

Reviews

The Flight of the Condor: A Letter, a Song and the Story of Intangible Cultural Heritage. Directed and Produced by Valdimar Tr. Hafstein and Áslaug Einarsdóttir. Vimeo. 2018. <http://flightofthecondorfilm.com/#watch>. 30 minutes. English with Spanish, French, English, Italian, Icelandic and Mandarin Chinese subtitles.

Narrated by Valdimar Tr. Hafstein, Professor of Folklore, Ethnology, and Museums Studies at the University of Iceland, the film *The Flight of the Condor: A Letter, a Song and the Story of Intangible Cultural Heritage* begins with a letter. But, to many of us, it also begins at the inaugural conference of the Association of Critical Heritage Studies (ACHS), which was held at the University of Gothenburg in June 2012, and where Professor Hafstein offered a stimulating keynote lecture surrounding the life-history of the popular song “El Condor Pasa.” The narrative arc of this documentary is driven by his engagement with critical work in heritage studies, asking, “when is protection not a means of dispossession?” There has been, therefore, much anticipation for the publication of this heritage narrative, and it does not disappoint.

This 30-minute film traces worldwide circulations and transformations of the melody that is globally known as the 1970 hit “El Condor Pasa,” by Simon and Garfunkel. It examines the itineraries of international heritage and copyright norms through oral and written transmissions, reflecting an interest in anthropology on the study of things in motion, rather than on the artificial designation of beginnings and ends (see Rosemary A. Joyce and Su-

san D. Gillespie. *Making Things Out of Objects that Move*. Santa Fe: SAR Press, 2015). From the highlands of South America to a cosmopolitan network of cultural and bureaucratic landscapes across the world, the heritage preservation narrative of *The Flight of the Condor* travels through texts, voices, languages, and landscapes. The narrative brings to light the *chaîne opératoire* involved in the rise and popularization of intangible heritage norms and instruments, one that leans on identifiable individual personalities and states. In alignment with the concerns of intangible heritage, the human scale is preserved and emphasized throughout, both in its dedication to the channels of expertise as well as through the depiction of its stakeholders.

Each itinerary comes to life expertly in the form of a documentary that extends the limits of representation of traditional mediums in heritage studies, such as Hafstein’s companion book, *Making Intangible Heritage: El Condor Pasa And Other Stories from UNESCO* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2018). The film situates historical and contemporary discussions of heritage rights and justice in every day streetscapes that are a far cry from the institutional landscapes of UNESCO and other academic settings presiding over the study and discussions of heritage values. Away from the dominant representations that define the visual cultures of the tangible heritage preservation regime – images cropped to perfection, sanitized, vacant – the stills and shots that the authors curate to accompany this narrative bring an unusual realism to the visuality of heritage as a lived experience: heritage value and voices sometimes set in places

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with unpaved roads crowded with people, traffic, or trash. In addition, this film depicts the significance of anecdote that reveals and underpins ethnographic engagements with heritage studies and its narratives of preservation, particularly significant in the more recent rise in institutional heritage ethnographies (see Denis Byrne. *Surface Collection: Archaeological Travels in Southeast Asia*. Lanham: Altamira Press, 2007; and Lynn Meskell. *A Future in Ruins: UNESCO, World Heritage, and the Dream of Peace*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018). It also illustrates the methodological complexities that construct contemporary heritage ethnographies, which include an engagement with diverse archives, temporalities and locales.

Tensions in this story are not limited to those surrounding indigenous claims in Peru and Bolivia, neo-colonial extraction practices, and the commoditization of traditions. The trajectories of the melody become additionally entangled in the politics of ownership *ad infinitum*: a version of the song still travels to outer space as part of the compilation *Sounds of Earth* included in the Voyager 1 and 2 phonograph records that were launched in 1977. Made to represent the legacy of humanity in its most literal form, this stands as an amplified example of challenging ethical concerns in the management of intangible heritage resources, one of the foundations of a critical heritage turn. As Hafstein explains, “we have a lot of grey area here, but very little black and white”, in particular when it comes to redressing injustices of the past.

