

The Form of Value in Globalized Traditions: Abstracts

I. Folklorists in Circulation

Bridges: Local, Global and Transnational Sadhana Naithani, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

Our effort to build new bridges with other disciplines and knowledge areas is faced by many historical and contemporary challenges. Not only folkloristics, but other disciplines too face the increasing inter-connectedness between local and global. For folklorists, however, the phenomena are not exactly new. One of the earliest debates in the discipline dabbled in the question of origin. The quest has long been given up in academic folklore studies, but it persists as a tag on commodities in the global market. Among folklore scholars there has been more unanimity about the idea of travel of folklore across all kinds of geographical and linguistic boundaries. This inter-connectedness between forms of oral cultural expressions is older than all the different forms of globalizations known for the last five centuries, but regimes of value seek to control and hinder this process. Secular folklore practices are being challenged by rising religious fundamentalisms. Discussions on IPR for folklore performers hardly take into account the views of the performers themselves. On the one hand technology claims to have broken borders of communication. On the other, large numbers of people are trapped within borders from which neither can their voice be heard, nor of others reach them.

We need to take cognizance of the ways folklore is traveling currently, and perhaps, more importantly, how its travel is being controlled and hindered by powers-that-are. Indeed, folktale has often spoken for, and of, characters that are unable to claim their rightful place in society. The fictional characters of the village folktales represent real human tendencies. These tendencies are present in the realities of the virtual global village too, and in spite of the discussion on the origins, it is the transnational identity of many folk forms that are evident – forms that have gone through radical changes in their value along with radical changes in the history of their performers. What is the role of the folklorist and folkloristics in this 'global village' of transnational identities? How could a new role be realized? The answers to these questions might suggest the kind of bridges with other disciplines that could be made, but also the kind of old bridges that need to be dismantled.

The Little I Know: The Incompatibility of UNESCO and Folkloristics Lee Haring, Saugerties, New York

Two years ago, I was invited by the Intangible Cultural Heritage section of UNESCO to write a Manual on Safeguarding Oral Traditions and Expressions, pursuant to UNESCO's 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. When I agreed to take on the commission, a number of chapters had already been drafted, an odd assortment of field-based materials had been sent in, and the outline of the manual and content of each chapter were firmly decided. My job was to assemble additional materials from around the world and write the Manual from beginning to end, following the outline. I saw the projected book as a more ambitious, export version of that well known course Introduction to Folklore. I amplified or decorated the expository content in the eight chapters with data

from the anthropological and folkloristic literature. It's more obvious to this group than to a UNESCO audience that peoples around the world make continually astonishing efforts to preserve, perform, and recreate their cultural heritages. As written, the Manual has a clear thesis: that people around the world are actively engaged in cultural safeguarding, and that in this time of rapid change, these people need encouragement and help, which may come from a variety of sources (governments, NGOs, and so on).

All the while, of course, I was aware how different my politics, and the politics I was advocating in the Manual, were from UNESCO's stance, which said, "Many elements of the ICH are endangered, due to effects of globalization, uniformization policies, and lack of means, appreciation and understanding which taken together may lead to the erosion of functions and values of such elements and to lack of interest among the younger generations." Or from the notion of "representativeness," in which representative "might mean, at the same time, representative for the creativity of humanity, for the cultural heritage of States, as well as for the cultural heritage of communities who are the bearers of the traditions in question" (<http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?pg=00002>), consulted February 9, 2009). Where I have "got to" is that after long histories of nationally independent scholarly traditions, international networks of communication about vernacular culture are beginning to emerge, rather as if an Enlightenment vision of a community of scholars is being reborn, and that at the same time, the opposite might be also emerging, the reconfirming of national traditions labeled as national.

