

# CULTURAL ANALYSIS

AN INTERDISCIPLINARY FORUM ON FOLKLORE AND POPULAR CULTURE

## Volume 7: *Memory*

Introduction, the editors.

**Ihab Saloul.**

“Performative Narrativity”: Palestinian Identity and the Performance of Catastrophe.

Response by **Anikó Imre**

**Timothy R. Tangherlini.**

“Where was I?”: Personal Experience Narrative, Crystallization and Some Thoughts on Tradition Memory.

Responses by **David C. Rubin** and **Bergsveinn Birgisson**

**Sara Reith.**

Through the “Eye of the Skull”: Memory and Tradition in a Travelling Landscape.

Response by **Alice Binchy**

Discussion by **Guy Beiner.**

Event Reviews by **Katherine Loague, Natalie M. Underberg.**

Book Reviews by **Ruth Goldstein, Ryan Sayre, Anna B. Creagh, Taylor Joy Mitchell, Amanda Maria Morrison, and Trevor J. Blank.**



***Cultural Analysis:***  
***An Interdisciplinary Forum on Folklore and Popular Culture***  
**Volume 7: *Memory***

**Anthony Bak Buccitelli & Tok Thompson**, editors. Introduction.....1

*Articles and Responses*

**Ihab Saloul**. “Performative Narrativity”: Palestinian Identity and the Performance of Catastrophe. Response by **Anikó Imre**.....5

**Timothy R. Tangherlini**. “Where was I?”: Personal Experience Narrative, Crystallization and Some Thoughts on Tradition Memory. Responses by **David C. Rubin** and **Bergsveinn Birgisson**.....41

**Sara Reith**. Through the “Eye of the Skull”: Memory and Tradition in a Travelling Landscape. Response by **Alice Binchy**.....77

*Discussion*

**Guy Beiner**. In Anticipation of a Post-Memory Boom Syndrome.....107

*Event Reviews*

**Katherine Loague**. #510: If the Shoe Fits. ....R1

**Natalie M. Underberg**. Playing Folklorists Online: Teaching about Folk Art through Interactivity.....R7

*Book Reviews*

**Ruth Goldstein**. *Traveling Spirit Masters: Moroccan Gnawa Trance Music in the Global Marketplace* (Kapchan).....R13

**Ryan Sayre**. *Risk and Technological Culture: Towards a Sociology of Virulence* (Van Loon).....R15

**Anna B. Creagh**. *National Dreams: The Remaking of Fairy Tales in Nineteenth-Century England*. (Schacker) ..... R20

**Taylor Joy Mitchell**. *Tex[t]-Mex: Seductive Hallucinations of the “Mexican” in America*. (Nericcio).....R22

**Amanda Maria Morrison**. *Check It While I Wreck It: Black Womanhood, Hip-Hop Culture, and the Public Sphere*. (Pough).....R24

**Trevor J. Blank**. *American Science Fiction TV: Star Trek, Stargate, and Beyond*. (Johnson-Smith).....R28

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Introduction to Cultural  
Analysis Volume 7, Special  
Issue: *Memory*.

Even beginning to speak of memory is difficult, because what is memory? If it exists, which it must, then where is it located? A list of possible answers includes books, petroglyphs, neurons, traditions, narratives, architecture, film, and oak trees. Different disciplines address the question of memory differently, from computer science to ethnic studies. While the functioning of memory is assuredly rooted in biological phenomena, there is a general agreement across many disciplines that the experience of memory involves something more complex than even the intricate network of brain impulses that sustains it. In this sense, memory is a multi-tiered process, something that involves the coming together of biological, psychological, linguistic, social and cultural elements.

There is a general agreement that memory involves recalling the past, whether of one's own individual experience, or of a learned (social) memory. In cognitive science, Tulving's work on memory (*e.g.*, 1972, 1983) has proved seminal at modeling different types of individual memory, such as the procedural, and episodic. Both types we share with much of the animal kingdom (see, *e.g.*, Clayton *et al* 1988, 2007). Humanity's use of complex language, narratives, and (more recently) inscriptions has pushed our social, learned memory to a particular complexity and rhetorical power. Yet when one attempts to trace the sources of this power, they quickly

become diffuse. Across cultures there are broad similarities in the practice and expression of memory, yet myriad cultural differences between groups and even between individuals intimately link memory practices to cultural contexts. Similarly, different modes of memory activities become popular or unpopular (film, heritage sites, contemporary ballad festivals), yet just as assuredly the changes are not completely random.

Scholars of folklore have long been at the forefront of research on the connections between memory and culture. However antiquated some of their theories might seem today, the early works of the antiquarian folklorists, at least as far back as the Grimms' *Deutsche Sagen* (1816-18), reflected many concerns with the collective remembrance of the past that would not be unfamiliar to contemporary scholars of cultural memory. With the increased emphasis on individuals as the originators and disseminators of folklore in the twentieth century, folklorists increasingly sought to interrogate the part played by individual memory in the maintenance and reproduction of traditional culture. (Wesselski 1925; 1931; 1934; Anderson 1923; 1935; Lord 1960) In recent years, more nuanced investigations of the interplay of social and cultural elements in the lives of traditional performers (Dégh 1969; Pentikäinen 1978; Glassie 1982; Holbek 1987) have led some scholars to call for a reinvigoration of the concept of "collective creation" of traditional materials, including historical remembrances, rejected outright by many folklorists in the early twentieth century. (Hafstein 2004)

The multifarious nature of memory often demands an interdisciplinary approach, a demand that often yields conflicts and confusion in equal proportion to its rewards. All interdisciplinary work is fraught with the potential for miscommunication and misunderstandings, dogged by the difficulties of mastering multiple knowledge sets. Yet, at the same time, this halting, stuttering conversation is desperately needed, in order for scholars to agree upon basic foundational ideas and expose points of conceptual disjunction between disciplinary methodologies.

In this volume, scholars from a wide variety of disciplines, from psychology to cultural studies, have contributed their perspectives on the interplay of society, culture and memory through the vehicle of narrative. As such, the work assembled here proposes to investigate the relationship between memory and narrative on levels ranging from the minutely biological to the broadly cultural.

In his article, "Where was I?: Personal Experience Narrative, Crystallization and Some Thoughts on Tradition Memory", folklorist Timothy R. Tangherlini brings the findings of his extensive scholarship and fieldwork on legend and personal experience narration (Tangherlini 1990; 1994; 1998; 2003) to bear on some of the basic models of memory processes put forward by psychologists and cognitive scientists. Tangherlini argues for the creation of a new model of traditional memory that can more accurately account for the variegated findings of folklorists with respect to the skill level of traditional narrators.

David Rubin and Bergsveinn Birgisson bring forward a variety of critiques of Tangherlini's approach in their respective responses to his article. Aside from the specific points Rubin and Birgisson address in Tangherlini's article, their critical discussion serves to highlight several places of substantial theoretical disjunction between the approaches of folklorists and those more familiar with the approaches of cognitive scientists. While contemporary folklorists have tended to conceptualize tradition and traditional memory as a set of tensions between the individual and the social, the works of psychologists and cognitive scientists, as well as scholars who follow their approaches, have tended to see tradition and memory more as the activity of individuals. Under the latter model, cognitive functioning is located so firmly in individualized biological bases of memory that other extrasomatic instances of memory are often difficult to locate. Nonetheless, the overlap of interest in memory between these disciplines should serve to formulate new theoretical models bridging the individualized biological bases and the shared, learned memories, including those embedded in narratives, stone, and paper.

Sara Reith follows this path through landscape and ballad by investigating social memory among the now-settled Travellers of Scotland, and in particular its loci in such places as "Auld Cruvie", the giant, ancient Oak tree, and in ballads, photos, and other physical mementoes. Expanding upward from the level of individual memory, Reith's work suggests some of the possibilities for ethnographic work to develop a fuller understanding of the deeply social aspects of

individual memories. But, perhaps more importantly, her work demonstrates the strong role that these memories of a disappeared lifestyle play in the continued maintenance of group identity. In Reith's work, one can see the significance for these disadvantaged communities to continue to remember walking roads that they, as individuals, perhaps have never visited.

Similarly, the landscape as inscribed memory features strongly in Ihab Saloul's work on Palestinian filmic memory, as does the experience of cultural loss. Loss, in this context, takes two forms. First, Saloul discusses the erasure of the geographical touchstones for social memory, a procedure that potentially inhibits the functioning of social memory. In its second context, however, Saloul points not to the loss of memory, but the collective memory of loss embedded in a film as a route for present and future generations to share remembrances of the past. As Saloul suggests, this type of filmic memory toys with the traditional and the official, with the real and the fictional. In doing so, Saloul reveals the critical importance of understanding the role of extrasomatic prosthetics, such as modern media, in the development of social memory across a widely dispersed population.

The three articles in Volume 7 address very different, yet highly significant, aspects of memory across a wide range of disciplinary concerns. The challenges to assembling meaningful interdisciplinary dialogues and models on such a large topic are substantial, and daunting. As Beiner (this volume) rightly observes, for instance, the process of forgetting

that is implicit all work on memory is rarely given the scholarly attention that it deserves, a point also made in his 2007 book on Irish folk historiography, *Remembering the Year of the French*. (Beiner 2007)

Memory studies continues to have a need for meaningful and substantial cross-disciplinary dialogue, as work from a variety of disciplines continues to expose the very different aspects of memory. More importantly, perhaps, the flexibility of approaches that characterizes all three pieces in this volume gives us hope that such dialogue, however difficult, will produce meaningful interdisciplinary models in the future, in order that all scholars might agree as to what we mean when we speak of memory.

*Cultural Analysis* is pleased to contribute to this project in our special issue volume 7: *Memory*.

Anthony Bak Buccitelli,  
Tok Thompson,  
Editors, *Cultural Analysis*

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## “Performative Narrativity”: Palestinian Identity and the Performance of Catastrophe

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### Abstract

*The day Israel annually celebrates as its “Day of Independence” Palestinians commemorate as their day of catastrophe (al-nakba). To most Palestinians, the catastrophic loss of Palestine in 1948 represents the climactic formative event of their lives. In the aftermath of this loss, the Palestinian society was transformed from a thriving society into a “nation of refugees” scattered over multiple geopolitical borders. In this article, I analyze audiovisual storytelling of al-nakba. I will perform this analysis on an audiovisual artifact that commemorates the Palestinians’ loss of their homeland in the past, and articulates the “deep narratives” of their denial of home in ongoing exile: Mohammed Bakri’s documentary 1948. My reading of Bakri’s film considers aesthetic modes of narrativity through which those deep narratives of al-nakba can be accessed through acts of remembrance.*

I have advised you my heart, and  
why did not you take my advice?

We became an intoxicated people  
who go to sleep and wake up in the  
love of their homeland. Oh [...] you,  
my body that is torn into two halves,  
a living one and another that lived,  
and the living half is left for pain and  
suffering. -Shafiq Kabha, *Mawaal*,  
(1989).<sup>1</sup>

I have begun with this Palestinian melody because it resonates beyond boundaries that are set by history and geography. Sung at weddings and other festive occasions, this melody, with its emphatic sighing for the lost homeland, “oh [...]”, serves as a testimony of a remembering that reclaims the experience of another time and another place. The loss of the homeland torments the soul and splits the body “into two halves [...]”, existing between a loved but dead past and a living but agonized present. At the same time, these words point out that the past and the present cannot be simply separated from one another.

Firmly anchored in the present, these words suggest that remembering events and experiences from the Palestinian past remains an effective means of releasing their stories of forced uprooting and struggle for freedom and independence from “official Zionist history”, especially its dominant colonial meta-narrative of “a land without a people for a people without a land”.<sup>2</sup> The temporal and spatial distance, between the remembered object (Palestine) and the Palestinian subject doing the remembering, functions as a conceptual metaphor for the more unsettling distance between this subject and him or herself in exile. This metaphor, as I will argue below, is most visible in the remembrance of *al-nakba*.

In this article, I probe the audiovisual storytelling of *al-nakba* through analyzing denied exilic narratives, particularly those of Palestinians living inside Israel, often referred to in

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willfully vague terms such as “Israeli-Arabs”.<sup>3</sup> I will perform this analysis on Mohammed Bakri’s documentary *1948*, which commemorates the Palestinians’ loss of their homeland in 1948 and articulates the “deep narratives” of their denial of home in ongoing exile. I use the term “deep narratives” to refer to those narratives that are inherently grounded in the past *nakba*, yet continuously (re) surface in reconstructions and retellings of the story of that catastrophe in present exile.

Made in 1998 within the context of Palestinian commemorations of the fiftieth anniversary of *al-nakba*, though never “officially” labeled as such, the thrust of Bakri’s *1948* is to express the carping ambiance of present-day Palestinians in exile, in which an interminable sense of catastrophe persists. Surprisingly in view of this grave subject, the set, so to speak, is the theater. *1948* begins as a theatrical performance, the story of which was told before by other storytellers. Theater and storytelling: these are the two cultural modes in which the film is cast. Both modes are anchored in fiction, and both are literally displayed in performance.

Behind the narrative of Bakri’s film hides another storyteller, the late Emile Habibi (1921-1996), to whom the film is dedicated. *1948* opens with “In memory of Emile Habibi”. Habibi was one of the most accomplished Palestinian intellectuals: he was both a writer and a politician who served as a member in the Israeli Parliament (*Knesset*) for nineteen years as the head of *Rakah Party* (The Israeli Communist Party). Habibi’s

satirical novel, *al-Mutasha’il: al-waq’i al-ghariba fi ikhtifaa’ Said abi al-nahs al-Mutasha’il*, serves as the starting point of Bakri’s film. Originally published in Arabic in 1974, *al-Mutasha’il* was translated into English in 1982 by Salma Khadra Jayyusi and Trevor Le Gassick under the title: *The Secret Life of Saeed: The Ill-Fated Pessoptimist*. The term *al-Mutasha’il* (The Pessoptimist) in the title of the novel is unique in its linguistic construction as it is made up of two Arabic adjectives: *al-mutasha’im* (the pessimist) and *al-mutafa’il* (optimist). Since its first appearance, serialized in three parts in the daily *Al-Jadid* in Haifa between 1972 and 1974, Habibi’s novel has evoked countless scholarly studies and literary criticism. For example, in his comment on *al-Mutasha’il*, Edward Said points out that the novel embodies the Kafkaesque elements, especially the alternation between being and not being in place, by which its narrative sketches a complete picture of Palestinian identity. As Said puts it, *al-Mutasha’il* is an “epistolary novel [...], unique in Arabic tradition in that it is consistently ironic, exploring a marvelously controlled energetic style to depict the peculiarly ‘outstanding’ and ‘invisible’ condition of Palestinians inside Israel” (1992: 83).<sup>4</sup>

In *1948*, Bakri uses footage from his own stage performance of Habibi’s *al-Mutasha’il*. This self-reflective device allows me to discuss the film’s narrative as an act of remembrance of *al-nakba*, which not only articulates the past catastrophe but also enacts the “catastrophic” in the present of the exilic subject—here, Bakri himself as a

theater director. This situation where a theater performance is recycled as a cinematic performance, and I will argue, through this double performance, as an act of storytelling, offers a good starting point for my analysis. This double use of performance helps me reflect on what I will call in this article a “performative narrativity”. This notion refers to dialectic between enactment and showing images from another time.

Central to this discussion is the question how the identity of the Palestinian subject is performatively constructed and narrativized at the same time—staged and remembered. The connection between performance and memory, by means of storytelling, is foregrounded in Bakri’s film *1948*. Composed of a mix of theatrical performance, archival footage and personal interviews of both Palestinians and Israelis, Bakri’s film, as Haim Bresheeth succinctly puts it in his article “Telling the Stories of Heim and Heimat, Home and Exile”, tells the narratives of Palestinians inside Israel, their subsequent marginalization, oppression and mistreatment, and their aspirations for freedom, equality and development; all dashed by the harsh realities of their exile while living in a Zionist entity that utterly negates their equality and their right to their lands (2003: 27-28). In its presentation of these narratives, *1948* appeals to the concepts of “performance” and “performativity”. These concepts have constituted a paradigm shift in the humanities.<sup>5</sup>

In her book, *Tavelling Concepts in the Humanities: A Rough Guide*, Mieke Bal probes performativity in performance. She does so by both articulating the unstable distinction between performance and performativity and arguing instead for a “conceptual messiness” between these concepts. At the heart of this “conceptual messiness” is Bal’s contention that while the two concepts are seemingly distinguishable from each other—performance as being determined in a pre-existing script and performativity as an event in the present—both are in fact interconnected through memory, but “without merging” (2002: 176). This, I contend, is what Bakri’s opening sequence does; as I will try to show below. Bakri’s recycling of a stage performance suggests a creative theorizing of this relationship, the emphatic re-use of theater—the art of performance par excellence—in a film that pursues performativity effects—to change our ways of seeing—offers a great insight into the cultural production of performativity.

According to Bal, such a connection between performance and performativity—primarily informed by Derrida’s theorization of the citationality of speech acts—facilitates the analysis of:

[T]he always potentially performative utterances into aspects. This move from categorization to analysis of each term is representative of the move from a scientific to an analytical approach to culture. (2002: 178)

This shift in approach brings Bakri’s film, as an audiovisual artifact, within

the orbit of cultural analysis. What animates the interconnection between “performance” and “performativity”, then, is the understanding of performance as an act of theatrical enactment that has at the same time the performative power to trigger new signifiers and meanings beyond the present act itself and through these, a change of identity. To this effect, following Bal’s argument of the performative (2002: 176-78) and in an attempt to extend its analytical domain, in my analysis of *1948* I bring the concepts of performance and performativity in their dialectic interaction to bear on the film’s audiovisual storytelling of Palestinian *nakba* and exile. In so doing, I assume that both the modes and strategies through which acts of remembrance are (audiovisually) narrativized in a particular cultural setting reflect specific conceptions of political history and cultural memory of the past and turn these reflections into agents of performativity in the present. Hence, they set up the necessary grounds within which a different future can be envisioned.<sup>6</sup>

But *1948* is a film *with* a story to tell. In order to account for the narrative sequence within and through which performativity takes effect, I will employ the concept of “performance” to articulate what happens in a theatrical setting with a narratological device of, what Bal calls in her book *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*, “focalization” (1997: 142-60). Through focalization, stories of the everyday of Palestinian exile can be enacted, and

brought to the fore, as focalized, that is, perceived and interpreted, rather than happening on the spur of the moment. I will show how *1948* is engaged in refocalizing the everyday experiences of Palestinian exile. The filmic narrative not only shows but also enacts those experiences. Thus, to delineate my itinerary, I make an analytical move from the “aestheticism” of performance—as theater—to the performativity of aesthetics—as political activism—in relation to audiovisual storytelling of Palestinian exile—as the remembrance needed for the activism. Such a move is able to connect the aesthetic representation of *al-nakba* with the ways this event continues to be lived in the present and makes an impact on the lives, identity and agency of Palestinians. This helps us understand what performance, in its connection to performativity may add to the storytelling of Palestinian memory of the past *nakba* in relation to its *mankoub* in the present. This term “mankoub” refers to the “catastrophed” subject.

In what follows, I will discuss how *1948*’s audiovisual storytelling of *al-nakba* and exile articulates Palestinian identity and cultural memory in terms of performance and performativity. In the first section, I will analyze the opening sequence of the film (the theatrical performance), and also reflect on what I mean by “performative narrativity”. As I will attempt to show, the combinational construct of this specific mode of narrativity, between theatrical performance and the archival footage, produces narratological fragments both in images and voices that facilitate

the construction of a present-oriented story of Palestinian loss of homeland. In this story, the historical enterprise of the catastrophic event (*al-nakba*) rejects a dissociation of cause and effect. I will then move to the next parts of Bakri's film where Palestinian and Israeli voices join the storytelling. In my analysis of these parts, I argue that Bakri's film advances the idea that Palestinian loss of homeland and exile is inherently about what people, the Israelis, do to other people, the Palestinians. At stake here is the notion that *al-nakba* is a thoroughly political event that has responsible agents behind it, not uncontrollable forces of nature, nor the effects of our uncontrollable aggressive and territorial genes.

### **Performative Narrativity: Exposing the Betrayal of Time**

That we make ourselves intelligible to others through performative acts is hardly a novel argument. What needs to be underscored, however, is how our acts can narrate and account for catastrophic events and traumatic experiences such as that of the Palestinians' loss of homeland and exile. In this respect, what is remarkable about Bakri's 1948 is that it is primarily linked to *al-nakba* through theatrical performance. Unexpectedly, the film begins its storytelling of this catastrophe as comedy play. Yet, 1948 is a documentary film.

The opening part of the film shows a theatrical play that was performed many times in Arabic and Hebrew to packed audiences over a number of years. In this performance, Bakri plays the role

of the main character of Habibi's novel, Saeed Abi al-Nahs (*al-Mutasha'il*, The Pessoptimist), the unfortunate fool who after *al-nakba* becomes a citizen of Israel. Saeed's story evokes the victimization and ensuing struggle of the Palestinians in Israel by means of a mix of fact and fantasy, tragedy and comedy. His is a story composed of fragments of loss and fortitude, aggression and resistance and affinity. In a series of tragic-comic episodes that reiterate the enactment of who he is, Saeed's stupidity, sincerity and fear transform him gradually from an unfortunate and naïve informer into a simple Palestinian man, who is victimized but determined to survive. Through the performative transformation of Saeed's identity, the film manages to make a trivial comedy stand in for catastrophic events.

At least for this viewer, the employment of comical performance in a documentary dedicated to catastrophic events solicited perplexity and attraction; both affects are in need of analysis. To make sense of Bakri's adaptation of comical performance in documentary cinema it is worth considering 1948 as an instance of audiovisual storytelling within a recent Palestinian cinematic tradition. This tradition reiterates, transfigures, and vindicates the multiple narratives of the past *nakba* and the predicament of present exile. These cinematic instances often resort to various forms of narrative representation, including "open-endedness" as a technique of narrative closure that mimics "ongoingness" (or the non-ending) of Palestinian loss of homeland. Examples of this Palestinian

cinema include other films such as Bakri's documentary film *Jenin, Jenin* (2002), Tawfiq Saleh's *Al-Makhdu'un* (The Dupes, 1972), Rashid Masharawi's *Curfew* (1994), Elia Suleiman's *Chronicle of Disappearance* (1996), Nizar Hassan's *Ostura* (1998), and Hani Abu Assad's *Ford Transit* (2002).<sup>7</sup>

In distinction from these films that are classically narrative, in 1948 narrative representation takes the form of a stage performance. This is particularly preeminent in the opening scene of the film, in which the story of Saeed is presented as a folk tale. In the opening shot of the film, while we see four images of Palestinian families during *al-nakba* gradually filling up the screen, Saeed, on stage, begins recounting the story:

Every folk tale begins: "once upon a time, long time ago [...]" Shall I tell the story, or go to sleep? I am Saeed (happy) Abi al-Nahs (the father of misfortune), *al-Mutasha'il* [The Pessoptimist], ID card No. 222222. I was born during the days of the British. In other words, my father and Churchill were very close friends. But [when] Papa knew that Churchill did not intend to stay here [in Palestine] very long, Papa befriended Yaakove Safsarchik. Before he died, Papa told me: "if life is bad, Saeed, Safsarchik will fix things". So he fixed me.

Like a folk tale, Saeed's story is told many times over. It is as if Bakri sought to insist on the iterative nature of identity as well as on the narrative nature of performance. It is a story composed of a combination of optimism

and pessimism: an episode of human suffering, survival and hope, which cannot avoid contradiction. Such a contradiction is bound to identity as early as in the Arabic meaning of the character's name, which jams happiness "Saeed" and misfortune "Nahs". The combination of contradictory elements is precisely what makes him *al-Mutasha'il* (The Pessoptimist).

Besides his name, Saeed identifies himself by an identity card number "ID card No. 222222", given to him by the State of Israel. In order to explain how he was given this number after *al-nakba*, Saeed recounts the past in terms of its "official" history, consisting of documented historical facts. The moment Saeed begins recounting "the days of the British", we see archival footage of the British forces during their mandate in Palestine. At the point that the voice reaches "Yaakove Safsarchik" –based on the Hebrew word *Safsar*, for "illegal peddler" or "black marketer" –we see archival footage of Ben Gurion and his wife on the occasion of the transfer of power from the British mandatory forces to the Zionist movement in Palestine. This scene ends with the British flag lowered, and the Israeli flag being hoisted on the same pole. This is precisely how the Zionist "Yaakove Safsarchik" betrayed Saeed in the past, and "fixed" him with an insignificant number. The insignificance of this number, "222222", can be interpreted in its senseless repetition of the number "2", suggesting second-class citizenry.<sup>8</sup>

At one level, the film's straightforward approach to history

through its use of archival material has the benefit of allowing the viewer to understand the story of the speaking subject, Saeed, as the fable of the betrayed Palestinian whose father trusted the false promises of the British and the Zionists. This approach, however, does not suffice when it comes to explaining the complexity of the betrayal that Palestinians endure beyond the historical event of *al-nakba*. The archival footage of *al-nakba* does not provide information about the effects of that event on the Palestinians in terms of their subjectivity. This is why there is a need to supplement the shift that the film takes from performance (present) to history (past) with another shift back to performance.

That shift can be seen in the following scene, in which the viewer is drawn back to the stage performance. The moment the flag of Israel is hoisted on the pole, Saeed's voice re-enters the stage to continue the recounting of the story:

My life in Israel began with a miracle. During the incidents [...] of 1947, I travelled to Acre with my father, by donkey. That is our national Mercedes. When we reached the railroad tracks, boom! We heard shots. Papa was hit and killed. I got off the donkey and hid behind it. The donkey was shot dead and I was saved. I owe my life in Israel to a donkey.

The shift to stage performance is primarily audiovisual, but also conceptual and temporal in that it enables the viewer to see the catastrophe

of Palestinians from a different angle than in the archival film footage in two ways. First, what is most notable in Saeed's performance of *al-nakba* is his description of this event not as *al-nakba* of 1948, but as "the incidents [...] of 1947". For Saeed, *al-nakba* is not so much a singular event, but rather a series of fragmented incidents that occupy different temporal moments. Saeed's catastrophe is grounded in that incident he experienced while traveling with his father in 1947. For Saeed, there are many *nakbas*, temporal variations of "the" event. As such, the concept of *al-nakba* does not appear as limited neatly to the year 1948. This may seem like a minor point, but it is relevant for the issue of the singularity of (catastrophic) events in relation to subjective experiences and cultural enactments of these events—when do you exactly mark *al-nakba*? On the one hand, there seems to be a vaguely collective date (May 15<sup>th</sup>, 1948), which demarcates the establishment of Israel, but that fixed date is utterly dependent on the Israeli/Zionist timeline and narrative. According to Saeed's performance, actual commemorations of *al-nakba* also happen at different moments and dates. This conceptualization not only repudiates the singularity of the catastrophic event, but also reflects and delineates different collectives or sub-collectives of its memory. For example, a particular village commemorates "its" *nakba* on the day on which the inhabitants experienced the fall of their own village.

The second way in which the temporal shift is conceptual touches on

performance in the strict sense. Whereas the archival footage only represents *al-nakba* on the political level – the transfer of power in Palestine to a single ethnic minority while depriving the ethnic majority – on stage, Saeed performs the catastrophe as a violent event that entails death and victimization. Hence, logically, he should be dead. Therefore Saeed describes his existence in Israel after *al-nakba* as a “miracle”. Saeed’s use of “miracle” here is important in relation to his survival. While “miracle” signifies an event that is inexplicable by the laws of nature and held to be the result of a supernatural act that therefore generates wonder, in Saeed’s case the miracle of surviving *al-nakba* is attributed to a donkey. By attributing his survival to a donkey, Saeed not only fuses his survival of the catastrophe with the intervention of an insignificant power, but also reduces the value of his life in Israel after *al-nakba* as similarly insignificant, just like his savior the donkey. This is an instance of performative narrativity. In the storytelling of his miraculous survival, Saeed performs his second-class identity.

As a performance with a performativity effect, Saeed’s description of his survival and life in Israel after *al-nakba* engenders a feeling, not of wonder, but of amusement. This sense of humor, however, is problematic because of its connection to a tragic memory, the death of his father. The result of such a tragicomic composition is that humor in the film does finally arrive, but always a little too late. For example, we hear the audiences

of the stage performance in the film laughing at Saeed’s description of the donkey as “our national Mercedes”. Yet, the laughter equally expected at Saeed’s description of the donkey as a savior is not heard and remains absent. Presumably, the idea follows on the heels of the story of his father’s death in a chronology that is not comical at all. Humor in *1948* not only serves as a trigger of laughter, but also of the impossibility of laughter. Through its contradictory effects, humor is, then, put at the service of the present reality of exile: it adheres to the everyday life of the exiled subject, yet also puts forward a vision of an alternative reality. In order for that alternative vision to materialize, however, the viewer is required to pay attention to the fragmented narrativity drifting between role-playing (performance) and archival footage (official history). This is what I will be referring to in this article as “performative narrativity”.

In a previous article, in my analysis of Tawfiq Saleh’s film *Al-Makhdu’un* (*The Dupes*, 1972), I called that film’s storytelling “exilic narrativity”. Exilic narrativity, as I argued there, presents a fragmented narrative sequence in terms of place, memory, self and other through a plurality of voices. Moreover, this narrativity articulates Palestinian exilic space and time as an experiential “truth” by means of a mode of audiovisual storytelling that drifts between fictional and documentary images and voices. The affective results of this drifting storytelling destabilize the binary opposition between “fiction” and “documentary” with regard to



“truthful” representation. Accordingly, this type of storytelling facilitates the travelling of the narrative between the present of the (re)telling of the (fictional) stories of *al-nakba* and the (documented) past happening of the event itself.<sup>9</sup>

Here, I focus on the relationship such exilic narrativity establishes with performance in order to promote the performativity that allows change to occur. Exilic narrativity not only signifies the storytelling of catastrophe that conforms with the mental workings of memory and its temporality against linear time, but, if it manages to be performative, also enacts and triggers the cultural shift, which the narrative itself seeks to achieve: from “official history” to a theorization of catastrophe and exile that we can “live” and understand at the same time. The exilic narrativity of *al-nakba* consists of the telling of a story wherein the historical past (archives) collides with its present (fictional) re-telling in exile up to the point where it can affect the identity of “we”.

