summer camps, and private homes, to prepare for the young a new vision of society.<sup>595</sup>

This was the political context of some of Alan Lomax's work, and it centred on cultural and social equity, and in the 1940s in particular it was closely linked with unionism and the rights of workers and performers. In a move away from Charles Seeger and the Composers Collective, the earlier revival movement used folk music as the music of the politicised worker since this music contained so much of the lives of the working classes already. Denning attests to the importance of this 'Popular Front' for succeeding generations,

Although the Popular Front was defeated by the forces of the "American Century," and the "thirties" seemed to be over by 1948, the works of the cultural front had a profound impact on American culture, informing the life – work of two generations of artists and intellectuals. For the first time in the history of the

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<sup>594</sup> Szwed, John. 2010. *The Man Who Recorded the World: A Biography of Alan Lomax*. William Heinemann, London. p. 306.

<sup>595</sup> Cantwell, Robert. 1996. *When We Were Good: The Folk Revival*. Harvard University Press. p. 272.

United States, a working – class culture had made a significant imprint on the dominant cultural institutions.<sup>596</sup>

This echoes Szwed's suggestion that part of the impetus for the 50s and 60s revival was 'unfinished business' from the 1930s, and as Cantwell argues that business had managed to resurface when a cultural trend made it slightly safer to do so. The most important aspect of this discussion is the notion that the political context in which Alan Lomax conducted his earlier work continued to impact on folk music into the revival of the 50s and 60s. Although John Lomax did not participate in the Popular Front to any great degree, his work was still facilitated by the 1930s elevation of the culture of the working – classes.

This thesis argues that other important intellectual contexts were at work in the 50s and 60s folk revival, and that these intellectual trends are in fact closely linked with folk music from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries in its various instantiations. Like many aspects of folklore work they were reframed by the folk revival and its historical and political setting. As Cantwell argues,

As we have seen, there are elements in the folk revival with histories of their own: folklore and ballad scholarship, minstrelsy, left – wing politics, education, recreation, and leisure, popular music and culture; but their particular conjunction in the folk revival has its meaning in the psychological and economic setting of postwar America.<sup>597</sup>

For instance, in the attitude to folk music and culture in the 50s and 60s it is possible to aspects of Romanticism at work. The revival was partly predicated on a reaction to the cultural homogeneity of the 1950s, and the feeling that this culture was stifling and artificial, which echoed in a sense the emergence of the Romantic Movement as a reaction against the prevailing Enlightenment intellectual culture. In a similar way to the manner in which Romantic intellectuals like Herder, Schiller, and Goethe idealised the folk for their purity and simple lifestyles, many revivalists regarded the American rural folk as embodying an

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<sup>596</sup> Denning, Michael. 1997. *The Cultural Front: The Labouring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century*. Verso, London. p. xx.

<sup>597</sup> Cantwell, Robert. 1996. *When We Were Good: The Folk Revival*. Harvard University Press. p. 318.



idealised rural past which was not impacted by the post – war culture which governed the lives of many ‘baby – boomers’. Another aspect of Romanticism which was echoed in the revivalist movement was the focus on fulfilling selfhood and the dedication of the self to an ideal. As Berlin argues, one of the governing principles of eighteenth century Romanticism was, ‘...the only thing which was worthwhile...is the exfoliation of a particular self, its creative activity, its imposition of forms upon matter, its penetration of other things, its creation of values, its dedication of itself to these values.’<sup>598</sup> Many of the participants in the folk revival devoted themselves to embodying a ‘folky’ lifestyle and singing the songs which had emerged from this lifestyle. A particular type of bohemian folk song aficionado also emerged from this Romanticism, who was not necessarily affiliated with any groups or political or social causes, but who was part of the progressive environment of the revival movement. Pete Seeger, in an article for *Sing Out!* magazine, commented on this trend in the revival in general, ‘The folksong revival did grow, and flourishes now like any happy weed, quite out of control of any person or party, right or left, purist or hybridist, romanticist or scientist.’<sup>599</sup> In this area it is possible to see the intersection of the Romantic elements of the Beat movement and those of the folk revival, which created this particular type of bohemian ‘folknik’ who was a bridge into the later hippy movement. As Cantwell argues, the ‘folkniks’ also resented some of the political rigidity of the early revival movement,