Our Circulatory System (or Folklore Publishing in the Era of Open Access, Corporate Enclosure and the Transformation of Scholarly Societies)

Jason Baird Jackson, Indiana University, Bloomington

Drawing on my experiences editing the journal *Museum Anthropology* (2005-2009) and founding and editing *Museum Anthropology Review* (2007-present), I propose to draw upon the folkloristic and ethnological literatures related to form, value and circulation in order to provide a frame for a description of, and argument about, the changing nature of scholarly publishing in folklore studies. While my perspective on these issues arises, in part, from my experiences as a participant in the controversial (and conflicted) transformation of the American Anthropological Association's publishing program, my focus in this presentation will be on the changing ecology of scholarly communications in international folkloristics. The generally positive, practical and bottom-up ways in which folklorists have begun altering and extending their system of scholarly communication provide an instructive contrast with the wrenching manner in which anthropologists have experienced the contradictory dynamics of the current moment in academic publishing and scholarly social organization. With a disproportionate emphasis on journal publishing, an overly personal perspective, and a markedly provisional stance, the paper that I propose to give will constitute a first attempt to survey and interpret the state of scholarly publishing in folklore studies in preparation for a more wide ranging, careful and collective effort to be undertaken by the American Folklore Society's Communication in Folklore Working Group.

II. Moving Objects and the Persistence of Form

"Give Me a Saying and I'll Give You a Man": Folklore and the Making of

Men in Nairobi's Urban Spaces

Mbugua wa-Mungai, Kenyatta University, Nairobi

One of the most conspicuous things in the Nairobi cityscape is the use of popular culture forms to mediate residents' everyday realities. FM radio and the internet have become critical spaces of folk expression. However, while these are relatively new spaces, urban passenger transport vans (matatu) are by far the more traditional, most visible and widely used sites where residents' folk knowledge is transmitted and negotiated as a means to apprehending particular realities of the city, and Kenya in general. As material culture objects, matatu have over time become mobile carriers of meaning that enable travelers and the young men who work on these vehicles to (re)invent the urban space to speak to particular ideologies of the city and of gender. A grammar of masculinity is actively coded into the social commentary that takes place in these spaces through the (re)configuration of local sayings to speak to contemporary aspects of city life. In this way diverse socio-cultural meanings are woven into technological forms that begin their journey in Japan as used imports but which end up in a different corner of the globe not as scrap metal but as social spaces upon which folklore is deployed for thinking about gender and other questions of power(lessness) within the larger society.

Classical Poetry as Cultural Capital in the Proverbs of Jews from Iran:

Transformations of Inter-textuality

Galit Hasan-Rokem, Hebrew University of Jerusalem

In the Proverb Project of the Folklore Research Center at the Hebrew University there are ca. eighty proverbs that were collected in Israel in the nineteen-eighties from Jews from Iran. The proverb collection includes contextual materials based on oral interviews with the transmitters of the proverbs. From the contextual information as well as from the proverbs themselves we learn that a considerable group of these proverbs are either attributed by name or anonymously to the classical poets of Iran. The paper will present the material, trying to clarify the possible literary sources of the proverbs, emphasizing the cultural status of proverbs between the written and the oral modes of expression. The following questions will be addressed: How did the inclusion of lines of classical poetry in oral proverbs express the particular identity of Iranian Jews in Israel? What are the inter-cultural ramifications of this practice? How do the poetics of proverbs serve various socio-cultural dynamics?

Circuitous Thinking: Ideas of the Region in a Globalizing World

Candace Slater, University of California, Berkeley

Why do some time-honored forms fade away while others not only survive but appear to grow stronger? And how does the concept of "region" mesh or present challenges to thinking about the local and the global? My presentation looks at three different literary forms closely associated with the Northeastern Brazilian backlands in offering some initial answers to these questions.