Bakri’s film is emblematic for this potential because it presents a mode of audiovisual storytelling, which drifts between performance and archival footage. “Performative narrativity”, as particularly powerful mode of exilic narrativity, deploys a fragmentary narrative composed from a plurality of voices. However, the specificity of performative narrativity, as a form of exilic narrativity, I contend, is determined by specific, complex sense of temporality. The employment of bodily engagement in 1948’s audiovisual storytelling through

explicit role-playing engenders Palestinian narratives of *al-nakba* as acts of “re-reading”.<sup>10</sup> These acts are triggered by the performance of the storytelling on stage. Since this telling takes the form of a folk tale, it harks back to unspecified ancient times. Narrating a subjective *nakba* event, it also brings in the historical past. On the stage, the audience is interpellated with a humor that cuts off the laughter it triggers. In the movie theatre, finally, the viewers, who are, likely to have seen or heard of the successful stage performance, are confronted with these three temporalities and the strong tragic-comic confusion in the present.

By focusing on the temporality of storytelling between theatrical performance and archival footage in 1948, I am practicing a re-reading of the film in this sense. Through this re-reading, I seek to demonstrate an important specificity in relation to exilic narrativity. There, the temporal referentiality of the fictional story is determined by the documented past of its event. In performative narrativity, due to the drifting between performance and archive, the referential scope of narrative broadens beyond the film’s temporal limits. As a result, it re-enacts the *mankoub* that characterizes the catastrophed subject in ongoing exile. This re-enactment involves the viewer affectively.

This affect does not emerge from theatrical performance as a vehicle of representation as such. Rather, it emerges from that performance’s ability to influence our sensory and perceptual concept of the systems

“archive”. Through performativity, the archival footage in the narrative becomes iterable: repeated and changed in a different frame. This performativity sharpens our notions of memory. Thus, the ontological status of cultural events in terms of their past happening and of the way they are experienced and memorized in the present is at stake in performative narrativity. Hence, the performativity of theatrical performance in *1948* not only lies in its mode of being, as Bal succinctly puts it, as “something that hovers between thing and event”, but in the fact that it performs an act that produces a new event (2002: 176).

In our case, the act of *1948* produces a narrative event in which the proliferation of the audiovisual invades the perceptual field of the viewer. Like the figure of Saeed, the viewer is caught by contradictions. When confronted with impossible laughter, the viewer is just perplexed: unable to deal with a laughter that is contextualized – it is felt and has all the required elements for it to come about – yet remains disembodied; that is, laughter does not manifest itself bodily. On one level, in its presentation of a contextualized yet disembodied humor, the film seems to conform with Henri Bergson’s conceptualization of laughter based on the principle of “exploitation and utilization” (1956: 180). In accordance with this principle, and distinct from Freud, for example, who believes that laughter and jokes are “fundamentally cathartic: a release, not stimulant”, Bergson decisively argues that “laughter is, above all, a corrective, and a means of correction”

(1956: 185).<sup>11</sup> As such, beyond its affect of relaxation and amusement, laughter, for Bergson, carries with it a need to correct a situation of missing the mark.

The impossible laughter in *1948*, I wish to argue is “corrective”. The laughter is no longer the known laughter, the sign of humor, when detached from its bodily manifestation. This disembodiment of laughter, through its absence in the film, generates a sense of alienation by which the viewer’s question shifts. From how images of the film tell a predetermined folk tale, the viewer now wonders what story the filmic representation produces. Thus, the viewer’s attention moves a way from the internal audiovisual structures of the known story of *al-nakba* to its narrative pragmatics; hence, opening up the temporal and contextual realms of the story and the event it recounts. Seen in this light, the impossibility of laughter in the film triggers a thought: a primary step made by the viewer towards the awareness and preparedness to deal with a different and more serious exilic reality. At the heart of this thought, impossible laughter emerges as an adequate marker of the problematic relationship between official history and the ways in which this is performed and experienced in the present by the people whose identity is at stake in the act of viewing.

Audiovisually, the film corresponds to this performative narrativity when, at the moment Saeed utters the words “I owe my life [...] to a donkey”, once more the viewer observes archival material of the war of 1948. While the title of the film, *1948*, pops up on

the screen in the shape of a burning flame, images of the fighting in 1948 are presented in the background. This return to archival historicism connects Saeed's performance in the film, through the impossibility of its laughter, with the alternative to humor—historical evidence. This connection turns Saeed's performance into a method of decoding the historicity of the event (the betrayal that *al-nakba* was), while at the same time encoding its (tragic) memory in and through the present betrayal of that past. In Saeed's performance, the viewer is constantly teased into laughter, only to realize that this laughter is a shield behind which tragedy lurks.

The shift from history to performance and back that the film undertakes enables us to see how performance keeps alive the memory of the past *nakba*, but also how this memory dwells in the present of the exiled subject. This effect emerges from the fact that what is enacted in Saeed's performance is not the event of *al-nakba* itself; rather, it is the subject's experience of this event. In this sense, the film's approach to *al-nakba* becomes emphatically subjective. Through this approach we are lured into the history of *al-nakba*, but we are also positioned as the subjects of that exile itself. Confronted with the impossibility of our laughter, together with Saeed, we come to live the past *nakba* in our reality.

What characterizes 1948, then, is a mode of audiovisual storytelling in which the past happening of *al-nakba* and the present experience of its exiled subjects, through memory, become locked together. The viewer may desire

to break loose but is unable to do so at the moment and as a consequence of enactment. In this sense, performative narrativity, drifting between performance and archives, becomes bound up with a temporal movement that displaces the narrative of *al-nakba* from its historical past of 1948 in order to reframe it in the present experience of Palestinian exile: fifty years later in 1998; more, at the moment of cinematic viewing later, in this case sixty years later in 2008. This narrative and reframing, wherein the past and the present of the event are conjoined in the same ontological domain, causes the viewer to be caught in a feeling of "ontological vertigo" by which his or her temporal distinction between the "real" and the imaginative become disordered.<sup>12</sup> As a result, narrative events do occur; they are constantly evoked by the fragments of performance and archival images and voices through which the verisimilitude of the narrative itself becomes inextricably connected with the language of the past and its memory as externally enacted by the body in the present. Hence, a performative mode of audiovisual storytelling occurs, wherein showing and enactment interlock and thus produce the referentiality of the narrative of Palestinian catastrophe. This referentiality is determined, not by the historical past, but by the political—cultural actuality of its exilic subjects.

In the film, this happens by marking off time, then setting up relations through the impossibility of laughter between archival footage and Saeed's act. Thereby the film uncovers meaningful designs of temporal series

through which the past event and the experience of the Palestinian subject can be connected in the present of exile, but without merging. This is how the film's performative narrativity becomes a re-enactment wherein the movements of mind and body affiliate. As a result, the viewer of the film becomes conscious not only of what was and is no more, but also of what is, and is living on. In this sense, to re-enact what is living through performance (role-playing) in *1948* becomes a narratological strategy that does not aim at unveiling the past, but rather at performing and transmitting the present. In other words, performance both keeps alive the memory of the past *nakba*, but also turns this event itself into an index that stands in a causal relationship with the presence of Palestinian exile.

Through such indexicality, both *al-nakba* and its present exiled subject are utilized in the film as drifting between mediums—between the stage and the archive. This drifting, as a result, produces narratological fragments that compose a present-oriented story—not only of where we were, but also where we are now. The beginning of this story in *1948*, however, does not attend to a shadow world: it is not alluding to comical tragedies in the vein of dark humor. Instead, the employment of tragic-comic episodes represents a beginning that is deliberately insensitive. In relation to *al-nakba*, the performative aspects of re-reading this narratological insensitivity establish a relation between the conceptualization of the catastrophe (as an event both in time and space) and the conceptualization of

Palestinian subjectivity as an actuality constructed in the past of a subjectively lived *al-nakba*, yet ultimately performed and lived in the present of exile. Performative narrativity, then, conjugates *al-nakba* to the experience of the *mankoub* subject.

In the opening scenes of *1948*, the combinational construct of performative narrativity between performance and archival footage appears to authorize the historical enterprise of *al-nakba* itself in all its forms; as meaningful representations of a fragmented Palestinian subjectivity in the present. Precisely through this historical authorization, the catastrophic event—regardless of the form of its representation in the narrative (here, performance and archives)—rejects a dissociation of cause and effect. In *1948* the telling of *al-nakba* as a folk tale “every folk tale begins [...]” offers a perfect example of this conceptualization. On the one hand, the folk tale suggests the inevitability of narrativization: more than half a century later, *al-nakba* has already become a story. On the other, the tale ironically warns against the risk that the Palestinians' loss of homeland and exile becomes temporally distant; just another fable among many.

At work here is not a trivialization of folk tales per se, but instead a narrative movement from *legend* set in a historical setting to *folk tale* as a story not told as “true”, but told as “pedagogy”. While the miracle and the donkey are part of the genre of folk tale, precise dating, “1947”, and the “national Mercedes” are not. Through Saeed's theatrical performance, especially in its

progression through several repetitive acts, this story of *al-nakba*, then, is a recent, in fact contemporary, ongoing story. It is a story that works through the problem of becoming a Palestinian subject; a desire gone wrong in the past that needs to be corrected in the present. This story of *al-nakba*, however, is not a unified whole. Instead, like the memory of its catastrophed subjects, it is a fragmented narrative consisting of multiple personal stories. This can be seen later on in the scenes following the opening of *1948* wherein audiovisual storytelling drifts yet again once more: this time between personal (oral) narratives and theatrical performance.

#### Exile of Body and Mind

Unlike the opening of *1948*, most of the scenes later on in the film are personal interviews conducted in 1998: story after story is told, interrupted by Bakri (the performer) on stage, who interprets and comments on the tales. The interviewees represent the first and second generations of post-*nakba* Palestinians. Their stories are arranged in a temporal sequence that takes the viewer on a journey covering the period between 1948 and 1998. The dominant characteristic of these stories is the emphasis on the violent nature of *al-nakba* and on the exile that followed 1948 and continues to exist in the present. Massacres, forced expulsion and loss of home are the main issues of these stories, particularly the *massacre of Deir Yassin*. This massacre refers to the killing of scores of Palestinian peasants in the village of Deir Yassin, near Jerusalem, during the British Mandate

of Palestine by Jewish paramilitary forces, Irgun and Stern groups, between April 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>, 1948.<sup>13</sup>

The following sequence of stories is a typical example of the alternation of interviews, archival images and the performance on the stage. As the archival images of the fighting of 1948 fade away, the camera moves from the flag of Israel to an elderly woman crying, identified on the screen as Um Saleh from Deir Yassin. Together with her grandson, she is standing on a hill over-looking a house on which the flag of Israel hangs. Looking at the house, Um Saleh begins to lament what used to be her house by chanting:

I kept calling [...] O Papa, until my head spun. There was no sound, no response. They were deaf and couldn't hear me. One of the floor's tiles answered me: "Go, light of my life. Destiny is thy bridegroom and absence will be long".

Both the traditional form of lamentation and the presence of the grandson give Um Saleh's chanting a theatrical feel. She seems to put up a performance: an act of singing. This is reinforced by the grandson's position as audience. Yet, Um Saleh's act is specifically "theatrical" as well. She also "plays", putting an act of loss and belonging. This act becomes manifest immediately after the singing as Um Saleh recounts the story of how she lost thirty members of her family during the *massacre of Deir Yassin*. With the flag of Israel hanging on her lost house as the backdrop, the decor on the stage, serving as a historical remainder, Um Saleh describes how her grandson

feels sorry of her whenever she cries:

[This] child starts pampering me when he sees me crying [...] Thirty of my relatives fell in Deir Yassin. Thirty people! My grandfather [...] was the Mukhtar [head of the village]. When he saw them killing his children, he slapped a Jew who said: "We are not slaughtering you. The British are". We Arabs, masters of our fate, became subservient to the Jews. After the injustice of Deir Yassin, 400 villages were erased. Had ten people came to our aid; Deir Yassin would have been saved.

Since the boy is both the audience of the performance and the object of the story, the temporal merging of past and present is enacted in the merging of play and story. Moreover, Um Saleh's story, and numerous ones like it, set up the historical and political framework of *al-nakba*. The old woman thus performs the intergenerational transmission of its narrative to the child, hence the present. This transmission inflects the position of the grandson as an audience into that of a new generation who "inherits" the grief and the loss of place.<sup>14</sup> On a historical level, Um Saleh's story emphatically lays the political responsibility for the loss of Palestine with the British, whose intention of doing justice to the world's Jewry in the aftermath of the Holocaust brought injustice and victimization on the Palestinians, so that the Palestinians became "victims" of the "victims": they "became subservient to the Jews".

For my purposes, it is more important to understand how Um Saleh works

this historical claim from past fact to enduring state. Um Saleh's conception of *al-nakba*, similarly to Saeed's in the theatrical performance in the opening of 1948, is localized: her catastrophe is the loss of her home and family during the Deir Yassin massacre. Um Saleh's loss is tempered with a longing for solidarity that does not come, "kept calling [...] They were deaf [...]" and "Had ten people to our aid [...]". It is also performed as subjective, since the song enacts a tormented experience of exile wherein a long absence is constantly re-produced, "destiny is thy bridegroom and absence will be long". The personification of absence as the offspring of a personal relationship (marriage) between the subject and her destiny, "bridegroom", gives shape to this subjective slant of her focalization. It weaves a symbolic net that not only allows for the interpretation of the absence of, and from, home as a dispossession aimed at both body and mind, but it also connects the expulsion of Um Saleh in the past to her living experience in the present. Only on that condition of that mixed temporality can she affect the grandson with that subjectivity. The theatricality stands for this temporality.

Hence, the presence of the grandson in the scene performs this connection between the past and the present. As a listener to the story, his presence not only signifies the iterability of the act and the cultural dynamics of memory transmission through oral narratives, but also the generational distance between Um Saleh's actual experience of the event and her act of telling. As

a result, the temporal structure of Um Saleh's story blends its re-enactment in the present of the film. The grandmother and the child are both involved in the act that produces the illocutionary force of telling. The acceptance of their mutual roles facilitates the felicity of the act: the grandmother tells and cries, and the grandson pampers her in agreement. The question of narrative duration in *1948* as such becomes moot at this point. Instead, the blend allows for a narrative focalization of the way *al-nakba* is lived in the body and mind of its subjects. Through this focalization, the expulsion and separation of, and from home, become geographical, historical, and personal all at once. And all this, presumably, for the film's viewer, who is offered the position of the child for partial identification.

This can be observed at the end of Um Saleh's account when the scope of the narrative widens to the outside of the subjective realm, only to return to it again. As Um Saleh's crying voice slowly fades away, images of popular demonstrations held in commemoration of *al-nakba* enter the screen. The demonstrators' voices overtake hers as they shout repeatedly: "Calamity day: through our resolve, the right of return will not die [...]". The "right of return" that the demonstrators call for represents the main political demand of the Palestinian people for the resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. This narrative movement to the exterior of Um Saleh's personal narrative transforms the private event of her loss of home into a public one. This move from private to public gives political

relevance to the notion of "returning", but also forces a questioning of what it means to "return". What or who returns? To where, and when?

Immediately after the film audiovisually *returns* to the personal narratives. The next story is that of Taha Ali Mohammed. Taha speaks of what the loss of his village (Saffouria) and "return" to it means to him:

Saffouria is a mysterious symbol. My longing for it is not a yearning for stone and paths alone, but for a mysterious blend of feelings, relatives, peoples, animals, birds, brooks, stories, and deeds [...] When I visit Saffouria I become excited and burst into crying, but when I think about Saffouria the picture that forms in my mind is virtually imaginary, mysterious, hard to explain [...].

Taha's words present a classical case of nostalgic yearning for the remainder of a destroyed place. In the situation of exile nostalgia does not necessarily appear as sentimental or escapist. Instead, if approached as an analytical concept, it can have a productive function as a cultural response to the loss of homeland in exile and, thus, facilitates detailing notions of Palestinian cultural memory and identification with Palestine as their homeland.

In Taha's narrative, this productive impulse of nostalgia can be seen in the fact that his longing for the past and for what has been lost does not represent a return to an idealized past: "my longing is not a yearning for stone [...]". For Taha, what were lost are not just houses, stones, and paths, but a

whole life: the country, the people, and their entire existence. The return to the lost home is constituted in the difference between “visiting” the place and “thinking” it. While his visit to the material site (the ruins of his village) evokes an emotional flux and tears, Taha’s thinking of Saffouria engenders a “mysterious” picture in his mind. Thus, Taha’s cultural identification and belonging appear grounded in the difference between “seeing” the place and interiorizing it, through which the material image of the lost home is transformed into a mental one.

This mental image is inexplicable: “hard to explain [...]”. On the one hand, Taha’s failure to articulate this mental image is the performative moment in the narrative at which his tragedy of loss of home is qualified as larger than the individual, hence collective and for that reason, not “fitting” in his individual mind. On the other, through the inexplicability of the mental image, Taha’s belonging to the lost place does not appear as a material belonging – not as a matter of “having and having not”. Rather, Taha’s belonging to his lost home appears as an enigma: a very personal sense that gives off an awareness of a specific knowledge of the self that cannot be expressed discursively, like an exotic and unnamable scent. The subjectivity of the enduring loss (of place) is again foregrounded. For Taha, this is how the return to the lost home becomes a return that must equal what was lost in the first place: a whole life. Hence, such a loss cannot be simply compensated with a visit to the lost place. Taha’s narrative confirms

Palestinians’ collective conceptions of the “right of return” as a return to a whole life, not just to a place.

In this part of *1948*, the movement of storytelling from the interior psyche (Um Saleh’s story) to the public exterior (demonstrations) and back again (Taha’s story) performs the process of becoming – in other words, of a dynamic identity – in terms of cultural memory. This wavering narrativity not only puts forward a political statement about the Palestinian loss of homeland and their “right of return” as the self demanding a return to itself, but also, I contend, exemplifies the idea of cultural memory, to borrow Bal’s conceptualization of the term, as an act of citationality that “establishes memorial links beyond personal contiguity” (1999a: 218).<sup>15</sup> Through the resulting intertemporality of memory, becoming can be viewed as a process based on interaction between the individual subject and collective, cultural and politic milieu, including that milieu’s history.

This process enables the discovery of a unique and irreplaceable position, a topographical one, with respect to exile. This movement inside and outside personal narratives not only frames Um Saleh’s and Taha’s narratives within contemporary political context of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, but also exposes Palestinian cultural memory and identity as contextually embedded within a past loss of homeland that invariably interferes in the present of exile. As such, the storytelling of *1948* not only deals with the temporality of the past within the present, also with the spatial and the generational



distance between the lost home and the exilic subject in the sense of the “there” in, and for, the “here”. At the heart of this figuration of Palestinian identity in 1948 is, then, a topographical position that maintains the notion that “there is no travel without a return” by which the past narrative of *al-nakba* is cognitively and spatially grounded in the present of the exilic subject. This figuration is performed in the storytelling acts of Um Saleh and Taha. In 1948, however, this topographical positioning does constitute a point of arrival for Bakri’s film, but also a point of departure for another kind of journey: a return trip to the subjective realm of narrative not of the self but of its “other”.

#### **Performing “We” in the “Aftermath”**

As I already indicated, Bakri’s theatrical play was performed many times in Arabic and Hebrew to packed audiences of Palestinians and Israelis over a number of years. In keeping up with this mixing, 1948 brings in Israeli narratives of this event. In the next scene, as the camera slowly moves away from Taha standing near the ruins of his destroyed village, a voice over comes in saying: “Saffouria endangered the Israeli army, the IDF [...]”. Slowly, the face of an elderly man, identified as Dov Yirmiya, sitting with his grandson in the courtyard of his house, enters on the screen. Speaking Arabic with an Israeli accent, Dov tells the story of how he was responsible for conquering Taha’s village (Saffouria) as IDF officer: “One battalion went to Illout and I led my platoon to Saffouria. I was ordered to conquer it and I did [...]”.

Audiovisually, Dov’s story is connected to the stories of Um Saleh and Taha. The setting of Dov with his grandson inside his house is symbolically charged. It echoes the scene of Um Saleh and her grandson standing outside her house, in exile. This not only reminds the viewer of the generational distance and the oral dynamic of narrative transmission, but it also sharply contrasts their respective positions: Um Saleh in non-place (not-home or exile), Dov in place (in Um Saleh’s home). Narratively and historically, through his confession of conquering Saffouria—“I did [it]”—Dov becomes the perpetrator of Taha’s catastrophe. As the perpetrator, Dov’s presence in the film concretizes Taha’s loss as well as his allegorical “return” to the lost home. Through Dov’s confession, Taha’s loss of place and the “right of return” are given a specific historical context: the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 as the origin of Palestinian exile in the film’s present. Most importantly, on a political level, Dov’s narrative relates to the issue of negation of *al-nakba*. His confession emphatically deviates from official Zionist history that denies that *al-nakba* took place.<sup>16</sup>

Through the employment of multiple personal narratives of both self and other, the movement of audiovisual storytelling in 1948 brings together different visions and voices playing off against each other without the need to reconcile them, but to hold them together—the “Palestinian self” as victimized and the “Israeli other” as a perpetrator. They need each other as

in a Hegelian dialectic.<sup>17</sup> Additionally, the film practices a narrativity that runs through the singular form according to the convention that several voices must at different moments claim the position of the main character in the narrative of *al-nakba*. This feature facilitates a polyvocal storytelling of the catastrophe that expresses feelings and aspirations of several people, in order to suggest that the voices of the Palestinian self and the Israeli other are each answerable to the other. This answerability can be seen to be performed in the audiovisual shift the film makes from the realm of personal memories to the theatrical and the public stage where self and other are brought, not into opposition, but into dialogue. In 1948, this dialogic relationship is grounded in specific conflicted, yet inherently *uneven*, discourses of memory, in which Palestinian and Israeli voices speak *of* and *in* “the aftermath” of *al-nakba*. I shall return to the “unevenness” of Palestinian and Israeli discourses of memory in the next section of this article.

After Dov’s story, the viewer encounters one more personal narrative. Her eyes looking straight into the camera, as if talking not to the interviewer but to the viewer, an elderly woman, identified as Zahariya Assad from Deir Yassin, begins her story with the words: “One thing made me cry the day we left our village, never allowed to return [...]”. The emphasis in Zahariya’s story is on exile occurring in a non-place. Her story can be summarized as follows. When Zahariya was fifteen years, the wife of her old brother

was killed during the *massacre of Deir Yassin*, leaving behind two baby girls. Zahariya takes care of the babies. After fleeing her village during the massacre, carrying with her the two baby girls, she ends up in an empty and strange place, without knowing how to support the girls. Following directly on Dov’s confession, the significance of this story lies primarily in its focalization of the catastrophic moment not in Dov’s act itself (his conquering as a contribution of the establishment of the State of Israel), but in the aftermath of this act: being stranded in a non-place (exile). What makes Zahariya cry is not that she must care for two babies with no means of survival, but, as she says, that she is “never allowed to return to her home”.

The aftermath—it is this retroactive recall of the past that causes tears. This “preposterous temporality” of the catastrophic moment, the aftermath of *al-nakba*, serves as the starting point for a renewed (theatrical) dialogue between the voices of self and other.<sup>18</sup> After Zahariya’s story, the screen, in the form of a book page, opens the theatrical stage. On stage, Saeed Abi al-Nahs, as if entering from afar, appears once more to complete his story, left off in the opening scenes:

I swear that when this great misfortune befell us in 1948, my family was scattered throughout Arab countries, bordering Israel that Israel had not yet conquered. But the day will come. When my father and the donkey were shot dead [...], I set sail for Acre, by sea. The great sea, whose foamy waves are like

mountains. Its shores are bullets and treachery, with refugee boats to the end of the horizon. The sea is great and treacherous and our cousins too, including infants, are drowning, drowning.

Saeed describes *al-nakba* as the “great misfortune” of 1948. In contrast to the opening scenes wherein the catastrophic moment is specified as “the incidents of 1947”, Saeed’s expression here follows the public dating of the event. In so doing, *al-nakba* becomes no longer the private catastrophe of the individual subject, but the larger collective one. Many small incidents in 1947 together add up to the collective catastrophe of 1948. *Al-nakba*, thus, appears as both utterly individual – it happened to each village or Palestinian – and collective – it targeted the Palestinians as a people and a nation – at the same time.

With respect to the notions of “self” and “other”, Saeed’s swearing gives his performative act a sense of sincerity.<sup>19</sup> But since the act takes place in public as well as expands to others, it transforms his performance into an act of testimony.<sup>20</sup> Saeed’s performance reiterates a story of loss and dispersal that is similar to the ones we already saw. Hence, Saeed takes responsibility for the film’s subjects through his re-telling of their losses. Like in a courtroom, Saeed’s act on stage embodies the aesthetic capacity both to reiterate the personal narratives and to “take their stand”. The similarity among the experiences of loss, expressed at the beginning of his statement “I swear [...]”, threatens the binary division of the self as

victimized and the other as perpetrator. Yet, Saeed’s description of the “great and treacherous” sea prevents this categorization. In the sea both the exilic (victimized) self and its (perpetrator) other perish equally: “the sea is great and our cousins too, including infants, are drowning, drowning”. In this sentence, the phrase “our cousins” is key. This is the phrase that Palestinians commonly use in reference to the Jews, thus, signifying the biblical relationship between both peoples as descendants from Isaac and Ishmael (the two half brothers), the sons of Abraham.<sup>21</sup> For Saeed, “our cousins” are drowning with us in the sea of conflict. His description, through referring to the Israel/Jewish other as “cousins”, moves away from oppositional politics and constitutes both self and other as a relationship between relatives. This is a performative politics of “we”.

On the level of narrative language, this conceptualization of self and other makes place for personal memories that confound official history and at the same time return to that history what often escapes it – the catastrophic in the present. Thus, the narrativity of *al-nakba* between personal memories and historical performance in 1948 establishes an equitable and dialogic relationship between the Palestinian self and its Israeli/Jewish other that is based on the unraveling of official Zionist history. This corrective stipulates that official history is bad, not in its essence – which would be a tautology – but rather in its application. In her book *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, Gayatri Spivak argues that the re-examination of

colonial discourse does not necessitate discarding previous versions of history or truth but challenges the notion that anyone is privileged to have access to the truth (1999: 21-25). In light of Spivak's critique, I wish to argue that in 1948 the distrust in official history's capacity to express the memories of *al-nakba* leads to a re-telling of the past that challenges the notion that anyone has privileged access to historical truth. As I pointed in my analysis of 1948 thus far, this challenge most clearly manifests itself in Dov's confession of conquering Saffouria, which sharply contradicts official Zionist historicity of *al-nakba*.

The performative narrativity of the film, then, constructs an alternative knowledge of the loss of Palestine. This alternative knowledge both activates the referentiality of the narrative of *al-nakba* as present-oriented, and politicizes its aesthetic experience. Thus, the film's narrative becomes a political performance that appeals to the audience to acknowledge and experience the actuality of Palestinians' loss of homeland and exile as ongoing. The appeal also extends the audience to include victims and perpetrators as co-dependent—as "cousins". What animates this appeal is not just a disagreement about what happened in the past, but also the issue of whether the catastrophe is really over, or continues in the present, albeit in different form. In the closing part of the film, the movement of audiovisual storytelling bears this out. Immediately after Saeed's performance of the metaphor of the sea, the viewer encounters more personal

stories of both self and other, but from a more recent point of view. Thus, the performative narrativity of the film is a mode of telling that, as I will attempt to show in the remainder of this article, explores the causes and effects of the narrative, but also attempts to bring this narrative closer to resolution.

### **The Everyday: Self, Others, and Exile**

The final sequence of Bakri's 1948 performs the conflicted, yet co-dependent "we" most directly. It opens with a close-up of Bakri outside the theatrical stage: we see him interviewing, listening to stories, and wondering between the ruins and the cactus trees. In one of these scenes, Bakri interviews a man, identified as Abu Adel from Dawaima. Abu Adel describes how the people from his village fled their homes during the Israeli army's invasion in 1948 in which "400-500 men, women, and children were killed then". The moment Abu Adel utters these words, a voice over comes saying in Hebrew: "It was a slaughter planned by IDF". In the next shot, the speaker—a man setting in his garden—is identified as Amos Keinan. Amos continues the story and says:

It was not the Irgun, Stern Group or the Hagana. It was the army. You won't find this in the official [Israeli] history books. But those who have to, know it. I, for one, have to know. I knew it back in 1948 [...].

Amos's narrative exposes the violent nature of the expulsion of the Palestinians in 1948. His narrative

also harks back to Dov's narrative in that it lays the responsibility for *al-nakba* on the Israeli army (IDF). Most importantly, his narrative emphatically shows the gaps of official Zionist history of *al-nakba*: "you won't find it in official history books". This congruity between Amos's and Dov's narratives further coalesces the idea of a co-dependent self and other. Through this consistency of their narratives, both Amos and Dov are focalized as Israeli/Jewish voices who confirm the stories of Palestinians and at the same time accept responsibility for *al-nakba*.

However, the conceptualization of a "responsible other" appears problematic as soon as Amos finishes his narrative. In the following scene we see Abu Adel leading Bakri to the place where his lost village (Dawaima) once stood. While both men wander among the ruins, they come across a Jewish house where they meet a man and his son who is carrying a gun on his waist. When Bakri asks the father – identified as David, a resident of Moshav Zecharia – "You live in an Arab village. Today, it's a Jewish locality. Are you comfortable living in a house that was not yours?" David, taken by the question and after some hesitation, answers with a question: "What can I say, yes or no?"

While David remains silent, still unable to come up with an answer, Bakri says: "That means you understand the pain of a person who [...]". Before completing the sentence, David rushes in and replies: "I understand it very well". The moment David finishes his sentence, his son – identified as David's

son from Moshav Zecharia – interferes in the discussion, so that a dialogue between them starts:

I was born here and this is my place. I don't look at whoever was here before me. Nothing. This land was given to the Jews thousands of years ago, and it's ours.

At this moment, David comes in completing his son's words and comparing his own immigration from Iraq to the loss of home that Palestinians experienced:

Whether we're comfortable with it or not. We were also hurt when they threw us out of our homes. They did not use force to throw us out and they did not say: "Get out of here!" I know that the State of Israel made a deal with the Iraqis and got us out of there. We came here.