Anyone grappling with the complexities of transporting the experience of intangible heritage preservation to the

more sterile spaces of a PowerPoint presentation in lectures and seminars will find a fitting place for *The Flight of Condor* in the teaching of heritage and preservation studies, practices, and debates. Hafstein and Einarsdóttir know the challenge of conveying the deep historical and contemporary narratives, voices, urban textures, and affects that are involved in the historiography of this term and invite us to give it a distinct platform from the traditional modes of representations of heritage.

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Making Intangible Heritage: El Condor Pasa and Other Stories from UNESCO. By Valdimar Tr. Hafstein. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2018. Pp. viii + 216 pages, b&w illustrations, prelude, postlude, acknowledgements, bibliography, index.

With the publication of folklorist and heritage scholar Valdimar Tr. Hafstein's *Making Intangible Heritage*, it is safe to say that we have fully entered the period of *critical* intangible heritage studies in global heritage scholarship and discourse. Indeed, we have reached a level of "meta-ness" in analysis that could make one dizzy. Yet, through his piercing and persuasive unpacking of the many meanings, uses, and contradictions that "intangible cultural heritage" brings us, we are offered sturdy footing—a self-aware grounding—with which to take a beat and reflect, and perhaps correct our course. Even grammatically, the case is now made that "intangible cultural heritage" ought to always be written with scare quotes, signaling its many layers and legacies, and of course its problems. Luckily, Hafstein's arguments are sprinkled with humor and personal vignettes, complete with a story of a broken pant fly, allowing for moments to chuckle at the glaring paradoxes inherent to this thing we call "ICH."

Making Intangible Heritage can be described as a tour of the "ICH" world, or paradigm, which is structured in large part by UNESCO's 2003 *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* (and overarching Western heritage values and norms). This tour is rather brisk, but heavy with thought; our guide

makes stops at some of the most problematic (and ironic) facets of the "ICH" concept, its long line of precursors, historiography, and associated machinery—that is, the ways in which the concept is put to use. To be sure, Hafstein's purpose is not just an exercise in laying bare all of the inadequacies of "ICH;" he does believe that, at the end of the day, "the world is better off" (18) with it. His aim is to signpost (in neon) the places where anthropologists, folklorists, ethnologists, and ethnomusicologists—the book's target tourists—can infiltrate this paradigm at international, national, and local levels in order to make it better. While a prior knowledge of international heritage policy can help, students, scholars, and professionals in anthropology, folklore, and allied fields and disciplines—those interested in heritage theory and practice, and those out on the frontlines of "ICH" work—should read this book.

Situated firmly in a good portion of the critical heritage studies literature, particularly with respect to "ICH" policy and related impacts, Hafstein draws on his previous writing since 2009, which bears repeating, as well as a decade's worth of participation in several UNESCO (and World Intellectual Property Organization) meetings. Importantly, Hafstein served as a member of the Icelandic delegation during a 2003 Intergovernmental Meeting of Experts on the Preliminary Draft Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, and provides gossipy, behind-the-scenes looks at how decisions, such as in terms of "ICH" selection criteria, were made. However entertaining, these accounts present needed context that "read against the grain" (26) of of-

ficial texts and instruments to illuminate how the “patrimonial regime” (10) is *really* propped up and, thus, how UNESCO heritage is made. We become privy to why the words “masterpiece” and “treasure,” in describing selected “ICH,” ignited heated debate, and the alliances that were formed backstage to fuel it.

He begins his tour with a biographical introduction, sharing his own story in becoming a diplomat—albeit accidentally—and his fascination in studying the peculiar and ritualistic machinations of “ICH” policy-making through a folklore and ethnographic lens. Most compelling is how he then frames the rest of our journey through an interrogation of three, key “ICH” origin stories: the 1973 letter to UNESCO from the Bolivian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Religion on the misappropriation of folk culture as related to Simon and Garfunkel’s “El Condor Pasa;” Japan’s vested interest in developing global “ICH” policy; and the turn-of-the-century recognition of Jemaa el-Fna Square in Marrakesh, Morocco as “ICH.”