“Folkniks,” Roger Abrahams recalls, looked with contempt on the narcissism and political lassitude of the beat movement, but at the same time shared with them a search for a “cultural centre of gravity.” The old Popular Front complaints about the Communist Party, that it was rigid and authoritarian, puritanical and self – important, without ideological tolerance and no understanding of plain human freedoms that the young were grasping by themselves, were now redirected toward Silber’s *Sing Out!* and other stubborn hardliners...<sup>600</sup>

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<sup>598</sup> Berlin, Isaiah. 1999. *The Roots of Romanticism: The A. W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts*. Princeton University Press. p. 95.

<sup>599</sup> Szwed, John. 2010. *The Man Who Recorded the World: A Biography of Alan Lomax*. William Heinemann, London. p. 306.

<sup>600</sup> Cantwell, Robert. 1996. *When We Were Good: The Folk Revival*. Harvard University Press. p. 284.

The gradual retreat of some of the more 'hardliner' elements could be seen as contributing to the dissolution of the revival movement, and this is also connected to the Romanticism of the revival, which has been called a 'socialist romance'. Cantwell comments on the decline of the revival in the late 1960s,

With its link to history broken, its moral and political centre dispersed, all pretence to philosophical or ideological depth repudiated, all forms of discursive continuity abolished in the intensity of the hallucinatory splendour of an acid trip, all of it as congenial to the nature of the capitalist marketplace as soap, an enclaved, dissident, bohemian culture, like Fermi's uranium pile at Stagg Field, had become the site of postmodernity's first self – sustaining commercial chain reaction.<sup>601</sup>

The end of the 'socialist romance' of the revival was an important factor in its decline, since it had lost part of its ideological foundation and became another popular trend which was eventually used for commercial purposes until its popularity declined. However, the formation of the revival was nonetheless predicated partly on a Romantic urge to find the purity of the rural folk and explore it as an alternative to the urban culture of the 1950s. This seems to substantiate Berlin's claim that Romanticism is the most important shift in the prevailing thought in modern history, and all other shifts have been influenced by it. Folk music in the twentieth century has certainly been impacted by Romanticism, since many of the precedents for what has come to be called folk music were established during the height of eighteenth century Romanticism. The continuing interest in folk music throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries could be called a fundamentally Romantic urge, since it largely involves looking to the folk for an authentic culture. The impetus behind the folk revival was partly the same search for an authentic culture, and although the revival eventually lost much of this theoretical grounding, the Romantic intellectual context was nevertheless an important part of the revival movement. It is also important to bear in mind the context in which this Romanticism existed, and not to confuse it too closely with the Romanticism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

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<sup>601</sup> Ibid. p. 310.

The 50s and 60s revival could also be said to have a strong Antimodernist impulse behind its development, although this is also tied to Romanticism in certain ways. Berlin's assertion comes into play again here: if Romanticism impacted on all subsequent intellectual movements, then it certainly had an effect on Antimodernism. The Antimodernism of William James, Theodore Roosevelt, and Charles William Eliot had clear links with Romanticism in its idealisation of the traditional working man as an antidote to the overcivilisation and comfort of late nineteenth/early twentieth century society. This somewhat echoes the Romantic trend of seeing the culture of the rural folk as an antidote to the reason and rationality of the Enlightenment which was regarded by some as artificial and not a natural impulse. The Antimodernist principles found at Harvard can also be seen to a certain extent in the folk revival, which also rallied against the prevailing urban middle – class culture which Cantwell describes as,

...American neighbourhood and community life became fields of industrial production, distribution, and consumption. No longer regional but national in scope, with new commodity, consumer, information, and entertainment markets opening in the suburbs, the wartime capitalist economy had become the peacetime public culture...<sup>602</sup>