The narrative of David and his son is crucial in this scene. The intergenerational transmission we saw earlier yields to a willful denial in the younger generation. On the one hand, both men reiterate the official Zionist narrative that is utterly grounded in terms of the intricate mythology of Israel's religious origins as Jewish continuity from biblical times: "This land was given to the Jews [...]". On the other hand, both of them take the position of an Israeli/Jewish other, who neither acknowledges the Palestinians' rights to their land, nor takes responsibility for what happened to them in 1948: "whether we're comfortable with it or not".

Thus, compared to Dov and Amos, both David and his son stand as extreme opposites of the former pair. With regard to “self” and “other”, the juxtaposition of the narratives of David and his son to those of Dov and Amos allows us to understand the Israeli/Jewish other as a construct that includes different “others”. These “others” are divided between an other who reforms Zionism and takes responsibility (Dov and Amos), and another irresponsible Zionist other constituted in the difference between David and his son.<sup>22</sup>

This presentation of the Israeli/Jewish other as internally divided others poses a theoretical challenge to the Palestinian victimized self: namely, where the Palestinian self is located and how it is configured in relation to its “others” so that they can become the “we” of the play and the film’s mixed audience. In order to answer this question, the film resorts to theatrical performance. For the final time and immediately after the scene with David and his son, the camera shifts from the outside to the theatrical stage. On stage, with a metal plate on his head like a soldier’s hat, hiding behind the broomstick as a defensive barrier, and with his hand in the shape of a pointed gun, Saeed audiovisually performs both self and other. Speaking Arabic with an Israeli accent, Saeed says: “Where did you come from? Tell me or I’ll shoot you?” Changing both his accent and position, coming out from behind the broomstick, Saeed starts talking to the audiences describing how an Israeli soldier held a gun to his child’s head and how he stood there helpless.

Changing his position again into that of the soldier, Saeed then recounts the story in a monologue in which the soldier interrogates the father of the child:

[Soldier:] Where are you from?  
[Father:] from Birwa, Sir. [Soldier:]  
Are you returning to Birwa? [Father:]  
Yes, Sir. Please, Sir [...] [Soldier:]  
Didn’t I order you not to return?  
Animals! You respect no law? Go on.  
Get out of here.

In Saeed’s performance, Palestinian self and Israeli other are intertwined in a violent relationship, that is, of a colonizer and colonized. The use of the “animals” enables a reading in which the Israeli soldier’s description becomes fused with racist, imperialist images of Palestinians as less than human. Moreover, the dialogue between self and other which was established in Saeed’s performance of the metaphor of the sea is now terminated by the sheer force of the soldier’s statement: “Get out of here!” What the Iraqis did not say to David (“Get out of here”), the Israeli soldier says to the Palestinians. More importantly, this scene makes concrete the internal division of Israeli/Jewish “others” (between Dov and Amos, and David and his son) in terms of power: not Dov and Amos, as responsible others, who have power in Israeli society, but David and his son. The gun on the waist of David’s son becomes a symbol of control and power. This symbol exposes the conflictual grounds of Palestinian and Israeli discourse of memory and identity, but it also embodies the *unevenness* of these

discourses. Since 1948, Israel always had the advantages of a state apparatus and military authority, which not only fashions images of historical Palestine exclusively as the so-called “Jewish land” internally and abroad but also suppresses and de-legitimizes Palestinian narratives of identity.

At the end of Saeed’s performance, the focalization of the Palestinian self and the Israeli other as colonized/colonizer seems to bring the film’s narrative to a halt. Only then, audiovisual storytelling shifts from the theatrical stage to the outside. In this scene, we see Dov playing his accordion music to a group of children, and singing in Arabic: “We bring you peace”. After the singing, Bakri asks Dov about the reason for his sympathy with the Palestinians, and says: “I sense that you’re playing music not only because you love music. You sympathize [with Palestinians] not just because you like Arabs, but also for another reason: You’re assuming responsibility for [a] national feeling of guilt. Am I right?” Dov then immediately answers:

You are right about one thing. For many years, I believed in my Zionism, but not like today’s Zionists and also not like the kind we had back then. I believed that we were not harming the Arabs here [...] I admit that even before the war, I perceived a trend in Zionism [...] when people come to a place where another people lives, especially if there’s resistance, and this resistance is justified, we later discovered [...] I certainly don’t feel comfortable with the idea, even before the establishment of the State

of Israel. But after the state was established, from the moment there was something we could do about it [...] To heal, rectify, show good will, help out, bring back refugees. That’s when it started to eat me inside. Since then I’ve been consistent in my views.

Dov’s consistent views of Palestinians not only show the inconsistency of David and his son’s views, but also particularize the difference between the views of Israeli/Jewish “others” as based on different ideological trends within Zionism.<sup>23</sup>

In our film, Dov is an Israeli/Jewish subject who believes in a Zionist ideology. Dov’s version of Zionism, however, is different from “today’s Zionism and also not like the kind we had back then [in 1948]”. Unlike the Zionist trend of David and his son, in Dov’s ideology establishing a “homeland for the Jews” should neither harm the Palestinians nor deny their existence: “When people come a place where another people live”. Precisely through this articulation of a specific trend of Zionism Dov becomes a subject with a historical consciousness, but also dominant trends of Zionism become atrocious—just like official history—not in their nature, but in their application. The current ideology of Zionism (or the trend of David and his son) is precisely dubious in its lack of historical consciousness: through the denial of the Palestinians’ rights and the refusal of responsibility for their catastrophe. Further, unlike David who lives with his ideology “whether [he is] comfortable with it or

not", Dov's historical consciousness is characterized by a moment of unease: "I certainly don't feel comfortable [...]". After the establishment of the State of Israel, this moment of unease, for Dov, became a moment of recognition of the fact that there was something that could be done about what happened to the Palestinians: "to heal, rectify, help out". Thus Dov's feeling of guilt, "that's when it started to eat me inside", is not grounded in what happened in the past, but in the failure to correct it in the present, to do something about the Palestinians' suffering today.

Dov's distinction of his own brand of Zionism unravels it as an ideology that has multiple strands and trends, but that hides them in an artificial unity. Rather than resolving the issue, Dov's narrative suggests that the possibility of resolution is in the hands, not of the Palestinians, but of their Israeli "others". The resolution of the Palestinian narrative of *al-nakba* can only work at the level of the others' ideologies, substituting racist Zionist ideological trends with historically conscious ones. However, until that moment comes, the Palestinians' remain colonized and dispossessed: their everyday of exile surges on without any sign of ending or reducing suffering.

The closing scene of *1948* illustrates this contradictory situation. We see Bakri walking among the ruins and the cactus trees, intimating the Palestinian present as tainted with loss of place and nostalgia. In a close-up, we see him standing on one of the graves and brushing the dust off the name on the gravestone. At this moment the image

of a bird, a seagull, at the shore of the sea enters the screen. As the bird is about to fly away, the camera captures its image, and Bakri's voice over comes in chanting:

O bird, you have reminded me of my [loved ones] with your plaintive song. Don't compound my sorrows. O bird, when you see a man placing his hand on his cheek, it means he parted from his loved ones. Don't approach him. O bird, everyone had his own troubles. Don't compound my sorrow.

The bird emerges as a metaphor for the tormented continuous journey in Palestinian exile. It not only reminds the exiled of his or her "loved ones" in the past, but also torments the self in the present, compounding "the sorrow". Thus, both the loss of the homeland and the helplessness to overcome it, "when you see a man placing his hand [...]", are displaced from the historical catastrophe to the contemporary reality of exile.<sup>24</sup>

In *1948*, the narrativity through which *al-nakba* is performed, then, suggests a dynamic reciprocity between the past and the present by which the agonized present of exile becomes the main motivation behind the subject's telling of the past. This mode can be derived as performative narrativity: drifting between theatrical performance, historical archives, and personal memories it comprises the performance of a fundamental aspect for the actual state of the Palestinian narrative. The image of Bakri brushing the dust off the name of the gravestone



becomes the ultimate enactment of this actuality. Through its confrontation with official Zionist history, the film's performative narrativity shows us the dusty gravestones of Palestinians, while performance exposes their names in the present.

In 1948, official history and performance emerge as the dialectic of politics and aesthetics. This dialectic, however, appears as self-perpetuating: it feeds on itself, especially through the film's moving inside and outside personal memories and the theatrical stage. Fittingly, the performative approach of audiovisual storytelling accepts intellectual responsibility for maintaining rather than resolving the tension between the aesthetic and the political, using the former to criticize, re-examine and transfigure the latter through performative acts of telling. The film constructs temporal bridges between the past of *al-nakba* and the present of exile that allows us to see both from different angles at once in a durational continuity that they share.

The salient aspect of this analysis of 1948 is not to recognize the temporality of the past event of *al-nakba* within the present of exile, but to see the aesthetic experience (in this case a theatrical performance) of that catastrophe as not merely a representation of the past but as a living form of the catastrophic present, where the battle for justice, emancipation and the diminishment of human suffering continues. Re-reading the film's performative narrativity can become a cultural intervention that does not aim to merge Palestinian "self" and Israel/Jewish "other", but

enacts their conflicted discourses of memory through which they can converse together in a shared space where narratives and identities are always already implicated in each other. Neither separation nor merging is ever absolute, but dependent on the specific contexts in which re-telling and re-reading are staged and performed.

### Notes

1. This *mawaal* (melody) is my translation and it is taken from Palestinian folkloric music that is commonly sung during festive occasions such as wedding ceremonies and births. The audio-cassette tape where I found this melody is from a composition of songs by Shafiq Kabha. See Kabha (1989).
2. I am referring here to the well-known Zionist narrative which makes claims for Jewish historical presence in Palestine based on a timeless biblical attachment to the land by absolutely rejecting, with brutal military force, any Palestinian historical or temporal counterclaims. For excellent explications of such a narrative, see Said (1992), Masalha (1992), and Pappé (2006).
3. The term "Israeli-Arabs" is often used to refer to the 17 percent of the Palestinians who remained in the area of Palestine on which Israel was established in 1948. Currently, there are more than one million Palestinians living inside Israel as a "second-class citizens" minority. The vagueness of the term "Israeli-Arabs" is due to the contradictory approaches through which these Palestinian subjects are theorized in dominant political ideologies and academic discourses, especially anthropological and ethnic studies. On the one hand, as Arabs, these subjects are

dismissed and degraded as uncivilized subjects. On the other, as Israelis, they are conceived of as an object for civilizing. For further critique of this term as well as the various acts of social disenfranchisement and political oppression which this segment of Palestinians had endured since 1948, see Frisch (1997: 257-69), and Suleiman (2001: 31-46).

4. In recognition of his life work, Habibi was awarded the Palestinian prize for literature (*Al-Quds Prize*) by the PLO in 1990. In 1992, Habibi also accepted the "Israel prize for Arabic Literature", and as a result, had to face some fierce literary and political attacks by Arab and Palestinian intellectuals that lasted until his death. Habibi was born and buried in Haifa and, in an adamant response to the attacks against him, his will was to have inscribed on his grave: "Emile Habibi remains in Haifa forever". For a comprehensive study on these controversial aspects of Habibi's life and literary project, see Jaraar (2002: 17-28). In his article, Jarrar also discusses many of the critical studies that dealt with Habibi's novel, *al-Mutasha'il*. Also, see Dalia Karpel's documentary about Emile Habibi's life, *Emile Habibi – Niszarty B'Haifa* (Emile Habibi – I Stayed in Haifa), (1997).

5. To be sure, the theory of performative, initially formulated by John Austin, in *How to Do Things With Words* (1962), changed linguistics drastically. This theory has been modified and extended from philosophy to cultural analysis and back again in other theorizations particularly these by Jacques Derrida and Judith Butler. Derrida embraces the theory of the performative as the basis for a new conceptual methodology of analysis in what he refers to as the

"new humanities". Through his intervention, the performative is brought to bear on a wide range of cultural practices and events; not only language. Derrida assigns the analytical authority of the humanities within the university to knowledge (its constative language), to the profession (its model of performative language), and to the *mise en oeuvre* of putting to practice of the "performative", which Derrida, alluding to metaphorical fiction, calls the "as if" (2001: 235). On Derrida's conceptualization of *mise en oeuvre* in the sense of "as if", see Derrida (2001: 233-247), and Singer (1993: 539-68). For further studies on Derrida's thought and theory, see Derrida (1976, 1977: 172-97, 1981, and 1989: 959-71), and Culler (1981, 1982, 2000: 503-19, and 2006). The term "new humanities" is cited in Peters (2002: 47-48). In his article, Peters discusses what Derrida outlines as seven programmatic theses in the humanities or what Derrida calls "seven professions of faith for the new humanities" (48). Butler's theorization of performativity follows this Derridian view of iteration as the key to performance in that it accounts for the performative's relationship to cultural practices such as gender. Butler argues that gender is discursively constituted by performative acts, which in their iteration come to form a specific and "coherent" gender identity. Gender, then, becomes a "performative reiteration", that is, as the subject's habit to embody hegemonic norms. As such, for Butler, there is no gender identity behind expressions of gender: identity is constituted by and through the very expressions that are said to be its results. See Butler (1990 and 1993).

6. My assumption here benefits from Richard Bauman's cross-cultural perspective of intertextuality, especially his folklore standpoint of looking at communications across time and the relationship of texts and performance to the past. See Bauman's (1984 and 2004). For relevant studies on this perspective in terms of performance, memory and storytelling, see Dell Hymes' works on the methodology and theory of ethnopoetics in Native American context. See Hymes (2003 and 2004).

7. It is worth mentioning here that Bakri's *Jenin, Jenin* (2002) is dedicated to the *Jenin massacre*. This massacre (also known as *The Battle of Jenin*) took place between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> of April, 2002 in Jenin Refugee camp in the West Bank as part of Israeli Army's Operation Defensive Shield during the second *Intifada*. Bakri's film includes testimonies from the residents of Jenin describing how Israeli forces destroyed most of the camp. *Jenin, Jenin* begins with a deaf and dumb man who leads the viewers (and Bakri himself) to the scenes of destruction after which straight up interviews with the inhabitants of Jenin are introduced. Bakri also includes an interview with himself. For more information on this film, see <http://www.arabfilm.com/item/242/>. For detailed insights on the *Jenin massacre*, see Baroud (2003). Baroud's book is an excellent compilation of eye-witness accounts of the residents of Jenin.

8. Similarly, Simone De Beauvoir's famous term "The Second Sex" indicates the second-class status of women. See Beauvoir (1949 [1989]).

9. See Saloul (2007: 111-28).

10. I use the term "re-reading" as discussed by Inge Boer. In her book, *Disorienting vision*,

Boer argues that "re-reading" is a temporal process of discovery which is itself "part and parcel of the act of reflecting on the relation that operate between a reader and a text or a viewer and an image. This process runs parallel to strategies of interpreting context" (2004: 19). In other words, re-reading is an interactive process that is explicit about both the practice of interpretation and its political pertinence in the context of the present.

11. This statement from Freud is quoted by Merchant (1972: 9), and Taha (2002: 56). For Bergson's notion of laughter, see Bergson (1956: 170-89).

12. My use of the term "ontological vertigo" is similar to Inge Boer's use of the term as an effect that emerges from literary works' use of common devices to claim truthfulness of their account while at the same time making use of the imaginary. See Boer (2004: 91).

13. For a comprehensive historical record, details and figure of this massacre as well as its psychological and political impact on the Palestinians, see Kanaana and Zitawi (1987), and Morris (2005: 79-107).

14. For relevant discussions on generational transmission of personal narratives and experiences, see for example, Stahl (1977: 9-30) and Robinson (1981: 58-85).

15. This conceptualization is further developed in Bal (1999b: vii-3).

16. In "official" Israeli political and academic discourse, the event of *al-nakba* is presented as an event that did not happen. On Israeli negation of *al-nakba*, see, for example, Kadish and Avraham (2005: 42-57), Morris (1987 and 1990), and Masalha (1988: 158-71 and 1996).

17. For a useful study on this dialectic, see Buck-Morss (2000: 821-65).

18. My use of the term “preposterous temporality” here benefits from Bal’s notion of “preposterous history” as she theorizes it in her book *Quoting Caravaggio*. The object of investigation in Bal’s book is not the well-known seventeenth century painter, but rather the temporality of art. In her book, Bal retheorizes linear notions of influence in cultural production. She does so by showing the particular ways in which the act of quoting is central to the new art but also to the source from which it is derived. Through such dialogic relationship between past and present, Bal argues for a notion of “preposterous history”, where works that appear chronologically first operate as “after effect” caused by the images of subsequent artists (1999a: 1-27). A similar temporality, I contend, is at stake in Bakri’s film, *1948*.

19. Sincerity is itself subject to rhetorical analysis. See Van Alphen (2008, in press).

20. For relevant works on testimony in relation to conflicted discourse of memory, see Lévinas (1996: 97-107), Derrida (2000: 15-51 and 2002: 82-99), Hartman (2002: 67-84), Felman (1991: 39-81), and Sontag (2003: 104-26).

21. The Islamic reference of this relationship as “cousins” can be found in Surah Ibrahim (14: 39). See Yusuf Ali (2000: 200-206).

22. For a useful study on the mishaps of the representation of Palestinian history in Zionist narrative in Israeli cinema, see Shohat (1989). Shohat’s driving thesis is that Palestinians are often not mentioned in Israeli films, and if they are, then their history and their case for a homeland are not treated with understanding and

sympathy. In her analysis, shohat also points out how the exclusive *Jewish rythem of life* which Zionist cinema promotes serves to camouflage the deep socio-cultural discrepancies between the European (Ashkenazi), the Oriental (Sephardim), the Orthodox and the secular Jews in Israeli society today.

23. For relevant studies on the different ideological trends within Zionism, see Hertzberg ([1976] 1997) and Rose (2004). Also, for a useful philosophical discussion of political ideologies and the ways they affect formation of subjectivity and sense of self, see Althusser (2001: 107-25).

24. For a relevant interpretation of the use of birds in Palestinian folktales, see Muhawi and Kanaana (1989).

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## Response

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The remembrance of Palestinian *al-nakba*, or the catastrophe of 1948, which is celebrated in Israel as the Day of Independence, is clearly an issue of grave global geopolitical weight. Therefore, the many audiovisual texts that perform this remembering carry a particular political charge. Ihab Saloul's essay analyzes one such text, Mohammed Bakri's documentary film *1948*. I have not seen this film, but the essay has convinced me that it is an important text: it has a multi-layered narrative, a self-reflexive approach, and a rich aesthetic fabric, all of which makes the film able to perform the trauma of and for the Palestinian people. While I cannot judge the validity of the author's evidently sensitive and knowledgeable interpretation, it makes me yearn to go beyond textual analysis. I feel like I would like to be addressed by the essay not just as an academic who enjoys erudite textual analysis, but also as a global citizen who should understand the implications of 1948 better and care more about the injustice committed against the Palestinian people.

While the *al-nakba* at the heart of *1948* is unique to a particular historical trauma, the compulsion to process historical trauma and memory is not. In fact, the field of study that has grown up around the contemporary global obsession with memory and history testifies to what Andreas Huyssen calls a global crisis of memory.<sup>1</sup> The crisis is due to the simultaneous shortage and abundance of

memory available. History, which used to be the exclusive property of nation-states, is quickly multiplying into historical narratives and non-national memories. These are all becoming simultaneously accessible within giant electronic memory databases. The globalization of consumer culture tends to generate waves of nostalgia and renders past periods matters of style to perform in the present. The encroachment of such a vast, depthless present on a chronologically organized past is also fostered by the convergence of media technologies and content, whose economic lifeline is manufactured technological obsolescence. As the recent global revival of Holocaust memories has shown, in our era, historical and popular memory not only coexist but often become indistinguishable.

Saloul seems quite aware that the Palestinian national memory of the catastrophe has a more universal dimension, that it is not safe from the contemporary global crisis of remembering. His very emphasis on narrative performativity reveals a keen sense that national memory is subject to repetitive reenactment. Rather than adopting a truth-seeking mission, the essay approaches memories of the catastrophe from the theoretical platform of performative remembering. This approach is familiar to those who have seriously pondered the workings of collective memory and its relation to official national history. Theory is the lingua franca that allows us to see analogical pain in remembering and analogical difficulties to remember among different events and sites. In my own view of Eastern Europe, another

trauma-ridden region, the double need to tell collective trauma on the one hand and to allow for contesting, competing memories to surface on the other has permeated virtually every question raised about the post-Soviet transitions. Theory, particularly poststructuralist and postcolonial accounts of nationalism, have helped me make sense of this paradoxical double need. Homi Bhabha's essay "DissemiNation," for instance, tackles precisely the theoretical and political implications of the nation's narrative dimension, which continually and repeatedly splits between two functions: the pedagogical and the performative.<sup>2</sup> This duality is implied in Saloul's emphasis on performativity as well. Performativity allows for the play of contestation to prevent history from rigidifying into a singular national narrative with a mythical beginning, an authoritative past, and a glorious future set aside for the chosen people. However, to me the essay's exclusive choice of textual analysis and singular focus on a high cultural text veers towards a pedagogical closure and undercuts the work of performativity itself that Saloul attributes to *1948*.

The analysis is grounded in the assumption that this particular film tells the story of and thus represents a dispersed and largely diasporic collective. But there is a discrepancy between the collective political significance of the Palestinian historical trauma, which has lasting and global consequences in the present, and the author's literary and textual focus on a single text. When he refers to the "Palestinian subject" or "the viewer," I think about another one

of the many documentaries on the subject, video essayist Ursula Biemann's latest film, *X-Mission* (2008). In one particularly memorable scene of this film, a Palestinian woman who lives in a refugee camp lists her relatives along with the places where they live. As she speaks, this information also appears written out on the screen, surrounding her lonely figure as she labors away at the kitchen sink with her back to us. We gradually realize that her family is scattered across at least ten countries. This scene is just one of the many evocative illustrations of the claim Biemann makes throughout the film, also spelled out on her website: "Given the vital connections among the separated Palestinian populations, the video attempts to place the Palestinian refugee in the context of a global diaspora and considers post-national models of belonging which have emerged through the networked matrix of this widely dispersed community." ([http://www.geobodies.org/01\\_art\\_and\\_videos/2008\\_x-mission/](http://www.geobodies.org/01_art_and_videos/2008_x-mission/)).

Biemann's representation of Palestinians as geographically dispersed, diasporic, multi-generational groups problematizes the "Palestinian subject" that emerges from Saloul's interpretation of *1948*. The national subject of the essay is mirrored in the assumption of a rather monolithic viewing subject, "the viewer," who is expected to engage with the text in a highly predictable way every time and place.

But there is another, somewhat overshadowed possibility implied in Saloul's interpretation of the film: Remembering is not only performative but

also relational. Jews and Palestinians are “cousins,” who are both drowning in a sea of conflict. This, to me, is one of the most productive claims of the film as well as of the analysis itself – a claim that could and should undermine the author’s very assumptions about national representation and viewership. It also raises the question what kind of position the author himself occupies in this web of relationality. What is his own viewing and analyzing position in relation to *al-nakba* and subsequent histories? The essay demonstrates well that theory is a useful tool of intercultural translation. However, theory can also fold upon itself and become a shield. To evoke Bhabha again, I see the essay’s commitment to theory, but I long for a more committed theory.<sup>3</sup>

### **Notes**

1. Huyssen, Andreas. 2000. “Present Pasts: Media, Politics, Amnesia.” *Public Culture* 12: 21-38.
2. Bhabha, Homi K. 1994. “DissemiNation: Time, Narrative and the Margins of the Modern Nation.” In *The Location of Culture*, by Bhabha, pp. 139-170. New York: Routledge.
3. Bhabha, Homi K. 1994. “The Commitment to Theory.” In *The Location of Culture*, by Bhabha, pp. 19-39. New York: Routledge.

**“Where was I?”:  
Personal Experience Narrative,  
Crystallization and Some  
Thoughts on Tradition  
Memory**

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Several years ago, I was rather surprised when one of my daughter’s friend’s parents asked me if I could help her with brain surgery in a few weeks’ time. She assured me that she was, in fact, a medical doctor and a practicing surgeon and that the request was sincere. We would not be performing amateur neurosurgery on an unsuspecting passer-by as part of a bizarre Southern Californian cult ritual. Rather, she would be trying to help a young woman regain her health by excising a remarkably aggressive tumor lodged deep in her brain. I indicated that two weeks might not be enough time for me to learn how to perform surgery, particularly something as delicate as neurosurgery, as opposed to something coarser, say an appendectomy or a simple amputation. I also reminded her that my doctor title was strictly related to philosophy: “Unless your patient is suffering from the effects of repeated attempts at deconstructing literary texts,” I said, “or an inexplicable desire to perform Finnish epic songs while strumming a *kantele*, I doubt that I can be of much

use.” But my “colleague” persisted, and explained that she needed me more for my Danish language skills than any alleged ability to decode literary texts or analyze traditional expressions. Having only encountered one other situation where I was sought out for my ability to speak Danish (that involving Kelsey Grammar, a Snickers bar, and a large multinational telecommunications firm), I acquiesced. This opportunity also allowed me to enter something on my shared university calendar that, if encountered by nosy legislators, might finally justify my employment.

The surgery was relatively straightforward from my perspective. The cranium had already been removed by the time I arrived in the operating theater, and no one asked me to close at the end. My task was simple: I was to speak Danish with the very conscious patient, making sure that she recognized pictures on flash cards, could maintain as coherent a conversation as possible while someone rooted about in her brain, and that she did not begin to speak nonsense or make strange noises. The patient was a young woman whose first language was Danish but who had learned English at such an early age that she was considered to be a “true” bilingual. The goal, as my colleague put it, was to avoid “cutting out” her Danish; they had “mapped” her language centers but, because she was bilingual, the fear was that her Danish language did not map to the same area as her English. The neurologist explained that language for this patient could have more than the one center that is common in most monolingual patients. By applying

electric currents to various parts of the brain while the patient spoke, my colleague could check the preexisting map and avoid paths toward the lesion that would disrupt possibly fragile language networks. The surgery was a success, the lesion was removed, and, the next day, I had a wrap up conversation with the sedated but grateful patient. Her Danish was fine. My colleague had said she was worried about the odd sounds coming from the woman during surgery, but I assured her that it was standard Danish.

While the patient's linguistic capacities remained intact, the experience brought home to me the very physicality of language and, by extension, memory. Often, in the humanities, we conceive of human expression—language and the expressions that are built around language—in ways that are quite divorced from this physicality. But my experiences during this surgery made it quite clear—as clear as it could possibly be—that language and memory (and, by extension, learning) are, among other things, connected to physiologic structures and the result of neurobiological processes. The pre-surgical preparations and the surgery itself also made absolutely explicit that no two brains are alike (Schumann 2004). Not only does each individual have a brain that has been shaped by their genetic inheritance, but that brain has been further shaped by (and is constantly being shaped by) environmental factors—either inputs through the senses or very real physical changes caused by disease, injury or, in this case, deliberate intervention (Schumann, Crowell, et al. 2004). Several weeks later, at a so-

cial gathering, I met my colleague and her husband—also a neurosurgeon—and I began to ask questions about the implications of the physiological structure of the brain and the neurobiological processes linked to language, learning, and memory that might help us understand traditional expression in ways other than those prevalent in the academy. Since I was so flabbergasted by the idea that language exists discretely in a section of the brain so readily identifiable, I wondered if tradition too might be linked to special mechanisms—or even specific sites—in the brain that differentiate tradition from other forms of memory.

In short, the surgery sparked my interest in the neurophysiologic processes of tradition and touched off a series of questions that I will attempt to address, however inadequately, in this short essay. Is there such a thing as “tradition memory”? Do traditions present in neurological terms differently than other types of memory? Does the process of expressing traditions verbally present in a neurologically different manner than what cognitive psychologists label “normal speech”? Is there a neurobiological process behind Hymes's (1975) breakthrough into performance? Can an appreciation of neurobiological processes also help explain the long apprenticeship and subsequent mastery of epic tradition among the singers encountered by Milman Parry and Albert Lord (Lord 1964)? Does one learn and process tradition as language and, if so, is it more akin to native language acquisition or second language acquisition? Or does one learn and process tradition as lived experi-

ence? How does one transform lived experience into traditional expression? To what degree is tradition production—acquisition, storage, and, most importantly, retrieval—automated compared to natural native language or other habitual skills? Or is it not an automatic process at all? Is it an automatic process for some people and not an automatic process for others? In other words, to what degree is tradition conditioned by declarative memory and to what extent is it subsumed by procedural memory? Similarly, why are some people so attracted to aspects of a tradition (active participants) that they master it and others do not (von Sydow 1948)? What accounts for the varying levels of skill and attraction that one finds in any community in regards to all of the community’s traditions? Speaking more basically, to what extent is tradition conditioned by neurobiology and genetic inheritance, and to what extent is it conditioned by environment? This essay is intended to begin asking these questions about tradition in a most preliminary fashion while appealing to theories of memory, learning, and forgetting. The tentative suggestions put forward here—and I stress tentative—might help us widen our ability to understand how the dialectic tension between individual and tradition that is the fundamental basis for folklore functions not only in society but, quite physically, in individuals who make up those societies (Chesnutt 1999).

Before I speculate briefly on these questions in the context of a small set of folkloric data (a chain transmission of the legend “The Hook” and a net-

work transmission of “The Fifty Dollar Porsche” both by a group of UCLA undergraduates), it seems prudent to provide an overview of current models of memory in the brain and to describe, however briefly, some of the main approaches to memory and tradition. I will conclude with a short overview of Multiple Trace Theory (MTT), a theory that has some significant advantages over the Standard Theory of memory consolidation in the context of understanding variation and stability in tradition, and can perhaps provide some more insight into those small experimental data sets. The two small data sets have significant constraints as suitable test data, and it may well be possible to design more rigorous experiments to test these hypotheses in the future.