III. Stigma, Ennoblement, and the Production of Value The Stigmatized Vernacular

Amy Shuman, The Ohio State University, Columbus

My presentation will focus on what Diane Goldstein calls "the stigmatized vernacular." Building on Erving Goffman's concept of stigma and the management of spoiled identities and Harvey Sacks' concept of "category bound activities," and incorporating recent folklore scholarship on the politics of trauma (Briggs, Goldstein, Lawless, O'Connor, Westerman and others), I will propose a folkloristics of visibility including:

1. stigma as a form of hyper-visibility that obscures other experiences
2. resignifying and redistributing the hyper-visible in new performative contexts and through shifts in style
3. the economies of viewing, that is the literal cost or implications of cost, class, differential access
4. visibility as a result of circulation
5. the production of invisibility
6. the deployment of moralizing narratives and their complicity in producing normalcy
7. folklore research as a process of recognizing resignifications and identifying what Dorry Noyes has referred to as "differentiations."

I will briefly apply this framework to my own work on political asylum narratives and on disability, and briefly discuss the work of students on the stigmatized vernacular.

Treasures, Trophies, and Relics: Thoughts on the Tradition of Objectification in Western Europe

Dorothy Noyes, The Ohio State University, Columbus

Socialized into folklore studies at the height of the performance turn, I have been appalled by (and expressed much high-minded disdain for) the return of bad old theory in the current Intangible Cultural Heritage juggernaut, which is flattening our carefully constructed intellectual habitations and leaving us to straggle in its wake as camp followers. In this presentation I attempt to relax my prejudices and explore the longer lineage of heritage policy in both vernacular and institutional objectifications that were intended to confer value on popular tradition, claim a lineage, and defend a threatened community. To me this tradition of objectification still feels like a strategy of ennoblement, in Bourdieu's sense, and I remain skeptical of its efficacy. I conclude, nonetheless, by participating in the tradition: I offer my own valorizing objectification of our discipline and, in turn, its object.

Afro-Peruvian Music, Cultural Rights and the Invocation of Culture as an Economic Resource

Javier León, Indiana University, Bloomington

This presentation focuses on recent changes on how Afro-Peruvian music is created and disseminated, both within and outside the Afro-Peruvian community. For the past decade Peru has been one of those countries whose "return to democracy" heralded the successes of neoliberalism in the region. In this new environment, music, like other forms of expressive culture, has been cast in a different light, often having what to some seems like a more pragmatic quality with the potential to integrate more marginal populations into civil society, provide new opportunities for economic development at the local level, and form the basis for the generation of cultural industries that can be more competitive in providing of

cultural goods and services in the global arena. As a result, music making has increasingly become a site for the production of various types of value which younger generations of performers have come to embrace as a means of not only asserting their local identities and bringing attention to the needs of the Afro-Peruvian community but also as a way of integrating themselves into an increasingly cosmopolitan, multicultural and entrepreneurial civil society. I give a brief overview of some of the current projects involving Afro-Peruvian music in Lima and how the recontextualization of many of these activities to predominantly urban and middle class settings, while in some cases has proven to be economically advantageous, it has also complicated issues of cultural ownership and in some cases challenged musicians' ability to claim authority over their cultural production.

IV. The Value of Distinctions Local Value in a Globalizing World?

Diarmuid Ó Giolláin, University College Cork

I am interested in looking at the somewhat changed role of the local today. On the one hand, through technological developments, the world can be revealed in the local today just as easily as it can be in the metropolitan: the local is no longer merely 'provincial'. On the other hand, postmodern cultural relativism and the crisis of biodiversity have renewed interest in the local, the former in a sort of reprise of Herderian and Romantic anti-universalism, the latter in a new kind of universalism, but one in which the boundaries of universality now coincide concretely with those of globality (to paraphrase Renato Ortiz). The relationship between the local on the one hand and notions of both intangible cultural heritage and the vernacular on the other will be the primary focus of my presentation.

Against Circulation

Charles L. Briggs, University of California, Berkeley

Globalization, as a scholarly framework and buzzword, is dead. Many competing notions seek to take its place—such as mobility, flow, network, and circulation. Here I examine the epistemological presuppositions and practices that make concepts of "circulation" work, that seem to enable them to describe and explain features of contemporary social life. I am not really "against circulation," I guess, but I am interested in providing researchers with a set of questions that they can ask themselves in locating the presuppositions that guide their use of this and similar notions—thus opening up new analytical possibilities.