Each of these stories has come to be known both inside and outside UNESCO as inspiring and justifying the “ICH” paradigm of today. Here, he turns to his training as a folklorist to study their “structure, their performance, their affects” to better understand their uses and “to appreciate how they help imagine coherence, conjure up contrast, and provide charters for action” (13). As such, we travel to Peru, Japan, and Morocco, among other places, to complicate these narratives of “organizational storytelling.” Critical space is opened up to include such unromantic truths as the fact that the Bolivian government’s attempts

to protect folk and traditional arts half a century ago were part and parcel of its systematic oppression and disenfranchisement of Indigenous peoples (Chapter 2). Bringing to light the mythical and sometimes hollow-hearted components of these stories, Hafstein surfaces the deep-seated issues that “ICH” presents as a social, economic, and political tool for, most often, national governments. This is where the “meta-ness” shines: by turning to folklore studies, he encourages us to see “ICH” as folklore in and of itself, so that we are not pulled in to critique it on its terms, but to “critique its terms” instead (9).

The detailed disruptions of the three stories serve as vehicles for delving into what could be called—in this period of critical intangible heritage studies—the “greatest hits of intangible heritage problems,” organized into the book’s core chapters. Interwoven throughout, though, Hafstein poses a wide range of questions that help disentangle relationships “ICH” has to universalism and authenticity, and forces such as globalization, neoliberalism, and folklorization, to name a few. Chapter 2, Making Threats, features Hafstein’s twisty tale of “El Condor Pasa,” while integrating an important critique of how “ICH” policy can so easily be mobilized by state authorities to administer and control the cultural traditions and expressions of local communities. The following chapter, Making Lists, focuses on the hegemonic forces behind listing and, thereby, designating heritage as heritage, exemplified by the Convention’s Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Hafstein dips into his field notes from early drafting meetings (and the chats

over coffees and post-meeting dinners) to provide insight into the political negotiations and jockeying of Member States, especially Japan in using the then budding “ICH” enterprise to become a “global authority in the cultural sector” (71). Here, the curtain is drawn: we are treated to a view of heritage’s cozy, essentializing relationship with national branding and prestige, and how on the global stage, “ICH” is a device for “channeling attention and resources to certain cultural practices and not to others” (87).

Chapter 4, *Making Communities*, opens with the *still-there*, bustling square, Jemaa el-Fna, and an examination of how it came to be “ICH.” Local intellectuals in the 1990s seized on UNESCO’s nascent “ICH” efforts to “transform the relationship of Marrakesh’s own [bourgeois] inhabitants to what goes on in Jemaa el-Fna” via global heritage valorization and, thus, save it from proposed-shopping mall destruction (94). In 2001, the square received the “ICH” stamp of approval through inscription on the Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity, the precursor to the Representative List. Hafstein’s analysis covers a full array of damages that can come in the wake of UNESCO “makeovers:” the bureaucratization, conservation, commodification, sanitization, and ordering of all that was once *way* more chaotic and living, such as a market square, to become “heritage.” He tarnishes this fairytale ending by inserting the 2010 story of two student activists tortured in the notorious police prison below Jemaa el-Fna.

A breakdown of similar transformations that “heritage” brings to the relationships between people and their liv-

ing traditions is closely considered in Chapter 5, *Making Festivals*. Nonetheless, *Making Communities* takes another sobering turn in its second half. Hafstein cautions that, in essence, “ICH” is “an intervention in community practices, and this intervention defines and delimits the community” (117). Since the onus is on states to “endeavour to ensure the widest possible participation of communities...” in safeguarding schemes, as written in the Convention (Paris: UNESCO, 2003), state actors can decide what and who the “community” is. He continues:

By defining community, providing it with outside expertise, and conferring official prestige on its marginalized practices and expressions, this process demonstrates how residual and interstitial cultural representations – craftsmanship, oral traditions, rituals, performing arts – are incorporated into the hegemonic order of representation. (118)

Moreover, the danger of states “enforcing conformity within the diverse communities it designates” (124) is high, and we should surely heed this warning. Yet, it rests on the premise that communities *are* participating—as widely as possible—in formal “ICH” activities, which as Hafstein contends, is not so clear-cut. Conceivably, space remains for living cultural traditions to continue to develop and change in the hands of communities and groups under the official radar.