Questions of variation and stability in tradition have been quite vexing ones for folklorists, at the same time as those two features have also helped define the bounds of the field itself. Early folklorists often neglected to pay attention to the actual individual tradition participants, positing a superorganic view of tradition that was very far from a view of tradition that could incorporate considerations of individual brain structure and function (Krohn 1926). Even Walter Anderson’s (1923) classic theory of “self correction”—a notion that a story would be brought back into line with its traditional form by other tradition participants because of repeated telling of the story and repeated hearings of the story through time—suggests that stories have a life of their own. In its best articulation the “law of self correction” is related to questions of memory and

reinforcement—a person who has heard and remembered a story multiple times and from multiple sources is likely to reject external idiosyncrasies in favor of his or her own memories. More recent studies of individual repertoires and world view, such as those of Pentikäinen (1978), Siikala (1990), Kaivola-Bregenhøj (1996), Dégh (1989; 1995), and Palkó and Dégh (1995), as well as my own study of nineteenth-century Danish storytellers (Tangherlini 1994a), place far more emphasis on the individual and the complex societies in which he or she lives and participates in traditional practices. Yet, in all of these studies, there is no real discussion of why individuals might have different repertoires. Generally, these studies simply offer the observation that these differences exist and reflect an aspect of an individual's world view (Pentikäinen 1978).

A decade or so ago, David Rubin (1995), in his *Memory in Oral Tradition*, attempted to bring the perspectives of a cognitive psychologist to bear on a narrow range of oral traditional genres. In his study, he concentrated on rhymed or sung (or rhymed and sung) traditions, and attempted to align findings from folklore theory—particularly Parry and Lord's Oral-Formulaic Theory—with the then current theories about remembering and forgetting. He proposed early on in his study that learning traditional expression—particularly genres such as counting out rhymes, ballad singing, and epic singing—is equivalent to learning one's native language, stating, "genres of oral traditions can be considered as poetic languages, or overlay systems, or rule bound registers of speech.

Second, learning such poetic languages is similar in many ways to learning first languages" and offered five points to support this hypothesis, including the important—yet potentially false—observation that "the process of learning and what is learned are not available to introspection" (136). In this context, "introspection" means that an individual is not only aware that he or she is learning but is also aware of what, and how, he or she is learning. Rubin opined that, while "Memory is often considered as a storehouse...for oral traditions a better metaphor is that of a well-practiced skill dependent on extensive experience" (Rubin 1995, 146). This latter observation proposes that tradition is largely related to automatic processes of nondeclarative, procedural memory, a position that is somewhat extreme (Rubin 1995, 136). Not all traditional performance is automatic, and a great deal of oral tradition is available to introspection, particularly for the most competent and active participants in that tradition.

The underlying theoretical orientation of Rubin's (1995) approach to aspects of stability and variation is described as "cue-item discriminability." This position holds that recall [of oral traditions] starts with the first word of the song and proceeds in a linear fashion. Words sung are cues for words yet to be sung. If words are to be recalled, they must be discriminated from other words in memory. The general constraints of the genre and piece, especially rhythm, act as cues from the start, with the singing filling in other cues as it progresses...This process, after the initial, often conscious decision to sing a

song has been made, can go on without conscious intervention, using what has been called implicit (*nondeclarative*) or indirect memory. The serial-recall method, however, means that knowledge in oral traditions is not routinely accessed without the cues provided by a running start and often cannot be accessed without them. (192)

Thus, the performance of a traditional expression, once begun, proceeds automatically, with little recourse to introspection. Rubin, of course, has overstated the case for sung tradition in his emphasis on the “running start.” Although many tradition participants often need a “running start” to access certain expressions, others—those that Bengt Holbek (1987) characterizes as the “craftsmen” of tradition—do not.

The example that Rubin offers of the folk singer who needs to wait for the chorus to come around again before he can sing it is so recognizably incorrect for “craftsmen” of a tradition that the folk singer Arlo Guthrie (1967) includes a humorous gloss on it in his well-known live rendition of “Alice’s Restaurant.” In that song he addresses his audience, saying, “So we’ll wait for it to come around on the guitar here and sing it when it does. Here it comes...” In response, the audience laughs, acknowledging the unlikely premise that Guthrie needs this type of cue to sing the refrain even though they might well need that type of cue. While it is probably true that, for most tradition participants, this type of cue-item discriminability is necessary for successful recall of a traditional expression, for the most active and competent tradition participants,

access to any part of the expression is far less dependent on cueing. Studies of singers of epic, such as those by Lord, confirm the ability of expert singers to begin and end singing in multiple points in the epic, and to modify their singing quite dramatically to respond to the exigencies of the immediate performance context (Lord, Mitchell, et al. 2000). Of course, on the opposite extreme, the least active tradition participants may not be able to produce a recognizable variant of a traditional expression irrespective of the number of cues they are given.

Rubin’s theory also does little to explain features of non-sung, non-rhythmic tradition, since many of the cues to which he refers are dependent on formal features of rhyme or meter. Rubin presents memory essentially as a mysterious, black-box phenomenon and does not explore the actual processes by which memories are consolidated, stored, and activated. A more contemporary model of memory might help explain the “running start” that he situates as a fundamental component of traditional recall and, at the same time, explain in a more nuanced manner how it is that the “craftsmen” of tradition—the most expert of active tradition participants—might be able to eliminate the need for the “running start.” Such a model might also explain how processes that for some are “automatic,” and not available for introspection or other types of modification, are much more easily accessible to other, more active, tradition participants, both for introspection, innovation, improvisation, and reformulation.

For most tradition participants, tra-



ditional expressions—their memory, their recall and to a certain extent, their performance—are not purely automatic processes as Rubin implies. Years of ethnographic and folkloric research has revealed that individuals’ participation in tradition is best defined on a scale in relation to the least active to the most active participants in a tradition (fig. 1). It is likely that the automatic processes Rubin describes are a fitting characterization of the manner in which tradition participants who cluster toward the middle of that spectrum remember and perform tradition. For other tradition participants, cue-item discriminability is no longer as necessary—for example in the case of tradition participants who have mastered the particular expressive form—or not functional—for example in the case of individuals who have yet to learn or participate in the tradition enough to be able to remember and reproduce expressions (fig. 1).

example above—the song (in this case) is not only readily available for introspection but also for deliberate modification (which is different from accidental modification that one would find at the other end of the spectrum). That is not to say that cue-item discriminability does not play some role in their recall; rather, these “craftsmen” have many more pathways to begin or restart an expression and many more pathways to connect or move between traditional expressions. In contrast, those just learning a tradition have not consolidated the formal features or content to make the type of automatic recall described by Rubin possible. Given the range of variation one encounters in traditional expressive performances, from the performances of the highly competent to the borderline incompetent, there must also be varying degrees of physical connections in the minds of these people for any given expression to explicit or de-

**Fig. 1** Declarative memory.



In this illustration, the cue-item discriminability Rubin describes is only functional for those tradition participants who are active in the tradition, yet not masters of it. For masters of a tradition—such as Arlo Guthrie in the

If we are to advance our understanding of how tradition functions on the individual level, we must move beyond the “black box” approach to learning and memory that is implicit in most studies of tradition, and incorporate in

our studies—at least on some level—a consideration of both the physiology and the neurobiology of memory and learning. Schumann points out that “Psychological theory almost universally assumes that across individuals brain structure is homogeneous. Thus, most psychological research on learning proceeds on the notion that all brains are the same...from the perspective of neurobiology, brains are as different as faces” (Schumann, Crowell, et al. 2004, 2). This awareness, that different people learn and remember not only different things but also do so differently may not tell us too much about why traditions persist, but it may help us to understand how traditions persist.

The question of why traditions persist might be subsumed under the neurobiology of motivation and aversion—rewards and value structures can be conditioned by the group and result in measurable changes in neurobiology. These changes result in people seeking out or rejecting environments that, in turn, lead both to learning and to underlying changes in the individual’s brain structure. In a continuous feedback loop, these changes again strengthen the motivation and aversion circuits. What Schumann points out for the context of learning can be extended to learning traditions:

The first interaction involves passive effects, in which the parents, whose genes the child inherits, provide the major environmental input to the child. In the second kind of interaction, the individual chooses and/or creates environments that are compatible with his or her talents. The third way genotype in-

teracts with the environment is through the evocation of responses from the environment. Evocative effects are those that an individual elicits from others. (Schumann, Crowell, et al. 2004, 16)

As a result, “interindividual variations are not seen as exceptions or noise, as in traditional psychology, but rather they are considered as a universal basis on which theories of human cognition must be built” (Schumann, Crowell, et al. 2004, 18). These considerations move us significantly away from an approach that considers folklore simply as behavior (Georges and Jones 1995). Instead, it allows us to explore folklore as part of a complex interaction between the individual and his or her physical and cultural environment as well as the individuated processes and effects related to learning and memory.

Memory is generally broken into two main categories: short-term or working memory, and long-term memory. Schumann notes, “Working memory has traditionally been defined as memory that is held for short periods of time (less than 20 seconds) in order to achieve success at a task...Long term memories are those lasting for extended periods of time, from days, to weeks or for as long as months or years” (Schumann, Crowell, et al. 2004, 4-5). As implied earlier, long-term memory is, in turn, broken into two main categories: declarative or explicit memory and nondeclarative or implicit memory. Again, from Schumann’s summary of a memory taxonomy, one learns that “declarative memories are memories for facts and events, and nondeclarative memories are memories for habits, motor and

perceptual skills, and emotional learning” (Schumann, Crowell, et al. 2004, 5). Each of these two main sets of long-term memory is further broken down into subsets. The subsets of declarative memory are semantic memory and episodic memory. The subsets of nondeclarative memory are conditioning, priming, and procedural memory. It is the last subcategories of each main category of long-term memory—episodic memory and procedural memory—that are of greatest interest to students of tradition. The interaction between these two types of memory—and indeed a particular type of interaction between these two—may well be the locus of what could be called “tradition memory.”

Declarative memory—including the important subset of episodic memory that is implicated in storytelling and traditional expression in general—is centered in the hippocampus. What is interesting is that, once stored, declarative memories are not static. Rather, “memories that have been previously stored have already modified the brain in such a way as to affect the relative ease with which new memories can be formed. In other words, learning not only results in memory but is itself the result of memory... at the cellular level, encoding, storage and retrieval are represented as modifications in the strength of synaptic connections that are constantly being altered as the result of new interactions with our environment” (Schumann, Crowell, et al. 2004, 76). Adding to this “dynamic nature” of long-term, declarative memory that once was considered to be remarkably stable, is the recent discovery that “episodic memories may

maintain traces in the hippocampus for an indefinite period,” a significant departure from “the traditional model, articulated by Squire (Squire, Knowlton, & Musen 1993), [that] suggests that consolidated memories are eventually stored in cortical circuits that are independent of the hippocampus” (Schumann, Crowell, et al. 2004, 95). This dynamic view of declarative memory is an important shift in understanding the physiology of memory and recall and has significant implications for an understanding of stability and variation. Similarly, the interaction between procedural memory and declarative memory as part of the neurobiology of memory consolidation should inform this understanding.

There are two main theories about the consolidation of long-term memories and the manner in which those memories are recalled. Both of these models rely on the relationship between declarative memory and nondeclarative memory. The first, known simply as the Standard Theory of memory consolidation, was first proposed by Müller and Pilzecker (1900). This theory suggests that memory consolidation is time dependent—the memories are first formed in the hippocampus and transferred over time to the neocortex. The traces between the hippocampus and the precortical regions eventually weaken and disappear, while the connections within the neocortex strengthen through repeated recall, consequently, the memory becomes both stable and less susceptible to disruption or damage in its stable state in the precortical regions. The retrieval of these memories relies on a single—

or a small number of—indexical links. This type of indexing explains the “running start,” or cue-item discriminability, emphasized by Rubin, as well as his emphasis on the seeming stability—and automaticization—of traditional expression.

This Standard Theory has been supplanted in recent years by Multiple Trace Theory (MTT). Based on evidence that older consolidated memories can, in fact, be subject to disruption of a kind nearly precluded by the Standard Theory, MTT proposes that the connection between the hippocampus and the neocortex do not dissipate, but rather are continuously reinforced, and new connections from the hippocampus to the neocortex indexing the same memory—and other related memories—are constantly being formed. This dynamic model for long-term memory consolidation aligns better with observations in both stability and variation in tradition (Tangherlini 2003) and also provides a mechanism that contests the notion of serial recall—a hypothesis that is easily falsified by both fieldwork and archival data.

One of the key findings of Nadel and Moscovitch who first proposed MTT in 1997 is summarized by Nancy Jones as follows:

As memories are retrieved and rehearsed, multiple traces are made in the hippocampus... These traces are indexed to locations in the neocortex. Each time a new set of hippocampal traces is made they are also indexed to the cortex. Thus, each time a memory is rehearsed, previously linked cortical regions would be linked to another set of traces. Addition-

ally, as more associations are made, new cortical regions could be added to the total set of traces for the given memory. (Schumann, Crowell, et al. 2004, 117)

Linking of this type allows for the possibility of stories growing and shrinking depending both on performance context and the narrator’s own development as a person. At the same time as it helps explain elasticity, it also helps explain aspects of stability over time—the “underlying” memory persists, it just has multiple indices in the hippocampus that form, are reinforced, or disappear over time.

A key feature of MTT that differentiates it from Standard Theory is the introduction of the possibility of disruption of older, consolidated memories. In MTT it is, “not only temporal duration but also the state of the memory (i.e., whether it has been activated or not) that can affect the stability of the memory” (Schumann, Crowell, et al. 2004, 120). This observation helps explain, for example, the wide range of variation one finds between variants of a story told by an active participant—whose memories might be frequently activated, and thus show both a high degree of stability, and a significant amount of indexicality between the hippocampus and the neocortex, thereby allowing for multiple “ins” to the storytelling—and a passive tradition participant whose memory of that same story may have been disrupted either by other environmental inputs, or by the lack of frequent activation, or both. At best, this passive tradition participant would need the “running start” to activate the initial index to the disrupted and weakly linked

memory in the neocortex. Indeed, he or she may need multiple running starts or additional prompting to access these memories—a phenomenon attested to by many fieldworkers.

The fragility of long-term memories—including long-term, episodic memories—is addressed well by MTT. In various studies such as those by Loftus, Miller, and Burns (1978) episodic memories for events were shown to be alterable by post-event information—a situation that mimics well the impact that tradition can have on individuals in the creation of personal experience narratives. I would argue that the paramedics with whom I worked often had their episodic memories for events “interrupted” by post-event information, often provided during the initial telling of the newly forming personal experience narrative (Tangherlini 1998). These “interruptions” were, of course, part of the tradition itself, and helped the medic consolidate the experiences of the events into a narrative episodic memory that conformed to the expectations of the group yet maintained the unique aspects of the discrete event (Tangherlini 1998; 2000).

The connection between episodic memory and procedural memory is equally important in understanding the neurobiology of tradition. Rubin (1995) rightfully points out that certain aspects of traditional performance seem almost automatic. This observation has been more formally expressed by Hymes (1975) in his consideration of “break-through into performance,” an observation that has also conditioned an entire generation of folklorists to focus almost

exclusively on aspects of performance. Clearly, there is a degree of nondeclarative—primarily procedural—memory that informs the performance of tradition which, in turn, is based largely on the consolidation and recall of declarative, episodic memories. Jones notes that “Ullman et al (1997) presents a dual model for language in which they posit that the lexicon is processed by the declarative memory system and grammar is processed by the procedural memory system” (Schumann, Crowell, et al. 2004, 124). By analogy, one might suggest that the episodic memory of events or learned events (e.g., narratives) are processed by declarative memory and the performance of those memories—including aspects of genre—are processed by the procedural memory system. Lee notes that “one acquires...[procedural] memory...through the repeated execution of a task...[it] is used for example when one learns how to play a musical instrument, how to dance, how to play a sport, or how to speak native language,” and to this list one could add how to tell a story, sing an epic, perform a jump rope rhyme and so on (Schumann, Crowell, et al. 2004, 44). The repeated execution of the task may take the form of both listening and performing; this learning process consequently engages both declarative and nondeclarative memory. In recall, the more stable nondeclarative memories structure the performance, while the more easily disrupted—yet potentially quite stable—declarative, episodic memories provide the content for the performance. Ultimately this approach allows for a holistic understanding of the neurobiology of tradition, al-

lowing for both variation and stability not only in the memory of individuals but also in traditional performances across individuals within a tradition group.

A chain transmission of a single story stands as an apt illustration of the potential for instability in tradition, particularly when members of the chain may be either inactive tradition participants, or completely unaware of the tradition (Anderson 1951). Unlike a regular tradition group, a chain transmission does not allow for the repeated execution of the task—neither telling nor listening. As a result, the memories created during the chain are likely to be more fragile and less likely to reflect the stability that is a hallmark of tradition. In a brief experiment, I asked twelve students in a folklore class to tell, in chain fashion, a version of “The Hook.” I told the story to the first person in the chain as follows:

C<sub>0</sub>: I’m going to tell you a story called “The Hook.” Now this happened when I was a kid and I grew up in central Massachusetts in Worcester and just outside of Worcester. But I remember in high school, this happened to a couple of, of friends of mine. They had gone to a party and after the party they drove out to a lake that everybody would go to after parties, particularly couples, its called Lake Chagoggagogchagogg-agogch-abunagungamog. And it was outside of Worcester, and it was called Lake Webster. They had parked by the lake and they were sitting there discussing homework. They had the radio on, a little Meatloaf song was playing and they were really getting into

their discussion. Very hot and heavy in this discussion. He was very excited, they were going to get to a part of the homework, that he really thought was going to be great, but just then on the radio, a voice broke in and said that an inmate had escaped from Worcester State hospital which was the insane asylum in Worcester. And the way that you could recognize that this was the escaped inmate was that instead of a right hand, he had a hook, and so if you saw this man wandering about you should be very careful because what he liked to do, he liked to slash people with this hook that he had, and so the girl started getting very agitated, and said we have to go home, we have to go home, and he said, “No, no, no, we were just getting to the best part.” And she said, “No, no, no, I can’t stay out here, its too deserted out here, by the lake and I insist, you have to go home.” So finally after some back and forth, the boyfriend got very angry at her, and started up the car, and peeled out of the parking lot. Just you know burned a whole lot of rubber and headed off home to Worcester. And they didn’t talk the whole way home. But finally they go to her house and sort of as a gesture of chivalry, he decided to get out of the car, sort of as, you know, an ironic gesture, to show how much of a gentleman he was, he pulls up to the front of her house, and he gets out of the car, and walks around the car to open her door, and there, on the car handle is the bloody hook. So that’s the story.

Even though students who self-identified as eager storytellers were deliberately chosen to be the early links in the chain, after two links, the story had al-

ready begun to change significantly. Details fell away, and, more importantly, the motivation of the two young lovers to visit the lake all but disappeared:

C<sub>3</sub>: Basically, there's this guy and he's in college and in Worcester, Boston, oh no, near Boston, Worcester? And he really likes this girl, and him and this girl they and park somewhere, in front of Lake Webster, which also has this really long complicated Indian name, but it's hard to pronounce, like Chamackamunga or something like that. And so, I don't remember it, and uh, anyway, so they're like sitting in the car and having this crazy conversation like talking about something that happened in class the other day and he's like really into it and everything like that, and I think there's some song from a band on the radio who they both like, or whatever, I don't remember the band name. I don't know who the band name is. Um, and all of a sudden, there's this interruption on the radio of this like this emergency announcement that there's crazed, deranged escaped mental patient in the area, right in the area they were in, and you know anyone in this area should leave immediately, and the only way you can identify this guy is he has a hook for his right hand I believe. And anyway the girl's like freaking out, like let's get outta here, let's get outta here, and so finally he's like OK we'll leave and they got to wherever they were going and cause he was a gentleman he got out of the car and he like walked around the car to go open the door for her to let her out and when he went to her door to go let her out, all he saw on the door handle was a bloody hook. And that's all I remember. That's it.

Despite the loss of various important features, the bounded phrases that define the underlying narrative structure are still in order, and the general notion of threat and its resolution have been maintained (see fig. 3 below). The last two links in the chain were, in contrast, reluctant storytellers at best, and the story quickly lost any coherence once it reached these students:

C<sub>11</sub>: This was in Massachusetts somewhere. And um so there were these college kids and I guess they wanted to just go away for the weekend, so they were going to this lake kind of far away, they'd been driving all day and so while they were driving they, uh, someone on the radio came on, and they were like warning everyone, because this like insane murderer had escaped from like the mental hospital and it was just in that area where they were, so they uh, they decided that uh they should probably like turn around and go home. And when they came home there was a hook on the door of the car. And that's it.

C<sub>12</sub>: OK. Well there's some college students who are from Massachusetts and they decided to go to a lake, and then they went to the lake. And they left their car I guess to go onto the lake for some reason. When they came back there was a hook on the car and they were very scared.

Some simple metrics can help reveal the rapid changes in length and word choice. Below is a table tabulating the most frequent verbs and nouns in the story, as well as a tabulation of total word tokens and word types for each narrative (fig. 2):

**Fig 2.**

<b>Story/Noun</b>	<b>C<sub>0</sub></b>	<b>C<sub>3</sub></b>	<b>C<sub>11</sub></b>	<b>C<sub>12</sub></b>
Worcester	6	(2)	(0)	(0)
car	5	3	1	2
home	5	(1)	2	(0)
lake	5	(1)	1	3
hook	4	(2)	1	1
area	(0)	3	1	(0)
band	(0)	3	(0)	(0)
door	(1)	3	1	(0)
girl	(1)	3	(0)	(0)
<b>Story/Verb</b>	<b>C0</b>	<b>C3</b>	<b>C11</b>	<b>C12</b>
was	10	2	3	1
had / has	6	2	1	(0)
go	5	2	2	2
said	4	(0)	(0)	(0)
were	4	2	5	1
called	3	(0)	(0)	(0)
remember	(1)	3	(0)	(0)
get	(2)	2	(0)	(0)
know	(2)	2	(0)	(0)
came	(0)	(0)	2	(0)
drive	(0)	(0)	2	(0)
<b>Total word types</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Total word tokens</b>	<b>428</b>	<b>306</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>57</b>

Perhaps most striking is the rapid decrease in both word tokens and overall vocabulary. While the verb list shows little of interest, except confirming the past tense nature of the narration, the noun list does highlight some interest-

ing phenomena. Most obvious is the rapid disappearance of place-name referents—the story was deliberately set in a landscape that few of the students had experience with and, consequently, the very specific and unusual place refer-



ents disappeared almost immediately, to be replaced initially by more generalized place referents, and later to drop out altogether. Place referents in the network story were far more persistent (see below), both because they were well-known to the students, and because the students heard and performed the story numerous times, helping to fix the story-place link in their memories.

Another fairly straight forward comparison method between these stories is the isolation of what Labov and Waletzky (1967) term “bounded phrases.” Below is a small table that attempts to align the bounded phrases from each of the four variants in the order in which they appear in the stories. The last variant is particularly challenging, as the narrative bears little resemblance to the original narrative (fig. 3):

Fig. 3

C0	C3	C11	C12
friends of mine... had gone to a party			
after the party they drove out to a lake	[this college guy] and this girl... park... in front of Lake Webster	these college kids... wanted to just go away for the weekend	some college students... decided to go to a lake
they were sitting there discussing homework	they're... sitting in the car and having this... conversation	they were going to this lake	then they went to the lake
on the radio, a voice broke in	there's this interruption on the radio... this emergency announcement	someone on the radio came on... warning everyone	
an inmate had escaped from Worcester State hospital	there's [a] crazed, deranged escaped mental patient in the area	[an] insane murderer had escaped from... the mental hospital	
the girl started getting very agitated	the girl's... freaking out		
after some back and forth, the boyfriend got very angry at her	so finally he's like OK we'll leave	they decided that... they should probably... turn around	

[he] started up the car, and peeled out of the parking lot			
			they left their car... to go onto the lake
finally they go to her house	they got to wherever they were going	when they came home	they came back

Although the underlying structure – and the order of bounded phrases – remains constant across the variants, the degree of detail between each telling drops considerably. Of particular note is the complete disappearance of the complicating action of the story (the escape of the insane man, identifiable by his hook) in C<sub>12</sub> (Labov and Waletzky 1967). Clearly, for the chain story, the lack of any reinforcement mechanisms, coupled with the lack of cultural relevance for the students, doomed the story to significant instability and, ultimately, a degree of incoherence that would clearly prevent further telling of this story.

Anderson (1951), in his classic storytelling experiments, recognized the importance of network transmission – a situation that more closely resembles an active tradition community in which stories are told and retold by numerous storytellers. As an extension of my class’s chain experiment, we decided to develop a “seeded network” experiment in the following quarter, where I provided a story to two members of the network and then enforced a network transmission over the course of nine weeks with eight participants (fig. 4).

Students were asked to retell the story each time as best as they could remember it. Transcripts of the first telling and the last (fourth) telling of the story by a single individual provide an interesting comparison:

(A<sub>1</sub>) So this guy moves out to Los Angeles to UCLA from the East Coast and he’s never been out here before and he doesn’t have a car and he realizes that he’ll need a car to get around because it’s Los Angeles and public transportation just really stinks here. So he’s looking through the paper and sees this listing that says brand new Porsche used for sale, for sale for 50 bucks and he knows that this is a typo but (...) “Ah, what the hell, I’ll call up anyways.” So he calls the number and “Oh, you’re calling about the car, fantastic, um, come on out for a test drive,” and he says, “Oh, sure.” So, you know, this is a once in a life time opportunity to drive a Porsche so he goes out to the address, this big estate in Beverly Hills, right 90210, right in the driveway is this glowing, brand new, red Porsche. And he can’t believe how beautiful the car is and wishes he could have it, but he knows it’s out of his price range. He figures, you know, I’d love to drive it anyway

Fig. 4

Week	Storyteller	Audience
1	A B	C and E D and F
2	C D	E and G F and H
3	E F A B	G and C H and D H and D G and C
4	G H C D	F and D B and C F and H E and G
5	E F G H	A and D B and C E and H F and A
6	A C G F	B and F D C and A A
7	B D E H	A and E B F and H D and G
8	E F C D	B E and G A and B A and C
9	A B G H	G H B E

so he knocks on the door. "Oh great, you're here about the car, let me show it to you, let me show it to you." He walks around, she shows him all the features, the interior design, the beautiful leather interior. "Well, do you want to take it for a spin?" So they hop in, he's driving around, driving for hours up and down the Coast Highway, and he just loves it. He knows the car is getting low on gas so he returns. He says, "Well, look, you know, it looks like I've used up all your gas, so I'll reimburse you for the gas but I, I really can't afford the car." And she says, "Can't afford it? But it's only 50 bucks! What do you mean you can't afford it?" "Well, gosh, I, I can afford that! Why are you selling it for so cheap?" And she said, "Oh, well, my husband left me for his secretary and I just got a wire from Barbados saying, 'Please sell the car and send me the money'."

(A<sub>4</sub>) This friend of a friend of mine moved out from the East Coast to discover that here in LA it's impossible to get around without a car. But he's kind of a starving student so he doesn't have a lot of money to afford to buy a car. So he's looking through the paper and he sees this listing for this brand new Porsche for 50 bucks and he's like, "Ah crap, it's definitely a typo but, you know, I gotta go, I gotta go test it out, you know, I gotta go." So he hops on the bus, heads out to the address and it turns out to be this big mansion in Beverly Hills. So, so he knocks on the door, he notices that there's this beautiful, red Porsche out front, he says, "Oh, god, I would love to have that car, but at least I'll get to sit in it, I'll get to see it." A woman comes to the door, "Oh, hey, great,

so you're here about the car, fantastic! Let me show it to you." So they walk out, looks at it, opens the door, smells the leather and gets in. "Hey, you want to take it for a spin?" Says, "Oh yeah, sure, that'd be great." So, you know, they drive around Beverly Hills for a while and they take it on PCH, driving around for hours and he notices he's kinda getting low on gas so he, "Ah, well, you know, it's been a long time and we're low on gas," and he starts to bring the car back. So they pull in and he's like, "You know, I, I'm sorry, I'll give you, I'll pay you back for the gas, but you know I just can't afford this car." And she's, "You can't afford it? What do you mean? It's only 50 bucks!" And he's like, "Holy crap! Oh, ok, here I got 50 bucks." And so she hands him the pink slip, and he's thinking, "OK, I gotta know now that I can ask her." "So why are you selling the car for 50 bucks?" She says, "Oh well, you, my husband ran off with his secretary for Barbados and he sent me an email the other day saying sell the car and send him the proceeds."

These two story variants reflect many of the aspects of crystallization that I identified in an earlier study of paramedic narrative (Tangherlini 2003).

Similarly, the first telling in the network and the last telling in the network by different storytellers reveal equally interesting aspects of stability and variation:

(B.) So the story is, ok, a guy moves to LA and sees an ad for a Porsche Carrera and it's for 50 bucks. But he thinks that the K got left off of the ad and he figures what the heck I'm test driving cars anyway and I have time

to kill. So he call this 310 area code and a woman answers and says to come and test drive. The address is in Beverly Hills 90210 zip code and, uh, he takes the bus to Wilshire and Rexford and walks to this big, old house. It's a huge mansion--it has a circular drive way and there's a Porsche Carrera, cherry, it's bright cherry red and (...) and he takes the car. Test drives it with the woman. Goes on Mulholland, she doesn't seem to mind his driving very fast and he drives for... he drives to PCH... has gone for an hour and then they're gone for two hours and then when it gets to the point where he's low on gas, then he goes back to Beverly Hills. He says at this point, "I wish I could afford this car," and the woman is astonished and says, "What do you mean, you can't afford 50 bucks?" and so, not to scotch the deal, without saying anything anymore he gives her 50 bucks and she gives him the pink slip. But he can't resist asking why she is selling the car for 50 bucks. And she says her husband ran away to the Caribbean with his secretary and told her to sell the car and send him the money.

(G<sub>4</sub>) So this is the story of a student who was from the East Coast and he comes to the West Coast and he's been told that, well, things are not like in New York, you cannot just hop into a bus or a metro here, unfortunately, you need a car. So he was looking in the newspaper for cars and he saw this ad for a Porsche for 50 bucks— he thought it was kind of odd, a Porsche at that price, but he said, "What the heck, why not give it a try?" and he called the person and see what's up. So he takes his bus, sorry, he takes his bike up to the Beverly Hills and

the address that corresponds to it is an absolutely gorgeous house. Very, very nice house, and in front of it there's this beautiful, red Porsche, the one that everybody dreams of. And then he goes up and there's this very nice lady who welcomes him and she offers him to take a spin. So of course they go and they go for a ride and it's the smoothest ride he guess he can have, it's just marvelous, he loves that and they drive for half an hour up to PCH and he's just in heaven, it's beautiful inside and then the gas is a little low, so he goes back towards the lady's address. And, um, at the time he has to take a decision to buy the car he says, "Well, I'm very sorry. I don't think I'll be able to pay for this car, I can't afford it." But the woman looks at him surprised, saying, "Are you mad? I mean, this is only 50 bucks! If you can't pay 50 bucks for a car..." and he doesn't ask more, just hands over a \$50 bill. She gives him the pink slip and later on, a few seconds later, he says, "Thank you very much for this but I'm curious to know why, uh,

this Porsche is so low in price." So the woman says, "Well my husband left last week with his secretary for Bermuda or those islands and he just sent a message, email or phone, saying, 'Sell the Porsche and send me the money'."