This prompted a somewhat Antimodernist focus on the folk music as it represented a rural past where regional differences still determined aspects of culture, and industrial capitalism did not exert such a powerful influence. Revivalist movements are necessarily backward – looking to a certain extent and draw on the past in what Cantwell refers to as a 'restorative' effort to reintroduce elements of the past into the present. This happened in the folk revival in a manner similar to the promotion of medieval virtues in late nineteenth century Antimodernism, and its attempt to restore some of these virtues to young men. As Lears comments, 'Many of the psychologist G. Stanley Hall's contemporaries shared his belief that medieval legends and folk tales, like "primitive" literature generally, would enlarge and elevate the adolescent imagination. Contemporary juvenile fiction seemed inadequate to

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<sup>602</sup> Ibid. p. 163.

those tasks.<sup>603</sup> Aspects of this restorative urge can also be seen in the Antimodernist Arts and Crafts movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, which idealised the labour of the traditional artisan, and, ‘Aesthetes and reformers sought to recover the hard but satisfying life of the medieval craftsman...’<sup>604</sup> As Cantwell points out, although these movements owe a great deal to the social and political situation in which they emerged, they are restorative rather than reactionary and are more of an attempt to restore aspects of an earlier time rather than a revolt against the contemporary culture. The context of Antimodernism did have an impact to a certain extent on the folk revival, since Antimodernism governed substantial parts of the work on folk music in the twentieth century, and some of the music introduced to the revival participants was the result of an Antimodern impulse in collecting and promoting folk music.

## 5.8: Conclusion

Ultimately, the contexts in which the collecting work was conducted were important because they governed the transformations introduced into the collection tradition by each of the collectors. The fact that they were all fundamentally engaged in the same process of gathering folk music is taken to be self – evident by this thesis, but if it is possible to speak of a distinguishable American collecting tradition then it is defined by this series of transformations which made it a developing practice. The concluding section will discuss these transformations, the contexts responsible for creating them, and how they ultimately define the American collecting tradition.

Child transformed folk song collecting firstly through his conception of folk music, which was informed by Herder’s Romanticism and his evocation of the common culture of communities, the Romantic Nationalism of the Grimms, and the collaboration of scholars like Svend Grundtvig and their ideas of a European ballad history. Child solidified these accrued theories of folklore into a definition of the popular ballad which posited a type of song that was a narrative poem, often detailing events in the lives of the upper classes; was authored by an individual and not communally composed, but the author was anonymous;

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<sup>603</sup> Lears, T.J. Jackson. 1994. *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880 – 1920*. University of Chicago Press. pp. 104 – 105.

<sup>604</sup> *Ibid.* p. xv.

was once universally enjoyed during a period in which class distinctions, and consequently distinctions of culture, did not exist; and if it was an authentic ballad it did have an original, authentic text which could be recovered or restored. Child's definition of the ballad represented a transformation of the emerging folklore discipline into a practice that was grounded in provenance, textual authenticity, and a particular reading of European history. As Bendix argues, 'Ballad scholarship was arguably the dominant pursuit of early American folkloristics, and once Child's textual reconstruction stood firm, arguments turned speculative, preoccupied with competing hypotheses of origin.'<sup>605</sup> In other words, Child's transformation of the theories of folk music made song origin the overriding factor in establishing the importance or credibility of a song text. This transformation effectively began what could be called the American collecting tradition, and established it as a literary field which was concerned with the origins of texts and their value based on their origins.