Despite all of the fundamental flaws in this UNESCO-“ICH” world, we are certainly stuck with it for the foreseeable future. As almost 180 countries begin and continue to implement the Convention, Hafstein is right to stress that this is

when criticism (or tough love) is crucial. Perhaps *Making Intangible Heritage* can be read as a love letter, helping to steer this framework into more equitable and effective directions. Optimistically, he ends with the reminder that “ICH” has great potential in uniting diverse peoples through their just-as-diverse cultural traditions, representing the “capability to relate to previous generations through expressions and practices that rehearse their words, sounds, gestures; and the social ability to share these with others.” And that as scholars and professionals, “we can reach out, foster collaborations, and promote alliances” (168).

Similarly, it would be too disheartening and limited to view the protection, vitalization, and *decline* of living cultural traditions at the local level, and across the globe, as only functioning within the UNESCO-“ICH” paradigm, or because of it. Fortunately, “ICH” is not the be-all and end-all of sustaining living heritage, and heritages—in whatever forms, locally defined—can very much be alive, with strong currency, outside Western hegemonic parameters and ideals. We need to remember that in States Parties to the Convention and/or where there is no “ICH” mandate, longstanding, diverse, and interdisciplinary ways of thinking and doing “safeguarding” are and have been happening, with successes and failures. Indeed, the reaching out and fostering of collaborations and alliances, as challenging and imperfect as it can be, should also stem from communities themselves, based on their needs and terms. If there is one lesson that critiquing “ICH” can carry forward it is that while “communities” may be conceptualized and treated as passive entities to be categorized and

administered from above, we should not perpetuate the idea that they are and will be. Recognizing and respecting people’s autonomy as the decision makers of their own cultural knowledges and expressions must be paramount, even when taking part in wildly transformative cultural policy. Communities can resist and reject the “administrative grid” (98) of “ICH,” and should be able to make it their own. It is our job to learn how to not stand in their way.

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Hittin' the Prayer Bones: Materiality of Spirit in the Pentecostal South. By Anderson Blanton. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015. Pp. xii + 224 pages, acknowledgements, introduction, 8 black and white photographs, notes, bibliography, index.

Blanton Anderson takes the reader on a journey through Southern Appalachian Pentecostal religious practice and media use from the 1940s to the present day. His study focuses on the “materialities of prayer” by seeking to describe the phenomenon of charismatic Holy Ghost power transmitted between subjects and objects in “the space of enthusiastic worship” (3). These subjects and objects include the preachers, radio stations, microphones, radio sets in the homes of listeners, prayer cloths, and, of course, the worshipers themselves. Blanton writes to a scholarly audience in fields such as religious studies, anthropology, folklore, media studies, and material culture.

Principally, he asks, “In what ways, if at all, did the microphone and associated technologies of radio broadcasting actively organize the charismatic worship environment and concomitant practices of devotion?” (5). Blanton explains, “this ethnography explores the specific ways efficacious prayer and other practices of divine communication are experienced and understood when the sound of prayer is ‘heard’ by the artificial ear of the microphone, amplified by the mechanical mouth of the loudspeaker, and communicated across vast expanses through ‘wireless’ apparati” (10). Through themes of technological bodily

extension or prosthesis, vicarious theurgical practice, and displaced “presence and immediacy,” Blanton captures the essence of the healing and transformative powers of the Holy Ghost tradition in the Pentecostal South (184).