Not surprisingly, the network, with its multiple performances and multiple opportunities to hear the story – and thus reinforce the memory of the story – leads to a far greater degree of stability in the story. Again, the same short analytical illustrations as used in the chain story reveal a remarkable degree of stability across the network, a stability that aligns well with my study of crystallization in paramedic personal experience narrative (Tangherlini 2003). The word frequency table reveals not only a consistency within narrative repertoire (here narrator A), but across the network as well, both for word choice, total vocabulary, and length of narrative (measured in word tokens) (fig. 5):

Fig. 5

Story / Noun	A <sub>1</sub>	A <sub>4</sub>	B <sub>1</sub>	G <sub>4</sub>
Car	8	8	4	4
Gas	3	3	(1)	1
Porsche	3	2	2	5
Los Angeles	2	0	(0)	0
coast (PCH)	2	1	1	3
Interior	2	0	0	0
Bucks	2	4	4	2
Beverly Hills	(1)	2	2	1
Friend	0	2		0
woman/ lady	0	1	3	4

Ad	0	0	2	1
<b>Story / Verb</b>	<b>A<sub>1</sub></b>	<b>A<sub>4</sub></b>	<b>B<sub>1</sub></b>	<b>G<sub>4</sub></b>
know(s)	6	7	0	1
drive(s)/ driving	5	2	7	1
Afford	4	3	2	1
Says	4	3	4	3
Show	2	(1)	0	0
Notices	(0)	2	0	0
get(s)/ getting	2	4	1	0
go / goes	1	3	2	4
give(s)	0	1	2	2
take(s)	1	2	2	4
<b>Total word types</b>	163	170	136	178
<b>Total word tokens</b>	382	406	271	389

The stability within repertoire according to these criteria is particularly striking and obtains for all of the storytellers in the study.

A second comparison of bounded phrases is equally revealing. The align-

ment of phrases is much easier in this case than in the chain transmission. This stability can most likely be attributed to the reinforcement mechanisms of the network transmission of the story (fig. 6):

**Fig. 6**

A <sub>1</sub>	A <sub>4</sub>	B <sub>1</sub>	G <sub>4</sub>
this guy moves out to Los Angeles	friend of a friend of mine moved out from the East Coast	a guy moves to LA	student... comes to the West Coast
he realizes that he'll need a car to get around	discover[s] that ... it's impossible to get around without a car		he's been told that... you need a car

he's looking through the paper and sees this listing that says... Porsche... for sale	he's looking through the paper and he sees this listing for this brand new Porsche	sees an ad for a Porsche Carrera	he saw this ad for a Porsche
he calls the number		So he calls this 310 area code	he called the person
		a woman... says to come and test drive	
	So he hops on the bus	he takes the bus to Wilshire and Rexford	So he takes his bus, sorry, he takes his bike
he goes out to the address	heads out to the address	and walks to this big old house.	and the address
in the driveway is this glowing brand new red Porsche		it has a circular drive way and there's a Porsche Carrera	in front of it there's this beautiful red Porsche
he knocks on the door	so he knocks on the door		he goes up and there's this very nice lady who welcomes him
	he notices that there's this beautiful red Porsche out front		
she shows him all the features	So they walk out, [he] looks at [the car]		
they hop in, he's driving around... for hours	they drive around... for hours	Test drives it with the woman.	they go for a ride
the car is getting low on gas	he's kinda getting low on gas	he's low on gas	then the gas is a little low
so he returns	he starts to bring the car back	he goes back to Beverly Hills	he goes back towards the lady's address

He says, “... I really can’t afford the car.”	he’s like, “... I just can’t afford this car.”	He says... “I wish I could afford this car”	he says, “... I can’t afford it.”
She says, “Can’t afford it? ... it’s only 50 bucks?”	she’s, “You can’t afford it?... It’s only 50 bucks!”	the woman says, “What do you mean, you can’t afford 50 bucks?”	the woman [says] “Are you mad? I mean this is only 50 bucks!”
[He says] “I can afford that!”	he’s like, “... Oh, ok, here I got 50 bucks.”	he gives her 50 bucks	he... hands over a \$50 bill.
	she hands him the pink slip	she gives him the pink slip	She gives him the pink slip
Why are you selling it for so cheap?”	So why are you selling the car for 50 bucks?	But he can’t resist asking why she is selling the car for 50 bucks	he says, “... I’m curious to know why... this Porsche is so low in price.”
she said, “...my husband left me for his secretary	She says, “Oh well, you, my husband ran off with his secretary	she says her husband ran away to the Caribbean with his secretary	the woman says, “... my husband left last week with his secretary for Bermuda
and I just got a wire from Barbados saying please sell the car and send me the money.”	he sent me an email... saying sell the car and send him the proceeds.”	told her to sell the car and send him the money	he... sent a message... saying sell the Porsche and send me the money.

Although the word choice does vary (as noted in fig. 5 above), the overall structure of the story varies very little. Given this stability, with more retellings, it is likely that these storytellers would be able to pick up their stories at various points in the telling, without the need for a “running start.” The slight changes

in formulation both within and across repertoire suggest that the story is readily available to introspection during its retelling. Repeated exposure to the story of course leads to subtle changes in each telling, undermining the idea from the Standard Theory that, once consolidated, a memory is unlikely to be changed;



rather, here the environment of repeated telling and shifting information changes the underlying memory itself at the same time as it solidifies the pathways to that memory.

A clear limitation of these experimental observations is that they do not allow for an assessment of the ability of storytellers in the network to begin their story from points other than the beginning. Rather, the experiment simply confirms the widely-held notion that networks are better for maintaining stability of memory than chains. Although this begins to address the question of how people learn, store, remember and perform traditional expression, the premises of the Standard Theory could possibly account for these observations. Yet MTT provides a much better model for understanding the shifts within repertoire and across a network as hinted at in the above experimental data. It also does a much better job of accounting for change over time. The next step is to devise a network that allows for interruptions, yet requires the storytellers to continue their story with, or without, a running start. In such an experiment, one would probably need to split the storytellers into two groups. Group A would be allowed a running start and Group B would be asked to tell from where they believed they left off. If the discussion above concerning MTT and the “craftsmen of tradition” is correct, the experimental group would have to include several such “craftsmen”; as such, it might be difficult to find an adequate tradition group.

My brief experience as a neurosurgeon’s consultant obviously led me

down what I hope will be a fruitful path in understanding both the physiology and the neurobiology of tradition. Advances in neurobiology—and a move away from viewing the brain as a “black box”—now allow folklorists to consider the physiological structures and the biological processes that make traditional expression not only possible but guarantee that they will continue to be performed. Tradition, it turns out, is conditioned by processes of learning, memory consolidation, and memory recall. The recognition that every brain is different—both because of genetics and because of the dynamic impact of physical and social environment on the brain—fits well into a view of folklore as emerging from the dialectic tension between the individual and tradition. Understanding the neurobiology of learning and memory further clarifies the basis for stability and variation in tradition. MTT provides for a dynamism in long-term, declarative memory missing from the earlier Standard Theory of memory consolidation. Similarly, an understanding of the relationship between declarative and procedural memory explains the relationship between performance and text; to borrow from Alan Dundes (1964), there clearly is a neurobiological basis for texture, text and context. While it may be too early—or perhaps misleading or even wrong—to posit the notion of “tradition memory,” it seems quite clear that recent advances in understanding long-term declarative and nondeclarative memory also can help clarify intriguing phenomena with regard to the performance of traditional expressions that appear both during fieldwork and in the archive.

### Notes

1. I would like to thank the participants in my fall 2005 seminar on folklore theory and methods at the University of California, Berkeley for their comments on earlier drafts of this paper. I would also like to thank my colleague John Schumann for his guidance and patience as I began learning about models of memory. Also, I would like to thank attendees at the Western States Folklore Society Annual Meeting at UC Berkeley in spring 2005 and the members of the Wildcat Canyon Advanced Seminars in Folklore for their comments on earlier versions of this paper. Finally, I would like to thank Anthony Buccitelli for his incredible patience as I completed this essay.
2. In earlier work I have proposed a refinement of von Sydow's concept of “active” and “passive” tradition bearers that incorporates an appreciation of the participatory nature of tradition, labeling the two nodes of this axis of participation “active” and “passive” tradition participants (Tangherlini 1994b).
3. Building on the work of Siikela (1990) I explore an example of this type of “crystallization” elsewhere (Tangherlini 2003). See also Anderson (1951) and Hiimäe and Krikmann (1992).
4. For an example of one such occurrence of disrupted storytelling see the opening sequence of “Talking Trauma” (Tangherlini 1994).
5. For a discussion of a similar experiment see Wehse (2005). Some of the earliest experiments in the reproduction of folk narrative were conducted by F.C. Bartlett at Cambridge in the early part of the twentieth century (Bartlett 1920).
6. I suspect that the paramedics with whom I worked might be an excellent group for this type of study (Tangherlini 1994b; 1998; 2000; 2003).

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## Responses

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### **Mix levels of analysis with care; genres not at all.**

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From my reading, Tangherlini's chapter gets most things right. However, the chapter has two fundamental problems. When I was writing my book (Rubin 1995), I was lucky to be able to gain the ear of Albert Lord. One of the first things he said to me, once we got past the idea that memory was not all rote memorization, was, "Don't mix your genres." I repeated that mantra throughout my studies and it helped me prevent many potential blunders; I even used it as a quote to start a chapter. The first problem is mixing non-rhythmic, more literate genres with the rhythmic, more oral genres that I selected. As the chapter notes, expertise makes a difference; but expertise is different in different genres.

The chapter notes correctly that I describe and try to explain from the viewpoint of a cognitive psychologist only three genres, all of them rhythmic. I focused on these genres because the role of writing or other recording devices was minimal and usually viewed as a problem when it was used by the people I studied and by my most reliable sources. I wanted to look at the role of memory in the transmission of oral traditions and needed to minimize external memory aids, such as writing, that could act as prostheses to hide the limitations of memory. I could not see

how memory shaped the oral traditions if the traditions were not kept in memory. It turned out that in the three traditions I studied, as in many other oral traditions, there was little formal training. The expert singer sang and the novice singer listened. The novice then practiced without an audience, and then perhaps with one or sang the song back to the expert, who might say something like, "That is not the way I have heard it." The expert did not know the rules of the genre in a form that could be summarized and presented to a novice; the rules were simply followed. Lord (1960) makes this point repeatedly for his singers. I made it in my book and elsewhere (Rubin 1988).

Psychologists contrast contingency learning with rule-bound learning (for a discussion of differences in expertise see Rubin, Wallace, and Houston 1993). When rules are taught explicitly, learning is much more efficient and subject to conscious reflection of the kind that the chapter claims Arlo Guthrie uses. If one knows what a page of music looks like, and can have a discussion about poetic devices and music theory that benefits from a millennium of human intellectual activity, then one approaches music differently and one's expertise includes much that is not included in the expertise of someone who learns by observation and trial and error. The two kinds of learning lead people to produce different kinds of songs in different ways. In a study of the very early beginnings of expertise, we had extremely literate undergraduates learn five similar oral tradition ballads by simply listening to them without any formal teaching of the

ballad form (Rubin, Wallace, and Houston 1993). They learned each successive ballad better over the course of the five ballads, following more of the regularities of the form and content. At the end, they composed a new ballad that was supposed to be indistinguishable from the five ballads they had learned and then to try to state the explicit rules that the ballads followed. They stated, but did not follow, some rules including, “the protagonist dies.” They followed, but did not state, rules such as “ballads have no explicit settings,” “ballads are composed of mostly one and two syllable words,” “nouns in ballads are concrete and easy to visualize, rather than abstract.” Their literate college training led them to notice explicitly one kind of regularity; their observational learning led them to produce another.

How did Arlo Guthrie get to the point where he sang *Alice’s Restaurant*? It is doubtful from the information in “The Official Oughtabiography of Arlo Guthrie” (<http://www.arlo.net/bio.shtml>) that it was from pure observation without any more active teaching. The line from *Alice’s Restaurant* quoted in Tangherlini’s chapter, “So we’ll wait for it to come around on the guitar, here and sing it when it does” is probably not a spontaneous creation of an oral tradition singer of tales. Guthrie registered his ownership of the entire talking blues monologue, including that line, in addition to the sung portion of *Alice’s Restaurant*, (<http://www.arlo.net/resources/lyrics/alices.shtml>).

Moreover, the performance from which the recording of the monologue came would hardly be the time to make

up such a long monologue without prior practice.. Arlo Guthrie wanted to involve a large audience at Newport, including me, and so he did have to keep playing until it came around or he would have violated genre and performance expectations in a way he could not, even if he had the ability to skip ahead. Imagine the jarring effect on the audience if he had jumped from where he was playing to the note he needed to start singing instead of continuing to play until it came around. Even a classical musician “craftsman” soloist, who could start reading the score at any note, returns to the beginning of a movement if a string breaks. The next time Arlo Guthrie wants the audience to join in, he adds the accurate, humorous, and copyrighted “We’re just waitin’ for it to come around is what we’re doing.” Such are the talking blues. I will let pass why the audience laughed, but there are more possible reasons than the one given in the chapter.

Arlo Guthrie was, and is, a master of the genres in which he works and these depend, in part, on text that is documented and revised by use of external memory aids, such as audio recordings, and written notation. Musical notation, recording, and writing can play a major role in some genres. Perhaps Tangherlini’s figure of levels of expertise may be correct for these genres: I remind the reader of Lord’s cautionary “Please don’t mix genres.” I have every reason to assume that the British singer with whom I spoke, who was brought to Duke University for a British-American festival, was an expert and a “craftsman” and that what he said was the actual

truth. Yet he maintained that it was necessary for him to wait until the chorus came around in order to sing the words. When Bruce Kapferer asked one of his expert performers to inform him about a demon and the singer had to sing to the part where the demon was mentioned, we had no reason to doubt him (Rubin 1995, 190). In these oral traditions, experts need a running start. As such, the figure in the chapter will need a different size box for “cue-item discriminability very important” for different genres.

The second problem in Tangherlini’s chapter is more serious. When I started studying oral traditions, I was a young cognitive psychologist with a good working knowledge of the brain as well as of behavior. This knowledge made its way into the organization of my book. The topics of narrative (or theme), language in the form of poetics, and visual imagery are in separate chapters, and object and spatial imagery are separated within the visual imagery chapter. Each of the behavioral systems has its own neural system that had been mapped out in terms of anatomy and that we have long known could be damaged separately. As I reviewed in my book, students of oral traditions had made most of these distinctions without help from psychologists or neurologists. However, I found that the distinction between spatial and visual imagery and the idea that narrative could exist without most of what we call language, were novel ideas to many scholars in the humanities. Although most humanists studying oral traditions view visual imagery as a single system, spatial location (the “where system”) and object recognition

(the “what system”) are considered as separate based on behavior studies, on neuropsychological damage studies, and on neuroimaging studies (Rubin 1995, 2006). Similarly, there is good evidence to consider narrative as a mode of thought (Bruner 1986) that need not depend on language, that can be used without language, as in mime and cartoons, and that has a different neural location that can be damaged separately (Rubin 2006; Rubin and Greenberg 2003).

In the book, I downplayed the neural basis of behavior and concentrated on the behavioral level that I felt then and still feel now is the most relevant for students of oral tradition. It is not because researchers viewed the brain as a black box, as the chapter laments; it is a question of determining the most appropriate level of analysis. What I wanted to explain was stability and change in oral traditions. I wanted the clearest theory that could do that. Although I was informed by what was known about the brain, it did not make the theory more precise to try to reduce it to underlying neural mechanisms. To use a concrete example, I knew from anatomy, neuropsychological damage studies, and neuroimaging studies that two behavioral systems important to oral tradition, visual imagery and language, were located in different neural systems. We have known they were separate systems with different properties at the behavioral level since the time of the ancient Greeks. However, labeling the brain locations involved in each system, or the use of any of my other knowledge at the neural level, did not tell me anything important enough to put into the book

about how oral tradition is transmitted. Later, I went into more detail about the brain-behavior analysis of the basic systems of episodic memory on which oral traditions draw (Rubin 2006) – but this still did not add anything that would tell me about stability and change in oral traditions. As is often the case, what is known about the brain has no implications for the kind of theoretical distinctions the author wants to make about behavior.

As a counterpoint to Tangherlini’s claims, I wish to examine some of the more detailed critiques of my work that his chapter brought forth and in particular show the difficulties of moving from neural to behavioral theories. The chapter contrasts the Standard Theory with the Multiple Trace Theory. The Standard Theory is not so standard as it is presented to be in the chapter and the Multiple Trace Theory is not so different from it. There is general agreement in the field that the hippocampus binds information in many other parts of the brain at the moment of encoding. There is some disagreement as to whether later declarative recall requires the hippocampus. However, this is not a major issue for most behavioral studies of memory and has absolutely no implications, as far as I can tell, for behavioral theories at the level I presented them in my book or that are used in the chapter. The key question here is what we could learn about oral traditions if we knew from the Multiple Trace Theory that cues arriving from sensory, language, and emotion areas of the brain had to pass through the hippocampus before activating networks or associations in other

parts of the brain that form a memory. How would that be different from what we would learn if the areas interacted among themselves without involving the hippocampus, which would be the neural alternative? That is, would this information affect what we know about theories of performance, or in any way restrict the range of possible behaviors in intact human beings? I can think of none, given our current level of knowledge. Even when we wrote papers on the catastrophic effects on memory of brain damage that removed visual memory abilities, there was no need to enter this debate (Greenberg, Eacott, Brechin, and Rubin 2005; Greenberg and Rubin 2003; Rubin and Greenberg 1998). Contrary to what the chapter implies, the key role of multiple cuing and cue-item distinctiveness as developed in my book would rely on information in multiple areas of the brain if the brain were involved in an explanatory role. That is one reason why there were separate sections on narrative, language, visual imagery, and spatial imagery. However, for the book, naming multiple systems of the mind sufficed without specifying in detail the neural basis of each of these systems in the brain. The discussion of Hintzman’s instance model (1986) in my book is of a computer model of behavior that is as close to the neural level Multiple Trace Theory as one could get, and I considered it as one possible way to implement my theory on a computer. The model hypothesizes multiple traces, just as the neural model does, and makes predictions about behavior based on the multiple trace – it simply remains silent on where in the nervous system the traces can be found.



Thus, even when Tangherlini's chapter is right about the neural basis of behavior, what it brings from the brain makes no difference in considering how one would describe and explain behavior. What we know about the brain can inform our theories of behavior, but making this connection is not always easy. To put this most simply, one should always try to make use of all levels of analysis, including the cultural, psychological, and neural levels. However, in the case of oral traditions, or of Arlo Guthrie's singing, using the Multiple Trace Theory at the neural level adds no useful information.

What do we know about the relation of brain and behavior that would be applicable to oral traditions and how has it changed in the decade since my book was published? I think it is safe to say nothing basic has been contradicted, but that the rise of structural and functional neuroimaging has offered a great deal of new information. From structural neuroimaging, we now know that the brain changes in relation to expertise; further, we can now measure that change in some detail. From functional imaging, we know which areas of the brain are most active in various tasks. For instance, from my own work on autobiographical memory we know that when people have to judge whether a picture is one they took themselves rather than one they saw in the laboratory, they utilize more areas involved in spatial processing, in self-referential processing, and in recollection, including the hippocampus (Cabeza, Prince, Daselaar, Greenberg, Budde, Dolcos, LaBar, and Rubin 2004). We also know that in the

course of recalling an autobiographical memory, the hippocampus is involved early in the search process but becomes less active as the memory is retrieved and visual areas become more active (Daselaar, Rice, Greenberg, Cabeza, LaBar, and Rubin 2008). Neural imaging work is expensive and those who provide the funding are generally more interested in practical problems of health than in oral literature, so the experiments available for review do not investigate oral traditions. Thus, it is hard to recommend any summaries integrating the neural findings directly with work in oral traditions, though I have made some attempts (Rubin 2006).

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## Response

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The article “Where was I?: Personal Experience, Crystallization and Some Thoughts on Tradition Memory” addresses a number of fields of research, including neurobiology, neurophysiology, and memory. By placing research from these fields in the context of field research in folklore studies the author’s work also potentially has implications for many other disciplines, including cognitive psychology, anthropology, folkloristics and literary studies.

By alluding to this theoretical background the author adopts an interdisciplinary stance and focuses on “tradition” from a folkloristic-neurobiological perspective. He sets out to pinpoint the “neurophysiologic processes of tradition” (42), or, as I understand it, he seeks to discover where tradition is stored in the brain and what characterizes the neurobiological processes of tradition in contrast to other kinds of memory performances.

Although the questions mentioned above are enough to fill many books with their responses they are but a few of the issues raised in the opening pages of this thought-provoking article (42–43). While some of the questions have vast implications and others are more focused and idiosyncratic they all share the same motivation: to delineate between the role of biology on the one

hand and socio-cultural circumstances in regard to the term “tradition” on the other hand. It is thus out of necessity that the author states that he wishes to “speculate briefly on these questions” (43). Inevitably speculations abound while answers or “tentative suggestions” (as the author calls them) are fewer.

It could be said that the question is perhaps a better friend of science than the answer or the firmly-grounded suggestion. Surely everything hinges on the value or relevance of the question. Is it a good and timely question or a confusing and vague one which potentially can even lead astray? I would like to address the nature of the questions boldly put forward by Timothy R. Tangherlini and refer briefly to his article’s theoretical framework. Although the questions raised are potentially in line with Neisser’s call (1978) to researchers to focus on the relation between the theoretical and the practical questions in cognitive explorations of memory, the theoretical uncertainties on which these questions are based are vast and deserving of attention.

The first obvious problem is the term “tradition” as it emerges from the questions asked by the author. For a start, one wonders about the author’s understanding of the term. He mentions Parry and Lord’s “singers” and the folk singer Arlo Guthrie, so a kind of folksong or a folktale tradition is seemingly implied, while the author’s empirical study focuses on “folkloric data” (i.e., tales transmitted by students). The author investigates the “possible” specific nature of “tradition memory” compared with other kinds of memory, language

learning, or the acquisition of other “habitual skills.” This leads the author to the central question, namely, “...if tradition too might be linked to special mechanisms – or even specific sites – in the brain” (42).

As I see it, one is obliged to begin research by defining the object of investigation or even arguing that an object *exists* in itself. Certainly this is a prerequisite for attempting to “place” it or to describe it in relation to other objects. Thus there is, to my knowledge, no empirical or scientific study in any of the academic fields mentioned above that claims that human memory can be classified or categorized when it comes to the actual cognitive processes of memory. The memory of, let us say, a traditional folksong cannot be seen as using a different site or a different set of neurobiological or cognitive processes in the brain than, for example, the memory of a Britney Spears pop single. Therefore, it is indeed difficult to claim that semantic categories (“tradition,” “pop culture,” “mathematics,” etc.) can be distinguished from one another when it comes to the complicated and simultaneous cognitive and biological processes involved in the process of memorization or recollection. Cognitive psychologists humbly admit that, rather than being a single cognitive process or system, memory is a collective term for a family of neuro-cognitive systems that store information in different formats (Schacter, Wagner, and Buckner 2000; Tulving 2002). Interestingly, our understanding of metaphors is leaning in this direction with the aid of conceptual integration theory, often referred to as “blending.” The construc-

tion of meaning is seen as a simultaneous gathering of many processes in the so-called blending space (Fauconnier and Turner 2002).

Today, there exists to my knowledge no overarching theory that can draw together the experimental results of neurobiology or neuropsychology on the human brain with studies of cognitive psychology on memory. This problem would have been a solid and appropriate starting point for the questions put forth in the article. Indeed, the vastness of the memory discipline make great demands on those who represent interdisciplinary research on the issue, as Tangherlini does in his article.

Thus, while the author asks “to what extent is tradition conditioned by neurobiology and genetic inheritance and to what extent is it conditioned by environment?” (43), cognitive psychologists would consider it impossible to distinguish between these aspects of personal memory. In fact, they would claim that it is a relatively misleading metaphor to say that a brain *thinks* or a brain *remembers*. It would be more accurate to say that a *person* thinks and a *person* remembers by using the brain as one of the tools involved in the process. This is because other aspects of memory – among them cultural, social, spatial, and sensual surroundings – cannot be neglected without creating a false picture. When it comes to describing the process of memorization in cognitive psychology the distinction between brain biology and socio-cultural circumstances of memory is non-existent. Any distinction of this kind made in speaking of cognition is merely a practical one, one that allows

scholars and doctors to pinpoint certain aspects of brain functions. The tools that cognitive psychologists employ in their attempts to understand memory are mainly metaphors and analogies, and the nature of metaphor—highlighting certain aspects of things while hiding others—should not be forgotten. One could mention, for example, the theatre metaphor, the multiple store metaphor, and memory as archaeology as some of the most popular metaphors for memory (Magnussen et. al. 2007). Underlying the use of metaphors in place of other “more scientific tools” is the fact that memory is *not directly observable*. Thus, when the author criticizes David Rubin for introducing memory as a “black-box phenomenon” while failing to explore “the actual processes by which memories are consolidated” (45), I can not say I agree, since memory still **is** a kind of “black-box phenomenon” because of its theoretical implications and complexity, or, to use another metaphor: too vast and complicated a theme for the *episteme* of putting things into boxes or categories.

Of course, it is true that if certain locations in the brain are damaged, for instance, by trauma or by a tumour (as in the case presented in this article), the patient can be left incapable of performing certain cognitive tasks, such as smelling, speaking, or recollecting childhood memories. Cognitive scholars have stressed, however, that this does not justify locating the complicated process of memory (or other cognitive tasks) in certain isolated parts of the human brain. Yet, this is what the author appears to do when he refers to the surgeon who wanted to avoid “cutting out” the pa-

tient’s Danish (41), or when he goes on to wonder if “tradition too might be linked to special mechanisms—or even specific sites—in the brain” (42).

The author goes on to suggest a characterization of the “craftsmen of tradition” as those who are not dependent on “cues.” Cues for memory can be rhythm, or a song, or even imagery, as also mentioned by Rubin (1995). In other words, he suggests that “masters of tradition” have a different method of memorizing than others in as much as they do not use cues for this purpose (pp. 45 and 46). If, for a moment, I might be excused for bringing into this discussion some personal empirical experience, I would like to mention that for about twenty years I have participated in an assembly of the folksong tradition (*rímur*) in Iceland as an active chanter. There is nothing in my experience that could support the above-mentioned idea; the rule is the same for the experienced as for the inexperienced chanters: the melody, once mastered, prompts the recollection of the words of the stanza. I have argued that in the pre-Christian North singers used bizarre imagery to aid in the recall of abstract words. This notion suggests that, in pre-Christian times in Scandinavia, there existed an advanced mnemonic system that faded away with the establishment of writing (Birgisson 2008). In this light, the mastery of tradition could be described as cultivating the skill of using cues, as seems to be the case among people with advanced memory skills (Luria 1975). This would suggest that “masters of tradition” use the same memorization method as the rest of us.

The author’s reference to a neurobiological study that claims that “brains are as different as faces” (47), leads him to the assumption that different people learn and remember differently, which in turn leads him to suggest that this difference in human cognition “may help us understand how tradition persists” (47). Could it not also be said that tradition exists namely because the opposite is true (i.e., that people have something in common both in the way they think and in the way they construct meaning from everyday life)? The author’s approach seems to associate tradition with a kind of biological elitism (i.e., those active in tradition have special kinds of brains), while it unfortunately excludes the social and cultural aspects of tradition.

In the light of this hypothesis it was rather odd to read the presentation of the empirical study involved: “A chain transmission of a single story stands as an apt illustration of the potential for instability in tradition, particularly when members of the chain may be either inactive tradition participants, or completely unaware of the tradition” (15). When it comes to a tradition, the transmission of poems, songs or folktales, for example, this seems to be an inappropriate model since tradition only requires a handful of active participants for its survival for an extended time. Temporal and locative aspects are also theoretically significant in this context. What type of people and what kind of tradition are involved? In addition when and where did the tradition in question exist?

These questions have to be answered since the art of remembering and telling stories has formerly had, and indeed still

has, different statuses in different societies. The status of these aspects among modern western people is apparently neither representative of the rest of the world nor of earlier times. It is therefore hardly representative of the brains of the “craftsmen of tradition.”

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## Through the "Eye of the Skull": Memory and Tradition in a Travelling Landscape

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### Abstract

*The vast oral culture of Scotland's Gypsy-Travellers was "discovered" by Hamish Henderson in the 1950s. Since that fieldwork period Traveller culture has undergone major social transformation. From an exoteric angle it is widely assumed that Scotland's "indigenous nomads" exist only in memory. Using the landscape of a traditional family camping ground to elucidate and revisit his culture, Scottish Traveller Stanley Robertson's "in-situ" knowledge suggests that, from within, memory is a vital force for the continuity and renewal of Traveller identity. My interviews with Stanley reveal parallels between memory, place-lore, cyclical journey and the progressive structure of learning. His beliefs suggest how, in interaction with oral traditions, memories function on many experiential levels to build creativity.*

**I**t has been a privilege to research the cultural traditions and creativity of the Scottish Travelling People,<sup>1</sup> an indigenous and traditionally nomadic group credited with the guardianship of one of the richest oral cultures in Europe. (Neat 1996, vii) The pioneering collection work of Scottish folklorist Hamish Henderson in the early 1950s first brought the attention of non-Traveller society to the "magnificent folk riches" (Neat 1996, 66)

preserved and nurtured within Traveller culture. Henderson was immediately captivated by the depth, longevity, dramatic sincerity and stylistic embellishment of the Traveller repertoire and his fieldwork yielded a quantity of ballads, songs and traditional stories which placed Travellers unmistakably at the forefront of traditional performance. Within Scottish society, Travellers gained a new venerated status as ubiquitous "tradition-bearers" (von Sydow 1948, 12-13) that remains uncontested today although the nomadic way of life that sustained this function is now believed to have virtually disappeared.