Child also transformed the practice of collecting folk songs by solidifying it as a literary field which was based on textual scholarship, research into song variants, and the reconstruction of authentic texts. The context for this was impacted heavily by the work of the Grimms whose *Kinder – und Hausmärchen* was very important in setting the precedent for this kind of textual scholarship. Child conducted extensive research into the history of texts, consulting other important collections, broadsides, and manuscripts in order to establish the origins of a text and determine whether it was a genuine popular ballad. This often involved piecing together a text from numerous versions to form what seemed to be the most authentic reconstruction of the original text. Again, this is very similar to the way in which the Grimms assembled folk tales for their collection, which involved editing and assembling a single text from different versions. Child developed these trends into a scientific methodology of research, analysis, and editing that dominated American folklore discipline in the nineteenth century and determined the work of numerous collectors, and as Filene argues, Child's collection provided a standard for scholarly folk song research.<sup>606</sup> As previously argued, the impulse to transform collecting practices came partly from a post – Romantic impulse to document the remains of a vanished tradition and a period in which humanity had not been influenced by class and cultural divisions. The scientific rigour of

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<sup>605</sup> Bendix, Regina. 1997. *In Search of Authenticity: The Formation of Folklore Studies*. University of Wisconsin Press. p. 88.

<sup>606</sup> Filene, Benjamin. 2000. *Romancing the Folk: Public Memory & American Roots Music*. University of North Carolina Press. p. 16.

Child's collecting practices could be seen as indicative of a desire to achieve this ambition as completely as possible. The context for this also came largely from the Grimms and their own impulse to collect the remnants of a lapsed German culture. Child's transformation of collecting practices could be seen as the establishment of collecting as a scholarly discipline which had a clear set of rules by which a genuine ballad could be presented. The folklore discipline Child transformed was a literary discipline, but it also had its own set of governing principles and practices which was another part in the foundation of the American collecting tradition.

Finally, perhaps Child's most important transformation was in the collection he produced, which set a standard for scholarly literary collections and once again collated and solidified many of the existing precedents for folklore collections. Child's context for his collection was Herder's *Volklieder*, the Grimms *Kinder – und Hausmärchen*, Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* and Motherwell's *Minstrelsy Ancient and Modern*. These collections used some similar conventions in their composition, and Child's *Ballads* adopted aspects of these conventions and combined them to produce a collection which surpassed prior collections in terms of ambition, comprehensiveness, and erudition. 'The English and Scottish Popular Ballads' marked another step in the scholarly advancement of the folklore discipline by introducing the most voluminous and exhaustively researched collection yet published by a collector. As Child stated in the introductory remarks to his collection he did not wish to publish *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads* until it could effectively live up to its title by gathering his own idea of the popular ballad as completely as possible. It is clear that the recurring theme in Child's work, and in his transformation of the aspects of folklore collecting, is the impulse towards comprehensiveness, rigour, and clearly establishing the parameters of his own conception of balladry. In doing so Child also established some of parameters of the folklore discipline in America in the nineteenth century, and created an American collecting tradition which numerous other collectors contributed to. Child's transformations, centred on post – Romantic scientific rigour and textual scholarship are what allow the beginning of folklore collecting in America to be called an American collecting tradition.

The transformation which is possibly the most important in the work of John Lomax is his conception of American folk music, which was largely derived from the context of his post – graduate education at Harvard, and which transformed the European ballad

hegemony to a certain extent by exploring types of music which were uniquely American. Although Lomax predicated some of his ideas on the ballad scholarship of Child and his peers, Lomax also moved away to a large extent from this dominant model of folklore and focused on documenting declining American traditions. As previously argued Lomax conceived of the cowboy song as representing an indigenous American tradition which had experienced its peak in the mid to late nineteenth century, but was now in decline as the ranching and cattle – droving which fostered the tradition was being superseded by other kinds of farming and smaller holdings. The intellectual context for this view of the singing cowboy tradition was inextricably rooted in various ideas promulgated by Harvard professors in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. One of the most central precepts which informed Lomax's idea of the cowboy was the understanding of ideal manhood propounded by Williams James and Charles William Eliot, professor and president at Harvard respectively, and Harvard alumnus turned outdoorsman Theodore Roosevelt. Their idea of the ideal man was based on a robust morality, vigour, and gentlemanly comportment. The ideal man also live the 'strenuous life' in which his martial vigour was employed to the most constructive ends, in physical work, or at Harvard in particular, in team sports. Lomax adopted aspects of these ideas in his depiction of the cowboy, who lived the strenuous life of a cattle – drover and put all his manly vigour into his work, from which came numerous songs about the life of a cowboy. What it especially important about Lomax's early work with cowboy songs is that within a trend of looking to Britain and its past for examples of ideal manhood, Lomax showed that an embodiment of manhood did exist within a uniquely American culture. This focus on American culture had a considerable impact on Lomax's later work, much of which was devoted to demonstrating the value of elements of indigenous American culture. Lomax's early theories of folk music transformed the prevailing idea of folk music residing in Britain and Europe into styles of folk music which originated in America and something which could be called American folk music. This shift in the theoretical underpinning of collecting defines the collection tradition in the early twentieth century, and allowed the American collecting tradition to develop into the twentieth century and become concerned with collecting American folk music rather than British songs.