Blanton places his analysis in the framework of folk religious practices with an “intimate link of oral-folk transmission with larger mass-mediated religious movements of the twentieth century,” such as Oral Robert’s “Healing Waters” revival radio programs beginning in the late 1940s (7). Blanton relies heavily on theories regarding hearing and sound and on material culture methods regarding the use of radio technology, healing objects, and the physical bones of knees during prayers and knuckles knocking on altars. He links the presence of the Holy Ghost with these material objects and faith practices to showcase what American cultural scholar Leigh Eric Schmidt (2002) calls the “communicative relays between the sacred and the everyday.”

Furthermore, Blanton’s analysis contrasts scholarly skepticism about faith practice by taking an anthropological approach to the performance of faith, and specifically, faith healing. His research aligns with Colleen McDannell’s (1995) and others’ focus on the materiality present in individual religious devotion, daily practice, and community making (5). Blanton cites John Pemberton as a mentor who heavily influenced his use of the concepts of the voice and the object. Also, Blanton relies heavily on French sociologist Marcel Mauss’s theories on prayer.

Hittin' the Prayer Bones is divided into four chapters interspersed with ethnographic transcripts of sermons, concluding with a metaphorical altar call just like

the traditional closing of Pentecostal faith healing radio broadcasts. Chapter 1 addresses the extensions of body inherent in faith healing over the radio as prayer warriors broadcast “skein prayer” and glossolalia to reach heaven and manifest healing power through a point of contact with listeners. Through the microphone and radio speakers, the layered voices of ecstatic prayer (like skeins of yarn) crescendo until a point when the ailing devotees touch their radios to receive a mediated release of faith and the Holy Ghost’s efficacious power. In this way, the laying on of hands for healing purposes is transferred over—and substituted with—technology as a medium for worship, as the Pentecostal faithful enhance ritual with media to “get a prayer through” (17).

Chapter 2 connects the materiality of the older tradition of creating prayer cloths to the mediated meanings of religious narrative. Through the substitution and faith transfer inherent in anointing cut up pieces of fabric and praying over them, practitioners create portable blessings. Blanton brilliantly inventories a broad range of references and symbolisms potentially connected to this practice, including “classic sleight-of-hand magic” which can further be traced to imitations of the “veiled moment of transubstantiation” in the Eucharist. Additionally, prayer cloths allude to tactility and the skin itself, as vegetable oil substitutes for bodily fluids. A skin-like cloth that is produced by humans but blessed by God transfers the power of human and divine virtue simultaneously. The grotesque overtures of something that looks like detached skin cut into squares could also call to mind swords, knives, and biblical

themes of sacrifice (87). Cloth extensions are also reminiscent of tongues crying out in prayer and the portable religious voice utilized so dramatically in the radio broadcast manifestations mentioned in the last chapter (57).

Extending these types of connections and returning to the act of preaching over the radio, chapter 3 explores the moment the religious voice is claimed to be “anointed” and enhanced by the Holy Ghost. The congregation views heaven as the transmitter and the preacher and worshipers as the receivers. Through the extensions of radio, this process is easily magnified by microphone and receiving speakers as the technological point of contact for listeners seeking healing. Chapter 4 develops the theory of the gap between the sacred and the everyday and how these human and technological mediums of the Holy Ghost negotiate healing power, recognizing the limitations of the material domain to “stand-in” for the divine (157). Briefly, these worshipers rely upon fervency and charismatic vocal intensity and rhythm to make their intercessory prayers more efficacious in the gap that separates them from the supernatural—a gap intensified by demonic blocks and human skepticism. Pentecostal religious practice seeks to enter this gap and fuse the two worlds, including mechanical reproductions that affect worshiper experience in different ways that also expand and extend original practice.

Blanton fuses ethnography with an analysis of history, symbols and potential meanings that is as enriching for his scholarly audience as the radio broadcasts are for Appalachian Pentecostals. While this particular ethnography is not

very accessible for the lay reader, potentially excluding any non-academic individuals among his research subjects from reading his book, the invaluable stylistic recreations of faith healing and preaching over radio that Blanton includes throughout and after each chapter give a sense of being involved in these interesting charismatic worship sessions.

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