Hamish Henderson appeared to have stumbled upon Scotland's "most substantially ancient" culture, "lying totally unregarded and essentially unknown," (Neat 1996, 65-6) held together by blood ties, inheritable knowledge and ancestral memory. Looking earnestly for remnants of the past in his fieldwork he found them in vast quantities in the Travellers' age-old traditional repertoire, family structure, ancient clan names, and hereditary craftsmanship. In addition, Henderson's knowledge of Scottish history led him to view Travellers as an "underground clan system of their own," (Henderson 1981, 378) the tribal remnants of the Gaelic society broken by the destruction of the clan system following the Battle of Culloden in 1746. (Kenrick and Clark 1999, 6) Explaining to Henderson the difference between a Traveller and a singular migrant, one young Traveller told him, "that sort of lad just lives from day to day, but we live entirely in the past." (Henderson 1981, 377-78)

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### **The Idealisation of the Past**

These idealisations of the past now constitute problems of perspective and representation on a number of levels. An unintended consequence of this early collection period has been the development of a “devolutionary” (Oring 1975, 41) perspective through which “an intact culture is projected onto the past”. (Okely 1983, 32) “Gleaned” and extensively collected in the 1950s (Nicolaisen 1995, 73), the creativity of Travellers apparently came to a standstill when the folklorists went home. Indexed, shelved and saved for posterity, the archives in the School of Scottish Studies are now where the interested minority can consult a recorded testimony of a now lost culture.<sup>2</sup> This golden-age image conveys the impression that traveler culture in its present form has degenerated into the forgotten memories, faceless voices and culturally dislocated sounds of recorded reels on dusty shelves.

No longer visible by their distinct material culture—their wares and craftsmanship considered obsolete<sup>3</sup>—the Travellers, it would seem, have disappeared completely replaced, if at all, by a “different” sort of Traveller. Contemporary media representations often accentuate this idea. Reports often distance settled Travellers from their collective past while those Travellers, forced by the reality of closed camping grounds, to camp on increasingly marginalised and public spaces are branded “rogue” Travellers.<sup>4</sup>

Of course many Travellers have time honoured traditions and lead law abiding lives. But an increasing

number are causing great distress to local communities by setting up illegal camps on green belt sites and building homes without the required permission. (Editorial, *Scottish Daily Mail*, March 22, 2005)

These recent comments are new expressions of an ongoing discourse in which Traveller identity is continually contested and misunderstood. As Betsy Whyte remembers from her 1930s childhood, “We Travelling people were judged without knowledge. Every crime, sin, foulness, acts of violence, cruelty, stupidity, and brutish behaviour under the sun was, to their [non-Travellers’] way of thinking, the heritage of all Travelling people”. (Whyte 1990, 88) Even when expressed in nostalgic and cautiously positive terms such as “The Summer Walkers” (Neat 1996, vii) and “the mist people”, (Whyte 1979, 24) these views reveal little more than the elusiveness of Travellers to settled society. In contrast to the distinct ethnic identity by which Travellers see themselves Traveller culture, since the time of its so-named “discovery,” has been largely defined by a materially rustic form of nomadism, and regarded as a way of life already threatened with extinction. (Porter and Gower 1995, 3-5)

### **Memory as a Conduit for Knowledge, Continuity and Creativity**

I would suggest that neither Traveller nor sedentary culture can be relegated to inactivity and that both have undergone similar processes of transformation. Older settled Travellers feel an understandable nostalgia for their lives

"on the road", using words like "freedom", or phrases like "the old days", and "a trip down memory lane",<sup>5</sup> to describe this sense of loss. The belief that their culture is dying out is common among the older generation who say "soon there will be no more Travellers".<sup>6</sup> Others lament the loss of annual gatherings, such as berry picking, for their combined value as social, working and family occasions, and for the enculturation and practical responsibility they offered to younger family members.<sup>7</sup>

However, as Perthshire Traveller Fiona Townsley remarked, "Travellers have always adapted".<sup>8</sup> In the absence of the real experiences once guaranteed by established cultural frameworks, Travellers have developed other routes to maintain the vitality of their culture and the strength of their social memory. In public and private performance – the key to real integration between people and lore – shared memories, retold with pride and experience, become energetic forces that revitalise the culture and strengthen family cohesion from within. (Bauman 1971, 33) The work of public representatives has sparked what some Travellers perceive as "a revival"<sup>9</sup> through the sharing of songs, stories, and language, or in the teaching of crafts such as basket and flower making to Travelling children. By becoming authors, performers and educators, Travellers continue to revisit, verbalise and teach the importance of their traditional identity in self-created ways.<sup>10</sup> Their work is an exemplary model for how memory and creativity combine to form the impetus that drives traditions forward. (Niles 1999, 15)

### Relocating Memory in Place and Culture

From a distant angle, memory is a deceptively dormant force, disconnected save for bursts of nostalgia from the places and contexts of the present. Likewise, collections of memory, from recordings to heritage sites, can be deadened by imposed historicity and accompanied by perceptions of loss and social discontinuity. (Nora 1989, 19)

Zooming in on the experiential, a reversal of "the Gleaner's Vision", (Nicolaisen 1995, 71-76) Travellers seek to know the past as an access point which might inform the present. (Nicolaisen 2002, 9) One of many natural analogies for the past/memory which resonates within Traveller culture is that of "the carrying stream". (Macaulay 2002) Memory is understood as a place in continual motion, a personal and collective archive of occasional<sup>11</sup> knowledge which, like repertoire, is subject to periods of increased relevance, creativity or inactivity in contextual relationship to the life cycle. (Goldstein 1972, 82) Cultural continuity is ensured by strong, well-informed individuals who perpetuate traditions. (Niles 1999, 15) In Traveller culture the idea of memory as an ongoing stream of conscience makes the content of oral traditions contemporary, instructive and meaningful. Memories transmit not only texts but also a coherent learning processes, the worldviews that provide the foundations for confident creativity and individualism. When viewed as creativity, memory becomes an evolving store of knowledge, a source of informed "imitation" and individualistic originality. (Kristeller 1983, 110-1)

### Looking in on Places of Knowledge

These core “academic”<sup>12</sup> themes place narrative and symbolic representation within the didactic structure of Traveller culture. Moving beyond the linear into the idea of places as vessels or containers of tradition and symbols of memory (Ben-Amos 1999, 298), I will show that it is both the cultural structure of reciprocal and cyclical interaction between place and people (Robertson “Interaction between Man and Nature”, 2002-2005), and the hostility commonly experienced when within sedentary culture that have given Traveller repertoires their breadth, creativity and resourceful quality. (Robertson “Poor Circumstances Rich Culture”, 2002-2005)

Perhaps the most striking way in which Traveller traditions are used in Traveller contexts is for their implicit symbolic and metaphoric undercurrents. High importance is placed upon sensory experience, evaluation and effective communication. Their emphasis on the ability to understand and embody the characters, dramatic proportions and locations of traditional texts stresses the importance of an expansive understanding derived from use of all the senses.

North-East Scottish Traveller Stanley Robertson describes this intuitive methodology as “multi-dimensionality”.<sup>13</sup> Relating texts to places and places to people, in “being”, “doing” and “relating” knowledge, Stanley illustrates how to “look in” and “draw out” vital information about the essence of his traditions. “Looking in”<sup>14</sup> on settled society, the people “much maligned and persecuted for centuries” (Robertson 2001)

have gained an extra edge of perceptiveness in often unpredictable surroundings. “Looking in” on the landscape is also a core aspect of how Travellers have constructed their traditional world and learned to “read” their environment.

### Roads and the Lifecycle

This methodology finds illustration in the multiple narratives of Jack, the epic hero of Traveller tradition. On his quests Jack is reminded, “You are not without knowledge”. (Robertson 1983, 18) He is aided by “ancestral wisdom, the power of nature and magic, and the realisation of his own potential”, and ultimate success lies in his ability to apply the resources of his memory and keen wits. (Douglas 2007, 52) Using a geographic model to construct journeys as life paths these narratives conceptualize education as progressively attained knowledge.<sup>15</sup> (Daniels and Nash 2004, 449) The commentary of Apache storyteller Dudley Patterson aligns well with the Traveller worldview built on “looking in” and “drawing out”. Patterson ties these reciprocal themes together, ending with the resounding implication that the responsibility and impetus to remember lie with the individual.

How will you walk along this trail of wisdom? Well, you will go to many places. You must look at them closely. You must remember all of them. Your relatives will talk to you about them. You must remember everything they tell you. You must think about it, and keep on thinking about it, and keep on thinking about it. You must do this because no one can help you but yourself... Wisdom sits in places. It's

like water...you also need to drink from places. You must remember everything about them. You must learn their names. You must remember what happened at them long ago. You must think about it and keep on thinking about it. And your mind will become smoother and smoother. (Basso 1996, 70)

Traveller tradition abounds with narratives that tie together geography and metaphor to recover ancestral memory. Founded upon the perpetuation of this memory, Traveller traditions caution that “only knowledge applied can be-

come wisdom”.<sup>16</sup> Passed down in oral tradition, traditional texts contain “supra-narrative” associations, principles that enable their interpretation through multiple levels of perception. (McCarthy 1990, 11-12) Places “become” through memory, and memory teaches through place.

### **The Old Road of Lumphanan**

The discussion that follows seeks to further unfold the triadic interaction between the Traveller themes of journey, memory and place. In the concealed Traveller topography of North-East



Stanley Robertson on the Old Road of Lumphanan in Autumn 2007

Photo by Steve Webb

Scotland, Aberdeen Traveller and internationally respected tradition-bearer Stanley Robertson has found an illustrative way to tell the story of his people's unique knowledge and cultural contribution. Key to his creative approach is the use and subsequent development of ancient teaching methods, which Stanley learned from his people on the road as a Travelling child. Speaking of his extended family, Stanley offers this tribute:

Never in ma life at any time, did I ever want to be anything else, than a Traveller. I just wanted to be amongst the people where I was born and loved... Nurtured and cocooned in love and happiness. And these people had a form of literacy that I never ever seen in the University. These folk could tell you the most wonderful things. They educated ye [you], and they took me on cultured excursions all ma life.<sup>17</sup>

Stanley has clearly inherited this ability to educate through tradition. His "in-situ"<sup>18</sup> narratives combine big ballads, songs and stories with family memories and place-lore,<sup>19</sup> using the framework of journey to take the uninformed on "cultured excursions" into the social, material and elemental "rubric"<sup>20</sup> of his culture. It is through his vision of a revered Aberdeenshire landscape, "the Old Road of Lumphanan," a traditional camping ground for many generations of his family, that I now attempt to describe his many-levelled journey into memory in its most vital, reverent and creative form.

### **A Landscape of Memory**

Lumphanan lies twenty-four miles west of Aberdeen between the rivers Don and Dee in rural Aberdeenshire. In the summer months this village was on part of a network of cyclical journeys taken by Stanley's family as they followed seasonal work opportunities. Today deserted save for local walkers the Old Road of Lumphanan conceals a treasury of human engagement known only to the initiated eye. Retelling its past (as per Nicolaisen 1984, 271), Stanley recreates the road as he states is has always functioned in his mind, as "a training ground." Stanley's vast repertoire comes of nights spent at the fireside hearing accomplished singers, storytellers, pipers and musicians. From instructing Stanley in the practical skills of building a camp, finding clean water, pearl fishing and hawking to imparting a detailed knowledge of the natural environment, its music and history, his family instilled in him a knowledge that always matched his stage of learning. However, the most striking aspect of his inheritance is his holistic view of the landscape. Stanley's expansive worldview encompasses the material, ancestral, ethereal and eternal as ever present resources. Lumphanan's spiritual geography is made manifest through his ability to interpret its natural "signs and portents," as he calls them, skilfully.<sup>21</sup>

### **"Through the Eye of the Skull"**

It was in early childhood at Lumphanan that one of Stanley's key mentors, his Great Auntie Maggie Stewart, taught him how to access these expansive di-

mensions. After listening as he described to her a decayed animal skull lying by the side of the road, Maggie asked him what he could see from inside the skull. Stanley, then aged five or six, remembers:

I immediately went inside the yak o the dead animal and I came to a place faur there were canyons, caverns, waterfalls mountains, animals o aa kinds and colours and smells, and the rick mi tick <sup>22</sup> o the inside unfolded tae me. And awa in the distance I heard the auld woman caa me tae come back tae me again. And I described tae her aa the things I experienced wi vivid colours and every sense inside honed up.<sup>23</sup>

Going "through the eye of the skull" denotes a methodology for the metaphysical relocation of self, one that uses a material access point to elicit a departure into "narrative time". (Nicolaisen 1991, 3) From this central point of vision anything may be intuitively understood by looking "through spiritual eyes".<sup>24</sup> Gifted with the prophetic "mantle of the storyteller",<sup>25</sup> Stanley has developed a transferable principle, "the spirit of discernment",<sup>26</sup> which uses insight to teach tradition from all perceptible angles. Building upon his vivid memories and sense of loyalty to his ancestors today he has taken their creative potential further than any of his predecessors may have thought possible. Returning from this transformational experience, his Auntie Maggie reminded him:

Weel today I hae taught ye a valuable lesson and that is ye will find oot and discover mair frae gaun inside

the rubric o the thing, than ye will by lookin' at a front dimension ... ye will learn mair in ten seconds inside a thing than ye wid looking and observing frae the outside.<sup>27</sup>

### The Symbolic Landscape

On the Old Road where he first absorbed this principle Stanley urges visitors, often researchers or students of traditional song, to replicate this spirit of discernment and "cast off their mantles of academia"<sup>28</sup> to gain an unclouded insight into Traveller traditions.

The gateway to the Old Road provides a similar point of transition. Passing this metaphoric boundary and "leaving the world of drudgery",<sup>29</sup> Stanley remarks that we are now in a place of timelessness and ancestral connection. Emblematic of freedom and self-renewal the Old Road of Lumphanan never fails to offer new learning experiences and confirm his people's ability to create a rich culture in poor circumstances. (Robertson "Poor Circumstances Rich Culture", 2002-2005)

Though camping has not been permitted here since the mid-1950s, this three-mile stretch of woodland track remains a focal point for his family tradition, which fuses natural landmarks with history, such as the murder of Macbeth, inherited knowledge and memories of ancestors.<sup>30</sup> (McCombie 1845, 1083) However, the core narratives that bring the Old Road's meaning to life are experiential memorates and traditional repertoire passed down through family. The Old Road of Lumphanan was once part of the ancient network of droving roads that formed a central crossing point for cattlemen between highland and lowland Scotland.

While this aspect of the road reaffirms Stanley's sense of belonging there, tradition tells him "this road has known Travellers since time immemorial".<sup>31</sup>

Leaving the gate behind, Stanley treats the landscape as an evolving record of the past, one that unfolds in his step-by-step building of a walking material and symbolic alignment, a sensibility reflected in his knowledge of the road's rich narratives. In contrast to the "official" map, Stanley's family describe the rivers Dee and the Don as supernatural beings (Robertson 1988, 128-29):

Ma mither used to say that this particular land [here] between the river Dee and the river Don - and they used to say lang ago that the Don wis the warlock and the river Dee wis the witch. And this land between it wis for her bairns. This land wis oors aa richt because there's only twa hooses. But this road has been known for many, many supernatural happenings ... there's a lot o happiness on this auld road. And every time I ging up it I could aye sort o feel the spirits o the past ...<sup>32</sup>

These inside representations of the landscape imply a worldview of reciprocal nurture and give an impression of the stewardship, idealism and symmetry that is part of the road's muse. Landmarks become "actualisations of the knowledge that informs them" (Basso 1996, 57), reflecting the security offered to the community by the land. (Robertson 2005) Symbolising black and white magic in balance, the spring well which marks the life-giving, social "heart's blood of the road" (Stanley often uses

ballad commonplaces in his everyday speech. See this also in Buchan 1997, 145) is similarly protected, purified by the presence of a rowan and oak tree on either side.<sup>33</sup> As these themes unfold, Stanley's narratives bring a growing realisation of why, in much simplified outsider terms, the Traveller way of life has been associated with an imagined "closeness to nature". (Nord 2006, 46)

The traditional camping grounds of Scottish Travellers have formed private community spaces where their skills, values, and rich culture could flourish. Journey, which for many settled Travellers is today more an ideal than a reality, still signifies a release from cruel treatment and the social constraints of settlement or enforced schooling. Journeys to the Old Road, which Stanley and his relatives have described as their "spiritual home", continue to renew feelings of purpose and vitality that are echoed in many Traveller narratives. In sharp contrast to city life Stanley remembers Lumphanan as a place of plenitude and visual splendour:

Because this wis the place where ye enjoyed the best pairt o yer life! Ye used tae wait until ye could feel the first smell of broom on the air. And how happy ye wid be fin ma father wid get his horse and his cairt, and we'd tak aa the things that ye needed, and just left the hoose in Aiberdeen, and ye wid come oot intae the Old Road o Lumphanan. As I come up this hill, I was so *happy*. And I *lookit* round this beautiful, glorious clear sky in a summer afternoon. And in ma vista before me, I could see the Mither Tap o Benachie. I could see Benahighlie with its very distinct little cairn. I could

look over by Tarland and see Morven. I could look further round I could see Lochnagar. And then I could see the distinct shape o Clachnaben – which looks like a lady lying down. And ye know ma spirits were *very*, very elevated ... But I remember coming down to ma folk. *What a welcome there was*. And on the edge of the glimmer, the fire, there was a big biling kettle always filled tae the gunnel. And this woman gave us tea and ‘duke sharras’ this is ducks eggs. And ye ken this, I just thought to maself ... *The Kingdom of Heaven* couldna be *any* better than what this was.<sup>34</sup>

Though the landmarks of the Old Road are the natural vernacular features of the Scottish landscape, the traditionalisation of this space is built on analogies. In its inner enclosure and outward expansiveness Lumphanan conveys a sense of natural safety and orientation, with curiosity for what lies beyond. Stories depict the Old Road with its surrounding hills as a “land betwixt and between”,<sup>35</sup> a liminal space where, it is implied, a person’s greatest potential can be realised (this is Stanley’s description though it matches many conclusions drawn by folklorists. See Abrahams 2003, 213).

### Place as Memory and Memory in Place

The principle of “going through the eye of the skull” is an endorsement of individual experience and exploration. Stanley, who has since invented a multitude of similarly-illustrative techniques, teaches visitors how to access and experience this “place” within themselves. Now, as an adult and exceptional storyteller, these abilities have become finely tuned. He remembers:

Ye had a whole world at your command and that’s where pure creativity is. And that’s where real story telling and writing and aa these things come from...it’s looking wi yer spiritual eyes...ye’ve got this inner eye... And when that eye opens...Nothing’s a barrier to you. You can go to any place...<sup>36</sup>

This exploratory approach creates his experience-centred dialogue with the Old Road. Held within its geography, transient like the passage of time and season until narrated into story-time, Stanley’s ability to bring out stories in this way often has the effect of connecting others to the place of their own muse or source of confidence.<sup>37</sup> One visitor, now a storyteller, related how Stanley’s tale of “Tammy Toddle”<sup>38</sup> caused her to revisit her father’s stories. She returned from this metaphysical journey with a renewed faith in continuing with her inheritance.

Tammy Toddle (excerpt)  
 Tammy Toddle he’s a canty chiel  
*good humoured, person*  
 Sae cousie and sae canty *kindly*  
 And the fairies liked him unca weel  
*very, well*  
 And they built him a wee hoosie  
*a little house*  
 (Higgins 2006, CD 1, Track 6)

In Stanley’s narratives the supernatural world is separated only by thin veils. His story of Jinty, who lives in the fairy kingdom under the Old Road and is able to come to the surface to play with a Traveller child because she believes reiterates an appeal to the importance of memory (Robertson 2002-2005):



Whin fairies are nae remembered by folks then they jist vanish intae oblivion. Fit this really means is that they gang intae hiding and winnae come oot for hunners o years. Sometimes the conditions between men and fairies become strained and the fairies jist close themsels hinnie awa frae mankind.<sup>39</sup>

Underlying this tale is a reiteration of the importance that remembering has to the continuity of traditional knowledge. The “rick mi tick”<sup>40</sup> of Lumphanan unfolds, paradoxically, through a form of forgetting. Using the framework of progressive journey Stanley’s narratives lull visitors and audiences into “the land where stories grow”<sup>41</sup> through the distracting activities of walking and listening. Stories invoke the footsteps and voices of ancestors, the sounds of ancient music carried by the wind or supernatural visions of ghostly beings and otherworldly tribes. Stanley’s beliefs add a conditional element to such deeply-informed experiences: the necessity of attentiveness, “through a vigorous conflation of attentive subject and geographical object, places come to generate their own fields of meaning...Animated by the thoughts and feelings of the persons that attend to them, places...yield to consciousness only what consciousness has given them to absorb”. (Basso 1996, 56) With “every sense inside honed up”, “the world itself begins to breath”, (Ingold 1993, 16) as though the road itself is memory, and nature a co-existent actor that can impose the past upon the here and now.

### The Summer Seat

One story that illustrates these themes is “The Summer Seat”, which describes a place tinged with the tragic memory of a Traveller woman named MacPhee found murdered there shortly after the First World War. Although she was denied the justice and concern usually given to any member of the settled population,<sup>42</sup> Stanley always stops here, singing a song in her memory. A non-Traveller visitor, poet and psychic medium, Steven Webb,<sup>43</sup> was asked to “tune in” to this event. He recounts what followed, “What I was guided by spirit to do...was to actually taste, to lick a bit o the bench [laughs]...To get a taste of the metal, you see? Where the paint had rusted away a bit. And then...the next thing, it was very strange, was to kiss the stone wall, a wee bit of mossy stone wall”.<sup>44</sup> Webb explains the logic behind these actions: “[I had] to ask the stones and the bench and the trees to tell me the story that they witnessed. Because the stone saw it...the bench saw it...I mean...it’s a bit like they were there”!<sup>45</sup>

This experience aligns well with the ideal of the road as a representation of the all-seeing, restorative power of nature. A poem connected with place unfolded as the spirits of Traveller witnesses recounted the event, “I was feelin aa the emotions coming through me”.<sup>46</sup> In addition to exposing the acts of local deception surrounding Lilian MacPhee’s death the poem, which gives voice to the thoughts of Lilian MacPhee, poignantly acknowledges her sadness that her life is remembered today only because it was so violently cut short. Her story provides a striking example of memory

materially self-represented in the landscape.

Poem For Lilian MacPhee (excerpt)<sup>47</sup>

You could look to find the guilty  
A cold case for yer fame  
Or ye could get to know me  
Who I am behind my name

I went straight to Christ wi the an-  
gels  
I've always rested in peace  
It's only ever the guilty  
Who hide from love's release

It's only he who sits here  
On the Simmer Seat wi me  
*Summer*  
And only he who cowers in the pit  
Below yer feet ye see...

Marking the spot where the murder happened almost one hundred years ago lies her "body," a fallen tree, while her earthbound, nameless killer is locked forever in the remains of an adjacent dead tree stump. Within this event is a "story of love and faith",<sup>48</sup> a reassurance that a higher balancing force is in operation and that the unalterable past may be transformed and resolved through commemoration.

The story that gives material form to this memory suggests the depth of human entrainment and elemental agency invested in this landscape. (Clayton 2001) In the narrative creation of the past how the "keepers of these landscapes, tell stories that explain [their] existence", is an implication that all levels of the material and unseen are in continual reciprocity. (Glassie 1994, 962) Stanley's

son, Anthony, understands these different levels as "frequencies".<sup>49</sup> "It's like having antenna, if you can't tune into the frequency then you won't know it's there".<sup>50</sup>

Memory, therefore, is both the key and strongest safeguard to the esoteric type of knowledge held within Traveler tradition. As Donald Braid points out the degree to which the "journey of following" narrated events is incorporated as a personal resource depends upon the listeners' particular experiential contexts. (Braid 1996, 9, 16, 26) The case discussed requires a "suspension of disbelief" that many sceptics could only make whilst conceiving of themselves as being in a narrative space.<sup>51</sup> (Edwards 2001, 82; Hufford 1995, 22) On returning they will leave the Old Road behind, safe in the world of "make believe".

### Stepping Stones to Knowledge

On another level, the road is celebrated for its ability to elucidate the progress of human life through activity and journey. Like the verbal emphasis of the Cant language,<sup>52</sup> the interface of the road teaches through response—by walking, listening, making, doing and discerning. Its metaphoric representations are designed "to make the mind move,"<sup>53</sup> an allegory for the therapeutic value of a new way of seeing, or as an opportunity, as Stanley puts it, to "rest and be thankful"<sup>54</sup> on the "stepping stones"<sup>55</sup> of life's path.

As a child Stanley remembers passing milestones on the road. At these places his father would review a learning principle, asking questions to make

sure that he had been understood. Stanley's approach to teaching, writing and performance is structured in much the same way. When singing a ballad for illustration he often stops between verses to elucidate symbolic, archaic language, historic connections, or events in the plot. Stanley's new vision of the Old Road recreates the cyclical structure of Traveller life, a journey of challenge and learning broken up by refreshing stops where one re-gathers personal energies or allows time for self analysis before moving on. Knowledge is accumulated in rhythmic progressions between journey and rest, learning and contemplation. Stanley explains that:

'At each stepping steen they wid sing ye a song, play ye a tune, instruct ye. So you could sit doon, ye could look behind, at faur ye come fae. Ye could see maybe the auld Mill o Aiberdeen. And then, at the next stepping stone, ye could sit doon, analyse yerself and see how far ye've come, and how far ye're gaun. So yer stepping steenies was the sort o resting places whaur you were taught something. And it represents the progress of the Travelling people'.<sup>56</sup>

### **An "Elemental" People<sup>57</sup>**

Explaining the capacity of his people to stop, listen and learn from their environmental resources, Stanley emphasises that to "catch the vision"<sup>58</sup> of this road involves receptiveness to its subtle frequencies. The vital spark of his stories, songs, and, later, his books, have been fed and inspired by a detailed awareness of the elements:

when ye went tae yer bed at night, aifter ye heard their music and the songs and the stories, just being amongst them. And ye lay in yer bed at night, ye could listen tae the rain. Fin ye hear the rain faa'in on the camp, this precipitates doon these torrential notes...And ye could hear aa these bonnie wee pipe tunes getting played by nature. And ye listen! And ye got all yer timings of yer tunes off o just listening to nature. And ye could look at the rain makin these beautiful intricate patterns upon the canvas. And ye got telt stories by an unseen voice, and yet these stories were all in the pattern. Ma Mither used to say,

'If ye listen to mither nature, she's a living being. What does she say to ye? What does she tell ye?'

The Travelling folk were very elemental...very much in tune with the elements [and] what was gan on. And that's where we learnt wir songs, stories, music...<sup>59</sup>

The sound of Traveller singers can have a dramatically expressive and emotionally raw edge, whilst timings within single phrases can vary greatly. Individuality is a source of family pride and, as in the case of traversing the Old Road, a greater emphasis is placed upon evaluation, understanding and an internalisation of symbolic structures and imagery than upon stylistic uniformity. Stanley equates this distinct style with the absorption of "elemental" timings. Traveller tradition has chosen to perpetuate many natural ballads of poetic and descriptive beauty,<sup>60</sup> including those containing the common theme of seasonal movement. Stanley relates the following

family song to another landmark, “The Tree of Life”, symbolic of socialisation and growth,<sup>61</sup> which metaphorically references the transition between childhood and maturity.

**The Seasons** (excerpt)

The hills are clad in purple  
 The autumn winds they are sighing  
 For a beauty growing old  
 The grey grouse and the heather  
 And the evenings where we played  
 I’m thinking of my childhood  
 In a very special way.<sup>62</sup>

**Auld Lumphanan’s Fame**<sup>63</sup>

The ultimate cohesiveness that continues to bind Traveller culture is kinship and through memories of extended relatives the Old Road becomes a “hall of fame”. Nowhere does Stanley feel closer to his “folk” than at Lumphanan, an affinity kindled from memories of times spent among a remarkable line of family singers, musicians and storytellers going back many generations. Though perhaps the most well-known relative was his aunt, Jeannie Robertson, he also credits his mother Elizabeth MacDonal, his father William Stewart, his Uncle Albert Stewart, his great grandfather Bill Macgregor, and Maggie Stewart for their wealth of folklore.

At the heart of the road is the social environment of the camping place where his family camped, cooked their habben [food in North-East Traveller Cant] over fires made with broom, exchanged experiences, and celebrated their community with songs, tunes and tales late into the night. Encompassing everything from country hits or children’s songs to big

ballads and tales, Stanley’s formidable memory has grown from a lively atmosphere of listening and family participation from his earliest years.

For Traveller children the Old Road became the focal point of their education. Though continually bullied and sent to the lowest class at school Stanley recalls how the strength of his family tradition “made you feel so very special”<sup>64</sup> and counterbalanced the social isolation he experienced there. The mechanisms of traditional education created unshakeable bonds between family members that have almost no parallel within the school system. Stanley told me, “It was a complete learning centre better than any school or college I ever went to”. (Robertson, in press)

Stories could be repeated, stretched over several nights or, by association and competitive spirit, lead to more embellished, larger-than-life versions. Stanley’s favourites were the supernatural stories that “wid terrify ye to death”,<sup>65</sup> or the Jack tales, several of which are geographically localised on the Old Road. Stanley explains their function:

The Jack Tales are tales of encouragement: These are tales to lift all the Travelling folk, (most especially the children) from the despair that is felt within the city and the prejudices of many of its people. For Jack is a marvellous and exemplary character – who always manages to get over all the evils of life, by finding worth within himself, and from this gaining faith with his fellow being – because Jack is not alone along the paths of truth – he is guided and assisted by helpers, who are very important to him. (Robertson 1988, 119)



*Auld Cruvie. Photo by author*

### Jack on the Old Road

The “King of the Road” is Auld Cruvie,<sup>66</sup> the ancient “all-seeing” oak tree. Respected for his age and stature (it is regarded as gendered), “Cruvie” is the focal point of one of Stanley’s key “Jack” narratives. Every fifty years, during the solstice, all the trees of the road come out to dance, revealing long-hidden jewels. Jack is successful because he has the wisdom not to take more than he needs, whereas the greedy Laird of the Black Airt is still filling his pockets with treasure when the roots of the returning tree crush him. Stanley uses this tale today to illustrate the topical environmental message that overpowering

greed and disrespect for nature will result in humanity’s ultimate demise. He believes this story has been reactivated in tradition because the world needs a reminder of the eternal bond between humans and nature.