John Lomax's transformations of the collecting tradition in terms of collecting methods and output came during his later work with Alan, but the next important

transformation following Lomax's *Cowboy Songs* came from Sharp and his work in England in the early twentieth century, and his work in the Appalachian Mountains 1914 – 18. Sharp's conception of folk music was based on many of the same intellectual contexts as that of Child, namely the Grimms and Herder and the Romantic and post – Romantic idea of the folk as remnants of an idealised period of cultural homogeneity. Sharp also developed the idea of folk music as a national culture which, since it emerged during a period of cultural homogeneity, should be expressive of the unified thoughts and feelings of the people of a nation. The transformations Sharp introduced to the tradition of folk music theory were governed by the political and historical context in which he was working, and his own intellectual leanings in this context. Sharp began collecting folk music, and developing his own theory of English folk music, in early twentieth century England which had undergone significant changes in Sharp's own lifetime. Perhaps most significantly for Sharp it marked the final disappearance of the medieval peasant, on whom many of Sharp's ideas of folk music were based. This is partly why Sharp considered his collecting an urgent mission to collect the remnants of the music of the English peasant before the older generation disappeared and the youth no longer sang the traditional songs. Sharp was also confronted with social and political change, which involved movements towards gender equality and the rise of the urban proletariat who did not seem to possess the same type of community as the rural medieval peasant. These changes influenced Sharp's conservative socialist leanings, and his Fabian interest in using education to improve this situation and restore aspects of the culture he found in the songs he collected. Ultimately, Sharp conceived of folk music as a cultural resource which could be used in the present to change the prevailing culture and restore elements of the rural folk culture of the past. In this respect Sharp transformed the American collecting tradition by conceiving of folk culture as something which could be used to change aspects of contemporary culture, rather than remnants of a lapsed culture which required preservation. This transformed aspects of the American collecting tradition into something which encouraged use of folk culture through education and instruction, in order that elements of this culture might influence the contemporary culture.

Sharp's most important transformation in terms of collecting practice in the American collecting tradition was to contribute to the transformation of the discipline from a literary to music and fieldwork based practice. Sharp's own background in music and



musical tuition meant he approached his collecting from this perspective, being especially interested in common trends in scales and modes since they are typically very different from that of classical music. Sharp made a point of giving equal attention to the tune and the text when he was transcribing a song from an informant, resulting in folk song with greater detail than the ballad texts of Child and his peers. The fact that Sharp's collecting was fieldwork based came from his supposition that the peasant folk traditions were still extant among the older members of the rural community who were possibly the last custodians in a tradition that began before the rise of the modern city and the decline of feudal estates in the countryside. This supposition was drawn from the historical context in which Sharp was working, which encouraged him to pursue fieldwork to discover the living remnants of the medieval past which had been largely superseded by the industrialised society. Sharp's determination to collect the tune and text of a song was also based on his aim of using the folk songs for educational purposes in schools, where we worked in England and America to introduce a folk song and dance curriculum in order that the folk traditions be restored to what he regarded as their proper place at the centre of national culture. Again, this was grounded in the historical context of modern anxieties over the city and the dehumanising effect it had on the inhabitants. Sharp wanted to use the folk materials he had collected to counteract this and to restore the national culture of both countries, which Sharp regarded as fundamentally English. In this respect Sharp's attitude to American folk music was different from that of John Lomax, since Sharp believed that the rural American was essentially a preserved version of the English peasant. Sharp's educational impulse also came from his Fabian socialist belief that education could assist in social progress and improvement, and in this case could aid the formation of a national culture for the people of America and England, that might in turn create a more pervasive feeling of community. Sharp's approach to song collecting marked another transformation in the American collecting tradition which had a considerable impact on the discipline. The use of fieldwork and the transformation of the discipline from a literary discipline to one based on capturing music and text allowed the American collecting tradition to continue developing in the twentieth century, eventually becoming a discipline based on ethnography and the scientific study of cultures. Sharp's transformation of collecting practices was a notable contribution to this gradual change in the collecting tradition.