### Memory, Performance, and the Senses

In the “intensely human habitat” of narratives in place Traveller culture has no shortage of mnemonic devices. (Nicolaisen 2002, 9) The sound and vocabulary of Traveller traditions in performance relates to a “folk-cultural register”, in which continual exposure to the commonplace phrases of traditional ballads and stories has added adeptness for extended descriptive embellishment to the individualised nuances of everyday speech. (Nicolaisen 1990, 44) Stanley says proudly, “Travellers were masters of hyperbolae”!<sup>67</sup> In the use of sound, imagery, alliteration and metaphor to convey emotional and situational content, he remembers how “everything was magnified”<sup>68</sup> to communicate full dramatic effect.

Stanley’s supply of descriptive phrases, comparative devices and capacity for immediate retort, such as, “Fake avree frae me ye auld cravat cos I widna gee ye as much as a lick o mi beard”, finds the humour and visual impact in every situation. Expressions like “drooshie and dry” to describe thirst and “blue sparks and fiery ends” to describe anger are just two examples of how he has fused his character to this inventive vocabulary with the goal of adding an extra descriptive edge to his speech and performances. (Robertson, in press)

Barbara McDermitt has noted how Stanley learned and remembered stories, sometimes after long periods of inactivity, by incorporating a spectrum of senses, by repetition, through use of numbers and symbols, or by drawing out the memory through progressive re-visualisations of place:

First of all I try to remember the actual place where I heard the story, maybe Lumphanan or someplace camping. I try to remember the setting, everything, even the smells, everything to do with the senses. I try to picture the storyteller, the voice, gestures, maybe rhymes or riddles. As I picture the actual event the missing parts of the story come back to me. It's a fusion of fragments...Once I hear a story, it's never really lost. (McDermitt 1986, 361-62)

Above Stanley describes a methodology similar to "going through the eye of the skull", using a three-way ritualised process of relocation, from the revisiting of the situational core to a rebuilding and articulation of its content. The journey from memory to renewal represents the creation of an individualised, experientially-grounded and timeless performance space.

As Maggie Stewart later emphasised, "You hae [have] understood that there are two times on this earth, the here and now, and story-time".<sup>69</sup> Like breathing in and out memory becomes a referential blueprint, the rubric of a text in progress. Using the material and traditional as points of departure the land where stories grow creates a new "place" in narrative time, a coexistence

world where knowledge, creativity and "occasionality" meet ancestral memory and the wisdom of the eternal.

Through the use of visual aids to recreate memorial places in the mind ballads, songs and stories designed to "mak a lang road short"<sup>70</sup> also became the "instruments of oral knowledge". (Robertson, "The Old Road," 2002-2005) Stanley remembers, "It was lovely to be at Drum, and then hear the ballad 'The Lady o Drum' or to be at Udny and hear 'Bonnie Udny' or Fyvie and hear 'Tifty's Annie', at Tarland and hear 'Corachree' or Monymusk and hear 'Johnnie o the Brine'. As a child I thought that everybody knew these songs and I did not realise until a later age just how precious these gems were". (McDermitt 1986, 9) His brief summary of nearby song locations conveys a fleeting sense of the wider orientation points of the Traveller landscape of Scotland. Beside the glimmer [fire] at Lumphanan Stanley remembers ballads were delivered with deliberation and immediacy "as though they happened yesterday",<sup>71</sup> their texts, plots and circumstances becoming regular subjects of discussion and social debate. Whether visiting historic ballad locations or teaching in a classroom Stanley draws listeners through a connection with ancient places towards a confident and well-rounded understanding of the human situation within the ballad.

Local ballad "Busk Busk Bonnie Lassie" is associated with the spectacular mountain pass of Glenshee in Highland Perthshire. (Robertson 1984, Track 3) Known in Traveller tradition as an ancient "bridal path",<sup>72</sup> the soldier's invitation to his sweetheart to walk with him

over Glenshee becomes a proposal for marriage. The soldier's potentially fateful departure implicit in the language reveals the song's "anti war sentiments"<sup>73</sup> Visiting this location, Stanley reminded me, "Now, when you sing this song you hae a vision o this place in your mind and you can bring it into the song".<sup>74</sup>

Busk Busk Bonnie Lassie (excerpt)

Fain I wid gang wi ye  
*willingly, would, go with you*  
 For yer aye on my mind  
*always*  
 It was never my intention  
 For to leave ye behind *you*  
 Busk, busk bonnie lassie  
 Aye, and come awa wi me *away*  
 And I'll tak ye tae Glen Isla *take*  
 Near Bonnie Glenshee  
 Fain I wid gang wi ye  
 But wi ye I daurna *go dare not*  
 Fain I wid gang wi ye  
 For I love ye so  
 Busk busk ...  
 An dae ye see yon high hills *do*  
 Aa covered wi snaw *all; snow*  
 They hae pairted mony's a true love  
*parted many a*  
 An they'll surely pairt us twa *two*  
 Busk, busk ...  
 An dae ye see yon shepherds *do*  
 As they mairch along *march, along*  
 Wi their plaidies pu'd about them  
*pulled, about*  
 And their sheep follae on *follow*  
 Busk, busk ...

The many local variants of this song suggest a cultural mapping of memory similar to that discussed by Judith Okeley. In Traveller tradition visual and spatial associations with the text are richly developed and, whilst founded by default upon a sense of the past, informed

by "orally transmitted traditions passed down through families and communities" (Davies 2007, 41), this co-exists with literary or contemporary knowledge, personal experience, and an awareness of how other groups have interpreted the songs. The experiential amounts to a knowledge base of all that is remembered (Nora 1989, 13) and, beyond socio-cultural boundaries, the universally applicable content of ballads can evoke infinite collective contexts for memory, strengthening their potential to teach. The Travelling way of life has made this reverent approach to traditions in performance a cultural strategy.

### The Multidimensional Ballad

The idea of "fusion" appears well-suited to these multiple layers of engagement. To the performance of ballads through place Traveller tradition adds an ethereal element that moves beyond their histories, encoded texts or creation in sensory dimensions. Songs entwined with the memories of much-loved relatives (Williamson 1985, 4) become relived genealogies inhabited by ancestral voices, and Stanley brings the memory and presence of many people to the stage. Performing with sincerity, respect and involvement Stanley teaches that "when you sing a tribe comes with you".<sup>75</sup> At times Stanley is moved to tears by the ballads he calls "his dearest friends".<sup>76</sup> Their emotional content is magnified as much by the timeless bonds they create with closely-felt family, as by his interaction with their events. When performing family songs their presence, participation, and direction are often sensed strongly.

His Auntie Jeannie, in particular, is an ever-present mentor, "And the tears just used to stream doon ma eyes, just powerful, and she still dis it yet, she's been dead for aa these years and she still comes through me. It's really frightening. But I ken she's teaching me...She wants me to get all her phraseology".<sup>77</sup> Stanley says, "A real balladeer fuses wi his ballad and the whole spirit o the ballad is there. Yer there in spirit and ye're there in body".<sup>78</sup> Using the same principle of internalisation and externalisation, drawing in the ballad, and relocating himself to the heart of the song, Stanley's intention is to become a "multi-dimensional singer",<sup>79</sup> a channel through which the song is able to come forward. Like a suspension of self,<sup>80</sup> each performance becomes a reverent renewal of an unbroken living link between singer and song.

Stanley's ballads are intensely visual, "lived in", and emotionally delivered commentaries:

I see them like films or plays in front o me. Yer the producer, the director, the actors, the narrator... You're every character in it. And you see it. And you've got to convey it! I see it like a big screen. I see it in a cinemascope Hollywood production. Every colour's there, and everything's there. And I want folk ... to see this vision.<sup>81</sup>

Stanley has been much influenced by his Auntie Jeannie who explained to him as a child that, "ballads live in the air all around you. Breath them in, let them fill aa your senses, and then, tak them oot bonnie".<sup>82</sup> According to Stanley,

the full implications of her words have been greatly misinterpreted by scholars. Stanley says, "Jeannie meant, 'just sing it as best as you can'",<sup>83</sup> His emphasis upon connecting with ballad location and content reflects his sense that a heartfelt performance is preferable to a "beautiful voice"<sup>84</sup>

High up in the air ye'll get the words o the ballad and down below further ye'll get the melody. But in between that space between the melody and the actual ballad itself, the words, lies all the magic of the ballad. And that's far The Mysie is. And it's once yer able to go in and take that out and discover it... And then that's the thing that gees ye the shivers doon yer spine. And that's fin ye get emotionally involved in the ballad.<sup>85</sup>

### Catching The Mysie

Like Jeannie's, Stanley's mentoring has had a transformational effect. Sam Lee, a traditional singer much influenced by Stanley, describes this "inside" approach, "I felt as though I was standing aside looking at myself performing. I was outside myself... just overawed by this power. Somebody else seemed to be singing through me. Then I realised, that was the brilliance of the ballad".<sup>86</sup> Reaching this tuned-in "place" Stanley's philosophy begins to make integral sense. To be a good storyteller, he says, "you must be willing to give up something of yourself",<sup>87</sup> an approach described by a local storyteller as being open to the "childlike innocence"<sup>88</sup> that is part of even the most disturbing stories.

Stanley's ultimate performance goal is The Mysie,<sup>89</sup> a term he uses to de-



scribe music's moving, transforming effect when sourced in visual connection, attentiveness to language, imagery and event, and emotional involvement. Felt as commonly by listeners as singers themselves, in Stanley's mind The Mysie, which can "mak yer hair stand on end",<sup>90</sup> is a tangible force, a gift, rather like the mantle of the storyteller, which bestows itself upon the sincere performer, at times adopting the human and elemental qualities of a deity-like being.

An experience of The Mysie spells a heightening of individual and collective thought, in performance, the creation of a conjoining "atmosphere". Stanley describes this as "feeling shivers down

your spine",<sup>91</sup> and, reflecting his own deep religious faith, as an appearance that signifies the presence of God. Its ancient power is such that Stanley says, "When ye've got that nobody can take it away frae ye",<sup>92</sup> and through transferable techniques like "the eye of the skull", a tradition bearer becomes part of a dialogue with eternity.

### The Land where Stories Grow

Stanley's commentary on The Mysie sums up what is perhaps the most compelling aspect of memory to Traveller tradition—its role as a human treasury of immeasurable wealth. Describing his inheritance as a silver chalice to be nurtured and passed on (Robertson, 2005),



The Travellers' Midden, Autumn 2007

Photo by Steve Webb

Stanley attempts to share his culture in the face of change, an act that embodies the belief that nothing is gone unless it is forgotten. By choosing to remember Travellers, so often outwardly disenfranchised, have prioritised the "communal bonds" (Yoors 2004, 7) of family ties and human exchange in order to celebrate their heritage as a source of pride, ownership and creativity.

Without Stanley's active belief in its continuing vitality, the Old Road of Lumphanan would be nothing more than a dirt track. Combining memory, tradition, and creativity, he has recreated its understated landscape as a living and monumental archive of Traveller life.

Today the only physical trace of the road's alternative history is carefully buried in the Travellers' midden,<sup>93</sup> the place where Stanley says they disposed of rubbish or buried things for posterity.<sup>94</sup> Concealed in layers, the midden divulges artefacts which relay a history of human dwelling. From the fragmented and unknown to the objects of living memory, the pieces of broken china, horse brasses and tackle, or cracked pots, cups and basins confirm the ancestral and emanate belonging. Nearer the surface objects become more complete in their direct relationship to remembered people. Stanley's discovery of his father's old-fashioned brass razor led him to recount tales, songs and anecdotes of his memory.

Such material becomes a conduit for new narratives that use a sense of the past to objectify the present. Within Traveller culture, the pervasive themes of cyclical renewal or life as a journey re-

flect a worldview instilled by the practical, descriptive, and symbolic richness of Traveller education in which the guidance of family, tradition and nature is always accessible when sought.

From the childhood game of making Brackos, Stanley learned to construct pictures and tell stories from gathered natural objects. Not only do these unfolding narratives hone descriptive abilities, they also provide methods for reflecting on life and for self-analysis. Today this skill allows him to perceive and arrange constellations of symbols, to create stories of expansive and enlightening narrative meaning from apparently unremarkable objects.<sup>95</sup>

Stanley's life as a Traveller and his family memories of the Old Road have taught him to cultivate the spirit of discernment and the ability to read his environment from the inside. Tradition manifests itself in the connections of knowledge drawn between the visible and the unseen and, in Traveller belief, material objects and oral traditions alike carry energetic properties, tangible shadows of the lives and experiences they connote. Handed down in his family is a belief that "the eyes are the mirror of the soul". "Looking in" on the landscape, Stanley's environment has become a teacher, and a reflection of all human situations.

Stanley's work today honours the memory of his ancestors and carries their knowledge forward in a unique and individual way. By passing on the mantle of tradition with an informed knowledge of its symbolic importance and an awareness of his sources, he, in turn, becomes a teacher and ensures its continu-

ity. Memory, experienced through tradition, provides an ancestrally sanctioned route for the development of solutions to current challenges. Catching a glimpse of the Old Road, visitors return through the eye of the skull richer in knowledge and transformed by the experience of a world perceived anew.

In the dedicated work of sharing the experiential within their culture, Traveler performers such as Stanley communicate a worldview that can cross the boundaries of outside memory, using tradition as a force to instigate positive changes in popular belief. Moving past the “tip of the iceberg”, between folklore study and the experiential language of tradition, terms such as “multi-dimensionality” can suggest ways of looking anew at the complicated dynamics of memory in traditional contexts. “Looking in” on the sensory dimensions of the experience of tradition elucidates how places exist in memory. It suggests that these places of memory serve as a motivational and creative force in tradition because of their human connections.

To sum up, the Old Road of Lumphanan is a landscape humanised by tradition. Its land is rich with the ancestral memory of learned knowledge and narrated in the distilled essence of experiences represented by archetypal figures like Jack. Just below the surface, from the stories and songs told of people that lived once or never, to the intensely individualised associations of living memory, the vertical meets the horizontal, the continual and immediate. Going through the eye of the skull creates a place, “the land where stories grow”, where these levels of knowledge

and immediacy converge, resulting in moments of epiphany or timelessness, the Mysie, in the realm of experience. Journeying through traditionalisation in the landscape, the evolving present meets with the vertical strata of commonly held, cross-generational truths, converging with layers of sensory experience in the here and now. In its spirit of renewal, “Auld Lumphanan’s fame” exists because each feature of its landscape contains multiple layers of association, the many levels of experience between the exoteric and esoteric which inhabit the memories of every human being.

To storytellers Auld Cruvie exists as a symbol of environmental truths. To those who have never “met” Cruvie, it is an image of their own association and, to visitors, a reminder of nature’s balance, or a place of luck and light-hearted ritual. To Stanley’s family Auld Cruvie on the Old Road of Lumphanan is a place of many deep and personally associated memories, an icon of their history and belonging and, ultimately, a representation of life, longevity, hope and faith. In an archetypal sense, Auld Cruvie emblemises the growth and rejuvenation of the treasures of the earth, an ancient knowledge of great worth and substance, sourced from the deep well of tradition. The Old Road of Lumphanan viewed through the eye of the skull is the sum total of all these parts: memory, tradition and creativity in a continual state of interaction.

The transition from the material to the experiential is made possible by journeys of the mind “through the eye of the skull”. Travelling through the eye of the skull, or breathing in his chosen

surroundings, Stanley understands that people and places are an ever-present part of the self and may be revisited by the mind and through the intensity of memory from any physical location. Memory fuelled by tradition is a place in the mind; it comes from the past yet lives in the moment of recollection. Everyone continually relives and recreates from their past, but it is the attentiveness of the going within that brings the creative spark of The Mysie to the moment and ensures the vitality of tradition. To look at memory as a multi-layered process of tradition, dwelling and humanisation is ultimately to ask "Where does memory live?" In Traveller tradition this is not "entirely in the past", but in the consciousness of its eternal presence.

### Notes

- 1 Scottish Travellers are also referred to in public and legal contexts as "Gypsy/Travellers".
- 2 Fearing the prejudice of the settled population, some Travellers choose to conceal their identity to the extent that they will not associate themselves with their past even in family situations.
- 3 Traveller objects of memory in a settled world have become increasingly important. Photographs are increasingly treasured and become proudly displayed visual props to a substantial genealogical knowledge. When I visited Fife Traveller Duncan Williamson he lived in one room of his welcoming home, and was surrounded by brass; harnesses, horseshoes and beautifully polished objects associated with his life and accumulated skill as a horseman and trader. The same show of garish pride is apparent at gatherings of Traveller culture such as Appleby Fair in which displays of skilled horsemanship (often from very young children), competitiveness and exchange compliment an increasing stock of memorabilia in the form of CD's, books and DVD's.
- 4 Many Scottish newspapers describe Travellers this way. See for example 'Anger as council offers £25,000 salary for gipsy co-ordinator' Scottish Daily Mail, June 14, 2006 or 'Rogue Camp almost caused multi-million pound pull-out' Evening Express, July 12, 2006.
- 5 EI 2008.098
- 6 Conversation with Fiona Townsley, Perth, 16.8.08.
- 7 Conversation with Traveller resident at Doubledykes Site, Perthshire, 15.8.08.
- 8 Conversation with Fiona Townsley, Perth, 16.8.08.
- 9 Conversation with Fiona Townsley, Perth, 16.8.08.
- 10 Some examples of Traveller publications include: Stanley Robertson. *Exodus to Alford*. Nairn: Balnain Books, 1988. Stanley Robertson. *Nyakum's Windows*. Nairn: Balnain Books, 1989. Jess Smith. *Jessie's Journey: Autobiography of a Traveller Girl*. Edinburgh: Mercat, 2002. Jess Smith. *Tales from the Tent: Jessie's Journey Continues*. Edinburgh: Mercat, 2003. Jess Smith. *Tears for a Tinker*. Edinburgh: Mercat, 2005. Sheila Stewart. *Queen Amang the Heather: The Life of Belle Stewart*. Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2006. Duncan Williamson. *The Horsieman: Memories of a Traveller 1928-58*. Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2002.
- 11 I have taken this thematic idea from recurring literary descriptions of Travellers and Gypsies as the ever-resourceful providers of "occasional labour". This idea seems to resonate well with how traditional lore functions within Traveller culture as a store of skills and knowledge to be recalled and applied to life contexts as and when required.
- 12 Now often sought as a tutor or lecturer in academic contexts, Stanley Robertson often pits the strength, reliability and detail of his "natural" knowledge against the oft-times sterile and misinformed approach of scholars.
- 13 Stanley Robertson's performing and teach-

ing methods focus heavily upon drawing listeners into an individual, culturally informed and humanistic experience of the song or story he is communicating, taking them on a journey of their own creation. Using a variety of techniques, he asks participants in his workshops to relate to songs and stories from as many angles as they are able to suggest, with the goal of becoming “multi-dimensional”.

14 Sam Lee of Cecil Sharpe House in London, a singer heavily influenced by Stanley Robertson’s approach, is the source of the following analogy which I think sums up very well how Travellers construct their identity. Another related aspect, which is not discussed here, is the association of Travellers with fortune telling and divination.

15 Stanley Robertson often compares the journeys of Travellers to “The Pilgrim’s Progress”. See Sharrock 1976.

16 EI 2006.069 (my italics)

17 EI 2005.061 Stanley Robertson frequently uses the local Scots vernacular, in this case, the North-East and Aberdeen dialect known as Doric. Traditional performance continues to make expressive use of multiple and widely spoken Scottish dialects. Many Travellers use their own combinations of Scots, Cant (Scottish Travellers’ cover language”), Romani and Gaelic language in performance, song and storytelling.

18 EI 2005.061 Stanley Robertson emphasises that Travellers educated him through an inventive use of natural surroundings. Visual connections to ballad locations were used in particular to give a reference point on which to hinge and develop the context of songs and stories.

19 EI 2002.037

20 EI 2002.037

21 Bauman (1971, 41) refers to the use of kinetic markers as points of connection in folklore performance.

22 In Stanley’s mind, this idea conveys a perceptive and intuitive ability to see, feel, and

understand the essence of any situation. It is instigated through a methodology and process of connection that is intensely personal and involves an individual ability to relate to surroundings from the inside, using all senses to experience and express the event.

23 EI 2002.037 Wint (North-East Doric), *went*. Yak (North-East Traveller Cant), *eye*. Faur (North-East Traveller Cant), *where*. Aa (North-East Doric), *all*. Awa (North-East Doric), *away*. Auld (Scots), *old*. Caa (Scots), *call*. Tae (Scots), *to*. Wi (North-East Doric), *with*.

24 EI 2002.037 The spiritual dimensions accorded to this way of looking are important. Stanley Robertson has multiple teaching mechanisms with the same goal in mind. Each leads to a view of “pure intelligence”, and suggests that the eye of the skull is a metaphor for progressive enlightenment.

25 EI 2002.037

26 EI 2006.127

27 EI 2002.037 Weel (North-East Doric), *well*. Hae (North-East Doric), *have*. Ye (Scots), *you*. Oot (North-East Doric), *out*. Mair frae gaun (North-East Doric), *more from going*. Wid (North-East Doric), *would*.

28 Conversation with Stanley Robertson, Aberdeen, 2007.

29 EI 2007.116

30 The latter category includes historic tales such as the legendary visits of the Gabelunzie King to Lumphanan.

31 EI 2007.128

32 Video footage from the personal collection of Stanley Robertson. Mither (North-East Doric), *mother*. Long (North-East Doric), *lang*. Wis (North-East Doric), *was*. Bairns (North-East Doric), *children*. Oors aa richt (North-East Doric), *ours all right*. Twa hooses (North-East Doric), *two houses*. Ging (North-East Doric), *go*. Aye (North-East Doric), *always*. ‘Aye’ also means ‘Yes’ in Scots usage. O (Scots), *of*.

33 Stanley has used a “ballad commonplace” phrase to describe this part of the road, one of many which is incorporated into his spoken

language.

34 Video footage from the personal collection of Stanley Robertson. *Pairt* (North-East Doric), *part*. *Fin* (North-East Doric), *when*. *Wid* (North-East Doric), *would*. *Cairt* (North-East Doric), *cart*. *Tak* (Scots), *take*. *Hoose* (North-East Doric), *house*. *Aiberdeen* (North-East Doric), *Aberdeen*. *Intae* (North-East Doric), *intae*. *Lookit* (North-East Doric), *looked*. *Glimmer* (North-East Traveller Cant), *fire*. *Biling* (North-East Doric), *boiling*. *Gunnel* (North-East Doric), *the very top*. *Duke* (North-East Doric), *duck*. *Sharras* (North-East Traveller Cant), *eggs*. *Couldna* (North-East Doric), *couldn't*.

35 These are Stanley's words of description, though they align well with the theories of Victor Turner on transformative spaces. See Turner 2002.

36 *Wi yer* (North-East Doric) with your

37 One effect of listening within these created spaces of narrative performance is a heightened experience that is “in concert” with the understandings of the performer. See Kapchan 2003, 134.

38 Stanley tells the following story about Tammy Toddle. “The story”s about this wee mannie [man], he wis a wee hunchback. An ugly wee cratur [person]. And aabody in the toon [town], ye ken [you know], shunned him because o his appearance. He wis like a wee mountebank. But he went oot [out] to bide [live] in the country, and the wee fairy folk o the place looked at him and never seen him as ugly. They just seen him as one o them. And they accepted him. So, they kint [knew] the treatment he wis getting in the toon. So they built him a wee hoosie [house]. It wis the fairy folk that built him his wee hoosie”. EI 2007.009

39 (Robertson 2005) *Whin* (Scots), *when*. *Nae* (North-East Doric), *not*. *Jist* (North-East Doric), *just*. *Intae* (North-East Doric), *into*. *Fit* (North-East Doric), *what*. *Gang* (North-East Doric), *go*. *Winnae* (Scots), *won't*. *Oot* (North-East Doric), *out*. *Hunners* (North-East Doric), *hundreds*. *Hinnie* (Scots), *then*.

40 See note 63.

41 Stanley has used this expression as a themed title for some of his many educational workshops.

42 Stanley's family tradition states how the authorities of the time were reluctant to investigate the murder or provide an official burial for the dead woman.

43 Steven Webb has been a regular attendant at Stanley's workshops on creativity and storytelling. His visits to the old road with Stanley have inspired him to write several poems related to the Traveller history of Lumphanan using Stanley's methodology of going “through the eye of the skull”.

44 EI 2007.104

45 EI 2007.104

46 EI 2007.104

47 EI 2007.104

48 EI 2004.037

49 EI 2006.127

50 EI 2006.127

51 Hufford's discussion of “official” and “unofficial” belief suggests how, in the absence of experience, willingness to believe is informed by context.

52 In performance, Stanley tells an anecdote which he attributes to Traveller Duncan Williamson. The many dialects of Scottish Traveller Cant which feature words derived from Scots, Gaelic and Romani have one common feature which relates to Cant's status as a primarily functional “cover language” designed to conceal the content of conversations from outsiders. Describing this function, Duncan would say, “If ye can't buy it, sell it, eat it, drink it or make love to it, there's no word for it in Cant”. Stanley Robertson in performance at “The Gypsy Arts Festival”, Edinburgh, 2008.

53 *Conversation with Stanley Robertson*, Aberdeen, 2007.

54 EI 2005.130 “Rest and be Thankful” is also a Scottish place-name for the summit of a steep

mountain road in the Highlands of Scotland.

55 EI 2005.130 This physical and visual approach to learning in progressive steps, which Stanley Robertson describes as an ancient teaching method, is used by many Travellers in various educational settings and is noted for its effectiveness and contrast to conventional teaching. Comment: run on

56 EI 2005.130Steen (North-East Doric), *stone*. Doon (North-East Doric), *down*.Faur (North-East Doric), *where*.Fae (North-East Doric), *from*.The 'ie' ending represents the diminutive in North-East Doric. Steenies are small stones. Whaur (Scots), *where*.

57 A description of Travellers given by Stanley Robertson in performance at "The Travellers' Day", Aberdeen, 2006.

58 Stanley Robertson often picks this theme for focus in his teaching work.

59 Stanley Robertson in performance at "The Travellers' Day", Aberdeen, 2006.

60 Stanley Robertson's vast repertoire of naturally descriptive ballads includes "Up a Wild and Lonely Glen", a song which reminds him of his father's singing at Lumphanan."Up a wild and lonely glenShaded by mony [many] a purple mountainTwas far from the busy haunts o menThe first time that I gaed [went] oot a hunting" This beautiful ballad, which Stanley visually associates with the singing of his father William Robertson at Lumphanan, is a version of the song "Queen Among the Heather", sung in different distinct versions by many Travelling families.

61 The Tree of Life stands near the heart of the Old Road and became a gauge of personal progress. Stanley remembers how, as children, they would measure their height year by year standing against this tree.

62 EI2007.097

63 This phrase is used by Stanley Robertson in his poem "Exodus o Travellers".

64 Conversation with Stanley Robertson, Aberdeen, 2006.

65 Conversation with Stanley Robertson, Ab-

erdeen, 2007.

66 "Cruvie" is a Scots derivative of the Gaelic word "craobh" meaning "tree." Auld Cruvie is the most prominent tree on the heart of the old road. "His" traditionalised association with wisdom is connected to "his" longevity, and "he" stands as a symbol of timelessness and renewal. The transformational experiences, rather like "rites of passage", through which the structures of Jack tales are developed is an important theme. Stanley notes that there are leagues of growth within the Jack tales, making them suitable for application to every stage of life. As a young shepherd boy, who spent most of his life under Auld Cruvie, Jack grew up immersed in nature and so learns to interact with and understand the language of the elements.

67 Conversation with Stanley Robertson, Aberdeen, 2007.

68 Conversation with Stanley Robertson, Aberdeen, 2007.

69 Unindexed interview with Stanley Robertson, 19.10.08.

70 EI 2002.085

71 Conversation with Marc Ellington, Aberdeen, 2006.

72 A bridal path in Traveller tradition is a road which when walked by a courting couple results in them being married on reaching the end of the road. Again, this idea aligns well with the progressive idea of journey as a rite of passage.

73 In verse four Stanley Robertson draws attention to the uncharacteristic "marching" of the shepherds as an omen for ensuing war and its effects of breaking up established families, courtships and social and domestic structures. Stanley Robertson in performance, Aberdeen, 2007.

74 Conversation with Stanley Robertson and his son Anthony Robertson whilst crossing Glemshee on a drive around some Scottish ballad locations, 2008.

75 Stanley Robertson, Unindexed interview

on "Ballads and Creativity", Aberdeen, March 2008.

76 Stanley Robertson, Unindexed interview on "Ballads and Creativity", Aberdeen, March 2008.

77 Stanley Robertson, Unindexed interview on "Ballads and Creativity", Aberdeen, March 2008.

78 Stanley Robertson, Unindexed interview on "Ballads and Creativity", Aberdeen, March 2008.

79 Stanley Robertson in a workshop for "Scottish Culture and Traditions", Aberdeen, 2007.

80 Titon. 1997, 94

81 Stanley Robertson, Unindexed interview on "Ballads and Creativity", Aberdeen, March 2008.

82 Stanley Robertson, Unindexed interview on "Ballads and Creativity", Aberdeen, March 2008.

83 Stanley Robertson, Unindexed interview on "Ballads and Creativity", Aberdeen, March 2008.

84 Stanley Robertson, Unindexed interview on "Ballads and Creativity", Aberdeen, March 2008.

85 Stanley Robertson, Unindexed interview on "Ballads and Creativity", Aberdeen, March 2008.

86 Stanley Robertson, Unindexed interview on "Ballads and Creativity", Aberdeen, March 2008.

87 Interview by Fiona-Jane Brown with Stanley Robertson on behalf of Grampian Association of Storytellers, Elphinstone Institute, 2006. <http://www.GAS.co.uk> accessed 21.11.2007.

88 EI 2007.112

89 EI2005.130 "The Mysie", is a term unique to Stanley Robertson's family. He describes it as a corruption of the English language term "The Muse". Other Travellers such as Sheila Stewart use the expression "The Coinyach" to describe this phenomenon.