In John Lomax's later career his most significant transformation of the collecting tradition was the introduction of recording technology to collecting fieldwork, and building collections which were ethnographic documents of various styles of folk music. In doing so he also developed his idea that America had its own indigenous types of folk music, and broadened this dramatically to include African – American folk music including work songs, blues, and spirituals. This transformation was also built on by Alan Lomax, who subsequently introduced his own transformations to the collecting tradition through this change to ethnographic field recording. There were various important contexts for this transformation of collecting practices, the most obvious of which was the technological context of portable recording technology. Recording devices had been used before John and Alan Lomax began their collecting trips, for example by Robert Gordon who made recordings of folk songs during his travels and who wished to assemble, '...a great and definitive gathering of all of American folksong, modelled after but surpassing the work of Francis James Child...'<sup>607</sup> However, John and Alan Lomax's collecting trips in the 1930s and 40s developed the practice of making field recordings into a more scientific or ethnographic practice, and this was made possible by using a machine that could cope with a heavy workload and operate in difficult conditions. The recording machine suffered from malfunctions, and in 1934 was appraised by a professor of physics at the University of Texas with the following summary,

Several weeks ago, at your request, I examined a phonograph recording system which you had been using, the examination being for the purpose of learning why the equipment functioned unsatisfactorily...The amplifier was in such a state that no amount of work could have made it function properly and reliably. In fact, I could hardly class the equipment as an "amplifier" in the best sense of the word but as something resembling junk.<sup>608</sup>

John Lomax stated that the recording machine could often produce satisfactory results, and the malfunctions did not prevent the Lomaxes from depositing hundreds of hours of

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<sup>607</sup> Bendix, Regina. 1997. *In Search of Authenticity: The Formation of Folklore Studies*. University of Wisconsin Press. p. 149.

<sup>608</sup> Boner, C.P. 14/05/1934. 'Letter to John A. Lomax'. In Lomax Papers, American Folklife Centre, Washington DC.

recordings in the first years of their recording expeditions. They also upgraded their machine or acquired a better model during the 1930s and 40s in order that they might produce better quality recordings, or find a machine that was easier and more reliable to operate. The Lomaxes developed a system of auditioning performers to find the best material available, then recording it as comprehensively as possible, without abridgements or interjections, since the avowed purpose of the recording technology was to capture songs objectively without interpretation. Increasingly reliable machines meant that it was easier to record for more sustained periods, and this facilitated Alan Lomax's ethnographic interviews with the folk he was recording, which provided more information about the culture that produced the songs. The Lomaxes transformed folk song collecting into something which could be called a scientific or ethnographic practice, which allowed it to develop into a practice associated with anthropology and ethnomusicology, which changed the intellectual parameters of the practice once again.

In addition, the political and historical context was crucial to this transformation in the collecting practices of the American collecting tradition. The New Deal initiatives sponsored various kinds of fieldwork in rural areas of the country, including photography and artistic projects, local colour writing and regional guides, and aid work in particularly deprived rural areas. In this environment of interest in the rural folk, and sometimes in direct cooperation with New Deal initiatives, the Lomaxes conducted some of their most important work documenting folk traditions in different regions of the country, noting the folk music of numerous jobs and ethnicities. Rather than simply encouraging interest in rural communities and folk traditions, the New Deal initiatives endorsed various fieldwork projects, some of which actually constituted thorough research into these areas. From the first recording expedition of the Lomaxes in 1933 to later trips such as John and Ruby Lomax's 1940 tour of the Southern States, the New Deal helped facilitate the transformation of collecting practices to ethnographic fieldwork based work. Alan Lomax's independent work was governed by changing political contexts, some of which encouraged the pursuit of folk music in America, and some of which seriously curtailed Alan's work. Alan's involvement with the Cultural Front created a political environment in which folk song collecting was necessary to highlight the culture of the rural working classes, the difficulties of their lives, and how their folk songs can be used to encourage solidarity and political awareness. Many of Alan's associates during the 1930s and 40s were also involved in the

cultural front, and their interest in his work was partly in the political implications of capturing the music of the marginalised and neglected and using it to promote the cause of the working classes. For instance, Alan's boss at the Archive of American Folk Song, Archibald MacLeish, was a supporter of Alan's work and was also part of the cultural front. Both Charles and Pete Seeger were also involved with the cultural front, and were interested in how music could be used to aid a politicised working class, though they differed on what kind of music should be used. Charles Seeger was less convinced of the value of folk music in this respect and sought to compose music for a politicised working class, whereas Pete Seeger tried to use his banjo songs to appeal to workers in New York. Denning notes that,

...the Seegers were not the most representative musical figures of the cultural front, nor was folk music its central form. Pete Seeger's Kentucky banjo songs led one Communist Party Official to tell him that "here in New York hardly anybody knows that kind of music...if you are going to work with the workers of New York City, you should be in the jazz field."<sup>609</sup>

However, what the cultural front did prompt was collecting that actually involved interaction with the folk in order that their lives might be better represented, and their music not be captured without also revealing something about the sort of lives which produce this kind of music. This contributed to the transformation of folk song collecting into an ethnographic practice which was concerned with culture and lifestyle as well as music. The involvement with the cultural contributed to one of the impediments to Alan's continued work in America, since many leftist artists and cultural workers began to be investigated during World War II as possible communists. From the mid – 1940s onwards Alan found that the political environment did not encourage folk song collecting to the same extent, and the Anticommunism feeling in the country was increasing. In 1950, as Szwed documents, 'Congress was debating the McCarran Act on internal security, legislation that

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<sup>609</sup> Denning, Michael. 1997. *The Cultural Front: The Labouring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century*. Verso, London. p. 284.

would require the registration and fingerprinting of all “subversives” in the United States.’<sup>610</sup> This legislation was passed in September 1950, and in the same month Alan travelled to Europe, where he would remain for the next eight years, collecting folk music in Scotland, England, Ireland, Spain, and Italy. During this period Alan began taking more photographs as part of his fieldwork, and as part of his ongoing attempts to document as much of the culture that produced the music as possible. His transformation of collecting practice during this period can be seen in a grant application he submitted to the University of London,

...drawing on the spirit of nineteenth and early – twentieth century German musicologists, Alan foresaw a means of moving the study of folklore out of the doldrums of nostalgia and kitsch (and worse, pop culture) by drawing on scientific technology and theories that had never been used the way he intended to employ them.<sup>611</sup>

Although the Anticommunism of the mid – 1940s to mid – 1950s largely prevented Alan from working in America, his work in Europe prompted him to transform his collecting practices even further into a scientific exercise in understanding social and cultural structures and how they determine folk music. The changing context in which the Lomaxes conducted their work determined the important transformations they introduced to the American collecting tradition, which furthered the transformation of folk song collecting from a literary discipline into a scientific, ethnographic practice focused on understanding not only songs but the fundamental aspects of the culture which produced the songs.

The technological context in which Smith was working was possibly the most important thing which determined his own transformations of the American collecting tradition. However, while Smith did introduce some transformations to folk song collecting, he also had little in common with the Lomaxes, Sharp, or Child, and consequently the *Anthology* has many elements in its composition that are unlike any previous collections. Smith nevertheless based some of his work on prior folk music study, for example Smith’s decision to collect 78rpm commercial records came partly from consulting Alan Lomax’s

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<sup>610</sup> Szwed, John. 2010. *The Man Who Recorded the World: A Biography of Alan Lomax*. William Heinemann, London. p. 250.

<sup>611</sup> *Ibid.* p. 299.

1942 *List of American Folk Songs on Commercial Records*. Both Smith and Lomax were working with a technology which had been undermined by the Depression in terms of its popularity and broad use, and which became particularly a particularly transient technology during the early 1940s and wartime. Szwed explores the background to Alan Lomax's 1942 *List of American Folk Songs* and how his sister Bess assisted him,

She recalled going with Alan to a small record company in New Jersey and setting to work in a room filled floor to ceiling with record masters. In a battle against the destructiveness of commercial culture, they had twenty – four hours to hear them all, as the company was destroying the records and melting down the plates used to press them.<sup>612</sup>

During wartime the records were also being recycled for their shellac content, which compounded the problem of records disappearing, and necessitated Smith's habit of looking in junk shops and record shops that were going out of business. During the 1940s 78rpm records were becoming increasingly expendable, and during his collecting Smith was working with a technology that was being cannibalised for more important purposes, despite the fact that the 78 remained an important format into the 1950s. It is also important not to overlook the cultural or intellectual context of Smith's work which, as previously discussed, was grounded in the 1940s Beat Movement and consequently focused on finding alternatives to the dominant culture of the 1940s. This gives the impression that Smith collecting 78rpm records was an act of cultural subversion, both in his work with a lapsed technology, and in his interest in commercial folk music from the 1920s and 30s.

The other important technological context for Smith's work was the development of the LP record in 1948, and Smith and Asch's subsequent use of this technology to release the 78rpm recordings. This fundamentally changed the context for these recordings from associations with an obsolete technology and a lapsed commercial market, to a technology associated with art music and high fidelity recordings. The *Anthology* effectively reframed the 78s as part of the contemporary recording culture, but in doing so also subverted this contemporary recording culture by using its technology to release such outdated recordings.

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<sup>612</sup> Ibid. p. 145.

This can also be linked to the so – called ‘second generation’ Beat Movement and its continued preoccupation with cultural disobedience and antidotes to contemporary culture. In many respects the collecting, production, and release of the *Anthology* were acts of subversion because they went against the cultural norms of the 1940s and 50s, but this in itself could be seen as conforming to a context of cultural disobedience emerging from the Beat Movement. In addition, this cultural disobedience can be found to a certain extent in the work of the cultural front from the mid – 1930s onwards, and as Denning notes while the CIO was being founded in the wake of a mass strike in the textile industry, ‘...a new radical culture was taking shape...America, it seemed, was waiting for lefty...’<sup>613</sup> The combined effects of cultural front politics, and the cultural subversion of the Beat Movement, contributed a great deal to the folk revival of the 1950s and 60s, in which the *Anthology* played some part. However, despite the importance of Smith’s *Anthology* in the folk revival in particular, it is difficult to suggest it transformed the American collecting tradition in the same way as the innovations of Child, Sharp, and the Lomaxes. This is partly because Smith was not a participant in the American collecting tradition to the same extent as his predecessors, and although he used elements from the work of Child, Sharp, and the Lomaxes, the *Anthology* was a very different collection from Child’s *Ballads* or John Lomax’s *Cowboy Songs*. Despite these distinctions between Smith and the other American collectors, Smith transformed American folk music by lifting it out of the American collecting tradition and reframing it as part of the new LP recording culture, as an avant – garde art object, and finally as a tool of cultural subversion, which ultimately could be bringing the idea of folk music back to its roots as a Romantic impulse and a response to cultural, political, or intellectual hegemony.

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<sup>613</sup> Denning, Michael. 1997. *The Cultural Front: The Labouring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century*. Verso, London. p. 284.

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