90 Jeannie Robertson was renowned for this ability.

91 Stanley Robertson's description conjoins with his traditional and spiritual belief that when the presence of God is felt, it travels down the spine and when it comes from the devil "shivers" are felt up the spine.

92 Stanley Robertson, Unindexed interview on "Ballads and Creativity", Aberdeen, March 2008.

93 Midden (North-East Doric), rubbish *dump*.

94 Stanley Robertson often takes visitors to this spot below the main camping ground and encourages them to dig. He delights in its possibility to continually divulge new artefacts, and often uses it to illustrate the strict codes of cleanliness and hygiene observed by his people..

95 Stanley Robertson's ability to invent stories from symbols became fully apparent to me when he one day told a story of epic potential based upon the mass produced and, in my mind, unremarkable images of beans printed on a disposable paper coffee cup.

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## Response

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Sara Reith’s highly insightful analysis will illuminate future research on Travellers and provide retrospective clarification of research already completed. Over a long period of fieldwork and writing on aspects of Irish Traveller language and culture, I came to understand that nomadism, kinship and storytelling were all vital elements in Traveller identity. Reith’s descriptions of the working of creative memory on Travellers’ life experience reveal Traveller identity as a process that is deeply rooted, vibrant and capable of endless renewal.

The contrast between Traveller life as viewed from the outside by settled people and from the inside by Travellers is striking, and is well illustrated by the different methods by which Traveller culture is preserved for posterity. By preserving their culture orally, Travellers allow tradition to be integrated with each storyteller’s reflection on his or her experience, creating an intensely personal and living narrative that feeds from and into communal history. As Reith indicates, by the very act of recording cultural elements, folklorists, anthropologists, linguists and other academics investigating Traveller culture freeze them in a way that makes them seem like part of an idealized past to be remembered with regret. I did so myself when I recorded the Traveller language, called *Shelta* by many academics and

*Cant* by most Travellers. As settled people, and perhaps especially as empirical researchers, we tend to have inordinate respect for the authentic and real: we would consider a fragment of *Cant* recorded in natural use by a Traveller as “better” than a description by a Traveller of how the language is used. When I set out to research *Shelta*, I realised that without recourse to unethical methods like hidden recorders I would find it hard to obtain specimens of the language in natural use. Recognising that many Travellers were and are ambivalent about the language being exposed to outsiders, I decided to content myself with descriptions of how the language is used, which I accessed through treating recording sessions as exercises in storytelling. I now understand why this technique was successful.

As Reith describes it, for Travellers, telling a story requires one to enter into the characters, places and events using all of one’s senses. From a settled person’s perspective, nomadism may seem irrational and, moreover, may seem to denote a lack of attachment to place. From a Traveller perspective, however, the nomadic life attaches importance to place, both because the physical environment is bound up with knowledge acquired there and because places have associations with people who spent time there and events that happened there. Nomadism allows for the recognition that life is a journey and that the more you travel, the more you learn. There is a slight implication that if one is no longer travelling, one is no longer learning, maybe even no longer living. As a Traveller man put it:

I don't suppose a Traveller would ever forget the road. People would say to you 'Why don't you settle down?' You'd try to settle down, but when you're there where I live, you're there on wheels, you always know the Navan road, or the Mullingar road, or the Galway road or the Cork road is out there. And I would go, and probably I will go this year, or probably go next year. Living in a house, well it's jail, now isn't it, you're in prison... (Davy, quoted in Binchy 1994: 326).

Another Traveller linked nomadism and kinship in the following way:

Country [settled] people organise every aspect of their lives...on the fact of sedentarism, the fact that they live permanently side by side with a fixed group of people. Travellers organise every aspect of their lives around family ties; how far away other family members may be is of no importance, any more than how physically close non-family may be. The Traveller's very identity requires 'keeping in touch' and this in turn requires travel. (McDonagh 1994: 98).

Stanley Robertson's effort to share his culture in the face of change embodies the belief that nothing is gone unless it is forgotten. This point brings into sharp focus Travellers' noted adaptability: when the trades which we as settled people saw as being "traditional" for Travellers died out, Travellers moved on to something else, without a backward glance. These trades were mere outward manifestations of the inner culture that is maintained and renewed by the methods described here. Not being able to "practice" their nomadism

does not mean that Travellers become settled people. It means that nomadism becomes part of what is maintained by memory of people and places, of being and doing, of learning and reflecting and recreating through the medium of storytelling.

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## In Anticipation of a Post-Memory Boom Syndrome

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It would seem that at any given moment an academic journal is publishing an article, perhaps even a themed issue, on memory. We are evidently witnessing what Jay Winter has aptly labeled a “memory boom” (2000). The number of publications is overwhelming. The *ISI Web of Knowledge*, which combines citation indexes in the social sciences and in the arts and humanities, yields over 11,800 references to collective/cultural/social/public/popular memory, of which some 9,500 appeared during the last decade (1998-2008). It is reasonable to assume that these tentative figures fall short of the actual number of relevant publications, which span many disciplines and often do not use distinctive adjectives. Google Books lists 936 books published in the past decade alone with “social memory,” “collective memory,” “cultural memory,” “public memory,” or “popular memory” in the title (and 166 books with titles that refer to memory and narrative). Google Scholar lists over 41,000 items with titles that include one or more of these terms. There are two journals exclusively dedicated to this topic (*History and Memory* and *Memory Studies*), and numerous periodicals have devoted special issues to this theme. H-Memory, an online discussion network launched in 2007, features

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constant debate on what is now recognized as an interdisciplinary academic field in its own right: “...how humans remember and represent that memory, be it through literature, monuments, historical works, or in their own private lives”.<sup>1</sup> All in all, the literature is extensive. How does one separate the wheat from the chaff?

Memory is a slippery term. Despite all that has been written, its meaning is not self-explanatory. Unreflective and uncritical references to memory inevitably induce banal conclusions. “Collective memory”, conceptualized by Maurice Halbwachs (1925,1950) in the interwar period, remains, in the words of James Wertsch, a “term in search of a meaning” (2002, 30-66), and contemporary research displays discomfort with the vacuous ways in which it has been applied. In particular, scholars have deemed the connotations of homogeneity implied by the term “collective” to be problematic. In the early 1980s, a group based in the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham developed a neo-Marxist model of “popular memory,” which stemmed from two sets of dialectics: between popular and dominant memories and between private and public memories (Popular Memory Group 1982). A complementary study preferred the term “public memory” in order to signify the battleground between dominant and subordinate social frameworks (Bommes and Wright 1982). John Bodnar, whose study of American commemorations focused on the “intersection of official and vernacular cultural expressions”, also employed this term effectively (1992, 13).

While these terms have persisted, other terms have also been added. "Social memory" surfaced in the late 1980s and has since gained currency (Burke 1989; Connerton 1989, 6-40; Collard 1989; Nerone and Wartella 1989). It was employed in a fruitful collaboration between the anthropologist James Fentress and the medievalist Chris Wickham, who sought to dissociate collective memory from a Jungian notion of "collective unconscious" and to redress what they considered to be an over-emphasis on group identities and a neglect of individual consciousness in the writings of Halbwachs and of his mentor, Émile Durkheim (Fentress and Wickham 1992). Calling attention to inequalities, shifting affiliations and social contestations, Elizabeth Tonkin's study of African oral history also preferred "social memory" (Tonkin 1992). Later in the 1990s, "cultural memory," originally conceptualized by Aby Warburg in the 1920s in reference to works of art (Gombrich 1989, 239-59), came into vogue, thus identifying the field more firmly with the wider "cultural turn" and aligning it with the ascent of cultural studies (Carter and Hirschkop 1996; Ben-Amos and Weissberg 1999). The Egyptologist Jan Assman examined transitions between social and cultural memory, distinguishing between codified cultural memory and its more fluid, informal initial appearance as "communicative memory" in primarily oral social interaction (1995). The transition from the study of testimonies of Holocaust survivors to the "second generation memory" of their children has generated yet another term: "postmemory"

(Hirsch 1997). In all of these studies, reference to a discernable identity implies that the amorphous fluidity of memory can be contained and scrutinized in static form. Indeed, Pierre Nora's highly influential concept of "lieux de mémoire" locates memory in specific sites from where it can be excavated (1984-1999). In contrast, those who have followed Paul Connerton's use of the verbal noun "remembering" prefer to put an emphasis on the dynamic processes of construction and continuous reconstruction, on memory being in a constant state of flux (Connerton 1989; Middleton and Edwards 1990). Despite the conceptual diversification implied by this terminological variation, however, much of the burgeoning literature is ultimately derivative and tautological. Though the mushrooming of memory studies shows no signs of abating, "memory fatigue" is imminent. There is an imperative for an infusion of innovative research agendas that would offer new directions for development.

Given that the appearance of what has been diagnosed as a "narrative turn" (Plummer 2001, 185-203) occurred more or less simultaneously with the contemporary re-emergence of interest in memory, it is not surprising that narrative, though not the only form of remembering, is a central theme in memory studies. The interrelationship of memory and narrative is clearly a topic that can benefit from critical interdisciplinary work, and the three essays in this volume of *Cultural Analysis* offer valuable contributions. At the same time, honing in on their shortfalls can serve to highlight lacunae in the current "state-of-the-arts" on this subject.

Sara Reith's glowing appraisal of the storytelling of the Aberdeen Traveller Stanley Robertson attests to the richness of memory traditions associated with landscape. Yet it lacks a comparative dimension without which the distinctiveness of remembrance in Scottish traveller culture cannot be properly appreciated. There are various forms of "vernacular landscape", which I have classified elsewhere as "topographies of folk commemoration" (Beiner 2006, 208-30) and, as anthropological and folklore studies have shown, these can be found in many different traditional societies. Moreover, Reith's analysis of Robertson's reminisces of the Old Road of Lumphanan fail to consider the ethnographic present in which the traditions were recorded, evidently in socio-cultural conditions remote from when they were originally experienced and with other listeners in mind. In consequence, her conclusion that memory is "not 'entirely in the past,' but in the consciousness of its eternal presence" is neither novel nor unique to traveller tradition.

Ihab Saloul's discussion of "performative narrativity" in Mohammed Bakri's poignant film *1948* grapples with traumatic remembrance of the catastrophe caused by the foundation of the State of Israel and the ongoing suffering of the Palestinian people. A striking *bricolage* of genres, which includes storytelling, theatre, poetry, ethnic music, and personal testimony, distinguishes the film from more conventional documentaries on the subject, such as Benny Brunner and Alexandra Jansse's *Al Nakba: The Palestinian Catastrophe 1948* (also produced in 1998), and from the growing archives

of Palestinian eyewitness testimonies, such as the al-Nakba Oral History Project which has documented hundreds of interviews on PalestineRemembered.com. Drawing on a concept of exilic narrativity, which he has written about elsewhere in relation to "a fragmentary narrative composed from a plurality of narrative voices," Saloul demonstrates how the interweaving of performative aesthetics into a documentary movie extends past confrontations into a continuously troubling present. This probing analysis breaks new ground as far as the conceptualization of cultural memory is concerned, yet a post-structuralist sensibility would call attention to its neglect of the socio-historical contexts of cultural production and popular reception. It is hardly a coincidence that the film, which dramatizes the bitter disillusionment of a Palestinian actor who has had a highly successful career on Israeli stages, was made in 1998 in response to the jubilee celebrations of Israeli independence. When discussing memory, it is too easy to forget that films, like plays, books, paintings or any other form of cultural production that addresses the past, do not in themselves remember. Therefore the question of audiences is crucial for understanding the dynamics of remembering. Perhaps one of the most telling screenings of *1948* was in 2002 at the bi-national *Oasis of Peace* village (Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salaam) outside of Jerusalem. It was apparent at the screening that the film elicited different responses from Jewish and Arab viewers. Further, Bakri, who had just witnessed the massive destruction of the Jenin refugee camp in the Occupied



West Bank (the topic of his subsequent movie *Jenin Jenin*), indicated that conveying the story of Palestinian suffering to Jews was a primary goal of the film.<sup>2</sup>

Developments in neuroscience and neuropsychology that shed new light on how memory functions within the brain are mostly neglected by the concurrent "Memory Boom." Timothy R. Tangherlini's original essay boldly proposes to bridge the two by suggesting that Multiple Trace Theory (MTT) can elucidate the physiological structures and biological processes through which people learn, store, remember and perform traditions. His experiments echo those of Frederic Charles Bartlett, the former Cambridge Professor of Experimental Psychology, which were also applied to the study of folklore (Bartlett 1920). However, unlike Bartlett, who defined memory as "an effort after meaning" (1932, 44-5), or his contemporary, Halbwachs, who examined how memory was shaped by surrounding social frameworks ("cadres sociaux"), Tangherlini is more concerned with a positivist "pass the parcel" concept of transmission of memory which does not adequately accommodate the regenerative and inventive dynamics of remembrance. It should also be admitted that, in its current stage, micro level neuroscience is still grappling with the most elementary functions of memory (Segev 2007) so that its ability to address the kind of questions raised in advanced analysis of narrativity is at best limited.

So, what could be the new frontiers for cutting-edge Memory Studies? I have emphasized the importance of incorporating comparative analysis into case studies, though it should be acknowl-

edged that this objective entails striving to keep abreast of ever growing crops of new publications in the field. I have also stated the need for studies of cultural memory to transcend the examination of texts (in the broadest sense of the term) and to exhibit a critical awareness of the contexts in which memories are generated and represented. To these demanding yet elemental guidelines, I will suggest one more direction which shows promise of breaking new ground.

If Paul Ricœur's monumental *Time and Narrative* (1983) was seminal to the emergence of interest in narrativity, his subsequent tome *Memory, History, Forgetting* may be another landmark for Memory Studies insofar as it forcefully demonstrates the centrality of forgetting to our understanding of memory (2000, 536-592). Whereas it is self-evident that there can be no remembrance without forgetting and practically all studies acknowledge the inherent selectivity of memory, the study of social/cultural amnesia is still in its infancy. Contemplating the overall neglect of forgetting in psychology, Jens Brockmeier proposed a cultural-psychological approach to narrative as a means of exploring the dialectics of remembering and forgetting (2002). Forgetting is the topic of thought-provoking treatises by David Gross (2000) and Marc Augé (2004), and more recently Paul Connerton has outlined a preliminary classification which allows for more subtle distinctions between "types of forgetting" (Connerton 2008). Aspiring to move beyond these initial steps, a sustained focus on forgetting would require revisiting many of the sources associated with memory and

rigorously interrogating gaps, omissions and absences in the narratives. It would also facilitate further debate on the more ethically charged topic of forgiving, which is intrinsically tied to forgetting (Ricœur 2000, 593-658; Margalit 2000, 183-210). In its conciliatory sense, forgetting can play a role in assuaging the lingering wounds of aggrieved memories. These are surely pertinent issues for our times. When re-examining the relationship of narrative and memory, let us remember not to forget about forgetting.

#### Notes

1. <http://www.h-net.org/~memory>
2. [http://nswas.org/bhc/updates/1948\\_02.htm](http://nswas.org/bhc/updates/1948_02.htm)

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## Event Reviews

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**#510: *If the Shoe Fits...A  
Transformative Laboratory  
Exhibition.***  
**Betty Rymer Gallery, School  
of the Art Institute of Chicago,  
March 10-April 14, 2006.**

**Katherine Loague**

*Betty Rymer Gallery, Chicago,  
USA*

A living work of art is life itself, born from the dynamic fusion of the self (the microcosm) and the universe (the macrocosm)... If we accept...the interconnection of all living things, then art becomes the elemental modality through which humans discover their bonds with humans, humanity with nature, and humanity with the universe.

-Daisaku Ikeda, Creative life at Académie des Beaux-Arts, June 14, 1989.

#510: *If the Shoe Fits...* (<http://www.artic.edu/webspaces/510iftheshoefits/>) as hosted by the Betty Rymer Gallery at the School of the Art Institute (SAIC) of Chicago March 10-April 14, 2006, was developed over the course of two years, plaiting the power of the oldest transformative folktale (Dundes 1982; Sierra 1992; Warner 1994) with a transformative experience for students around the globe. Taking folk tale AT 510A as its guiding subject and theme, the laboratory exhibition examined the widespread interest in this folk tale. International artists provided their critical assessment and/or retelling of the tale type

through drawings, artists' books, sculpture, assemblage, and collaborative murals. Artwork included mentored collaborative student works from Kenya, South Korea, Turkey, Ohio, and Chicago, as well as some produced by pediatric patients working with the Snow City Arts Foundation.

As a laboratory, the exhibition's educational objective was to provide a forum to critically analyze culture and a citizen's place within it. The artwork provided a platform for dialogue that allowed local and distant comparisons of experience and perspective. In presenting works by established artists alongside collaborative student projects, the exhibition's designers intended to challenge the notion of privilege within the gallery's public space. The exhibition sought to construct a democratic landscape where the cultivation and exchange of individual perspectives could be effectively achieved. In this regard, the exhibition represented a critical intervention in the art world trend toward privileging a single point of view.

Case studies and focus groups conducted among school-aged children provided data regarding sustained level of interest in the tale, used to speculate on a projected laboratory/exhibition result. International versions of tale type AT 510A provided students an effective interface with which to explore fixed notions of dating rituals, death, patriarchy, family dynamics (including step-and/or mixed families), the complexities of gender expectations, grief, magic, matriarchy, misogyny, privilege/power, psychological/sociological phenomena, sexuality and/or spirituality that are at work within the narrative, as well as the unique perspective each artist used to interpret and present the tale.

Cultural Analysis 7 (2008): Page-Page  
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## Reviews

A sampling of the exhibited works by students and artists follows:

*Snow City Arts Foundation's* (SCAF) artists selected an AT 510A version of interest to them. In response, using medical supplies, they made plaster casts of their own feet and then fit those castings into altered shoes. SCAF visual artist-in-residence Lisa Fedich mentored hospitalized patients, enabling them, although physically confined, to walk in another's shoes. The works produced included Lauren Youins', *In Response to a Persian #510 Tale* (2006) and Ashley Bridges', *In Response to a Louisiana #510 Tale* (2006). In designing the shoes, each participant carefully considered the lifestyle and location of the leading character in the representation he or she chose.

Similarly, under the guidance of Pablo Serrano and Alberto Sepulveda, students of Chicago's Eli Whitney and Rosario Castellanos elementary schools created a lobby mural outside the gallery entrance as a response to AT 510A by investigating cultural artifacts close to home: their family members' castoff shoes. The students developed the mural inscribed with their perspectives by writing slogans across the painted shoes where one might typically find corporate logos such as the *Nike* swoosh. They studied international films and children's book versions of AT 510A to gain a sense of the social implications laced throughout multicultural versions of the tale type in popular culture, and to consider how those themes are expressed in their daily lives. While developing their own interpretations, the students deconstructed well-worn

interpretations, including commercials that use AT 510A to target youth as consumers.

In the same vein, three studio classes at Chicago's Multicultural Arts High School deconstructed the Disney film classic *Cinderella* (Geronimi et al. 1950) and produced a joint installation. Participants in Michelle Corpus' studio examined gender and stereotypes found throughout the animated film, contrasting these to images found in consumer marketing aimed at teens. Robin Roberts led a story-writing studio allowing her students to update Disney's screenplay using different genres told from various perspectives. Tanya Brown Merriman's fashion students altered clothing to design, reenact, and document the story from a hip-hop point of view.

Aaron Knochel's students at the Seoul International School reminded us that at their best, folktales can hint at utopian societies or at least articulate magical strategies with which to improve occupational concerns. Jack Zipes, in his *Happily Ever After: Fairytales, Children, and the Culture Industry* (1997) acknowledged the collective value of tales in his comment that:

We use fairy tales as markers to determine where we are in our journey. The fairy tale becomes a broad arena for presenting and representing our wishes and desires. It frequently takes the form of a mammoth discourse in which way we carry on struggles over family, sexuality, gender roles, rituals, values, and sociopolitical power. (Zipes 1997, 17)

The individual flash animations and corresponding movie posters made

by Knochel's students did not defer to Disney or any other storyteller. Instead, in the style of Wendy Walker and Jane Yolen's contemporary fairy tales, their interpretations critiqued oppressive forces. The students examined the oppression of homework, the dreaded SAT exams, dating, body image, war, and the struggle to balance all aspects of teen life—issues not easily resolved that readily cross geographical borders. The work of these students explored the potential of the Cinderella tale type to function as a tool of personal transformation that could assist them in dealing with the difficult issues of adolescence.

Likewise, Yesmim Sonmez's tenth grade students of TED Istanbul Koleji collaborated to produce *Turkish Cinderella* (2006), a unique story about a poor village girl's personal and economic transformation. The girl, Ece, is forced to move to Istanbul after her mother's death. In the city she befriends Tan, a paralyzed youth who suffered at the hands of his evil mother. Using AT 510A motifs, the story chronicles Ece's transformation as she overcomes the obstacles of servitude to become a successful physician. By the end, Ece marries and treats Tan; the evil mother's heart is softened; and all live happily ever after. Their piece was presented onto the page as well as into audio recordings in both Turkish and English.

Students from Kenya pointed to the cultural contingencies of the folktale by attempting to rearticulate elements of the narrative in terms of familiar, but different, Kenyan folk motifs. Students from Kenya High School, the national

high school for young women, under the direction of art teacher Genevieve K'opiyo, collaboratively produced the gallery mural *Lwande Magera*, a local legend that depicts the indigenous teachings of the Sodho clan of Kano (2006). Individual drawings made by students mentored at The Nairobi Boys School by art teacher Wanjiku Ng'ang'a translated the essence of a benevolent "fairy godmother" into ancestral spirits. Such illustrations include Edwin Kaseda's *The Walk Towards Help* (2006), Peter Njeru's *Terrified Cinderella*, and Dissent Ingati's *The Dance* (2006).

Extending this critique to a global scale, other pieces pointed out that mass marketing calls attention to some versions of folktales more than to others. The versions variously produced by Disney and the Grimm brothers continue to influence the public at large. An assemblage of individual artists drawn from various geographic locations and cultural heritages—Damla Tokcan-Faro (Turkey), Lucia Fabio (Italy), and Zsófia Ötvös (Hungary) — illustrated the impact of branded AT 510A characters. The artwork of Tokcan-Faro's *The ingredients for a life lived happily ever after, with Turkish to English translation* (2006) and Fabio's *Cenerentola* (2006) reflected a childhood association with the innocuous fantasy of Disney, while the series of paintings by Ötvös, *Trying on the Shoe* (2006), included the mutilation of the stepsisters at the hands of their mother as graphically depicted by the brothers Grimm (Dundes, ed. 1982, 28). Turkey, Italy, and Hungary each claim a rich domestic canon of AT 510A variants, yet each of the three

artists found themselves influenced as children by the longstanding marketing wizardry of the more popular versions and demonstrated the effects of this influence in their works.

Picking up on this thread, Eileen Maxson's video *Three Revised Fairytales* confronted and challenged the widely disseminated Disney representation of the Prince as a hero and Cinderella as a trifling girl. Overlaying imagery from Disney's film with audio from the TV show *90210*, the work exposed the Prince as a weak link in the story and Cinderella as a strong person who has suffered, survived, and transformed into a perceptive judge of character, a woman who can smell a rat in royal garb. To the extent that it sought to subvert a mass media fantasy in fairy tale form, Maxson's version realized the visionary musings of Angela Carter on the potentials of technology in the production of narrative. Carter observed that "[n]ow we have machines to do our dreaming for us. But within that 'video gadgetry' might lie the source of a continuation, even a transformation, of storytelling and story performance" (Carter 1990, xxi).

Other works in the exhibition commented on the historical process of how AT 510A was introduced to the public through print media. Chapbooks such as Pamela Barrie's Scottish AT 510A letterpress variant *The Ballad of Rashin Coatie* (2005-2006), showed examples of the initial mass-mediated treatment of fairy tales. Chapbooks eventually served as public curriculum, teaching the public how to behave according to the principals of well-positioned clergy

and judiciary. In 1942, the introduction of *Little Golden Books* challenged the privileged-status of literature in the United States. At twenty-five cents each, children's literature was made accessible to most by expanding print distribution to include sales in department stores. Amanda W. Freymann's work *Cinderella: A Fairy Tale from the 1950's* (2006), an altered Little Golden Book, used Cinderella to parody the sensibilities of American women in the 1950's.

Many of the works displayed in *#510: If the Shoe Fits...* also celebrated collaborative practice. Marshall Field's treatment of *Cinderella* in the design of their Chicago department store's 2005 holiday window display, inspired by the illustrations of Diana Marye Huff, was developed through a partnership with New York's Spaeth Design. The collaborative effort demonstrated the success of storytelling as a lure to bring customers into the store. Huff's original interpretation in the artist book *Cinderella the True Story* (2004), focuses on a young female protagonist who has aspirations to become a fashion designer. In the end, she marries the prince who finances her dream to own a fashion boutique. The shop eventually becomes a beloved store similar to Marshall Field's. Huff's sketches and Spaeth Design's foam core prototypes for *The Prince and Cinderella had a fairy-tale wedding and lived happily ever after* (2005), Tulle & Dye's *Cinderella Slipper* (2005), and Spaeth's *Cinderella – Wedding* (2005) represent the eighteen-month collaborative process and the numerous design teams behind the seasonal display.

The assertion that rather than teaching children about fine art, *art can educate children about the world,*

arises from the observation that when children's introductions often constitutes an intellectual exercise in status perception. In the art world, a work appraised at a certain monetary value is often assessed as being of higher value than works by self-taught artists or by folk artists. Frequently, pedagogical value is assigned only to celebrated visual art, in the same way that works by authors of distinction become canonical on teaching syllabi. As a result, the art product (text or visual) is too often valued over the artistic process.

In a child's experience of art, the business of the "art world" is irrelevant, but the process of discovery and imagination enables crucial developmental tasks. Great masters need not shoulder exclusive responsibility for developing aesthetic awareness in students. Children can discover shape, color, and the intent and execution of design in the images with which they interact in their daily lives. Students are flooded with text-based media that is ripe for investigation of content, style, and structure. Utilizing folktales, visual and text-based artworks as a medium of exchange has proven to be of value in discovering and sharing authentic cultural distinctions among students of all ages. What is more, the evolution of oral tales and print media, as folklorists have often noted, is interwoven with notions of social justice. Therefore folktales represent a powerful genre for teachers of all subjects to use in opening an accessible route to cultural awareness and criticism for their students.

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## Playing Folklorists Online: Teaching about Folk Art through Interactivity

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USA

### Abstract

*This review concerns an online game designed to teach elementary school students about the artists on Folkvine.org, an interactive website about Florida folk artists. In the review I look at the way that the game allows players to play the role of folklorists involved in public programming by intentionally foregrounding the research and public programming encounters within the structure of the game. The objective of the game is to successfully plan a Folkvine public event at which the artists' website is premiered to members of the public. The "chance" cards in the game are kernel narratives about the experience of doing public arts programming, answering the "task" cards mimics the ethnographic encounter of doing field research and learning about artists, and the "junction" cards imitate the brainstorming about the titles/themes of artists' sites. The project is intentionally playful in more senses than one, and imitates the public programming/fieldwork work folklorists do in sharing community-based arts.*

The Folkvine project ([www.folkvine.org](http://www.folkvine.org)) is an effort to utilize new media to share the stories of Florida folk artists and their communities on the internet. Through the use of digital media, the project seeks ways to present and, most importantly, experience their art and culture as well. This form of online ethnographic storytelling provides an arena for enacting the research process in a way that moves

beyond text-based presentation. The design and navigation structures of the websites on [folkvine.org](http://folkvine.org) seek to simultaneously present the context for understanding cultural stories and the experience of ethnography and ethnology (method and interpretation). By creatively exploiting the characteristics of digital environments, [folkvine.org](http://folkvine.org) reflects the narrative and reflexive trends in anthropology and folkloristics (Pink 2001; Van Maanen 1988).

The Folkvine elementary school game is an online board game created with through the joint efforts of the University of Central Florida and the Florida Department of State Division of Cultural Affairs. Elementary school students at Sterling Creek Elementary in Orlando, Florida, created brightly colored artwork for the game, based on the artwork of Folkvine artists Lilly Carrasquillo, Ruby C. Williams, and Kurt Zimmerman. The game board consists of seventeen spaces for "task" questions about individual artists, as well as several "junction" spots (addressing key themes and requiring a detour if they are answered incorrectly) and "chance" spots (relating to unforeseen events and circumstances surrounding the Folkvine public events). Although there are three main game boards focusing on three artists, the questions involve, to some degree, all of the seven artists featured in the first two years of the Folkvine site (including Taft Richardson, Ginger LaVoie, Wayne and Marty Scott, and Diamond Jim Parker).

The player joins the Folkvine team as an event planner in-training, and must complete several steps along the way. First, the player mixes and matches a bobblehead avatar from various parts and color options. The player then chooses an artist from a splash page. When the user picks an artist, he/she is taken

to the game board for that particular artist. The game board reflects the art and life of the artist. For example, Lilly Carrasquillo's board has drawings of *coquis* (a type of frog common to Puerto Rico and the figure which she first sold when she became an artist) and Mexican sun masks (a form of art she creates).

Then the player can begin the game. There are three types of cards on the board. The "task" cards send the player to the artist's site to answer questions about the artist; question topics generally concern the motivations behind, uses of, and history of various artistic practices. Solutions to these questions take the form of a multiple choice answer and a freeform response which expands on the multiple choice answer. The "junction" cards are in play at two main points in the game. These cards require players to name the theme or overarching metaphor that structured the creation of the artist's site and provides the rationale for the public program's title—information that can be inferred from an exploration of the site. Players are evaluated on the basis of these answers; if players provide poor responses to these fundamental questions, they are sent off on a detour lined with more task card spots so they may learn more about the artist. Finally, when players land on certain spaces, "chance" cards are drawn. These cards represent challenges or opportunities for the folk art event planner. "Chance" cards have to do with the public event at which the artist's website is presented to the community. They address questions about the date, time, and place of event, as well as questions relating to refreshments and the presentation schedule. Answers are scored "really good," "acceptable" or "poor," and the player receives a different number of points based on his or her response to the "chance" card.

As an event planner in-training, the Folkvine elementary game player balances learning about the artist with considerations of how to present that artist to the public. After all, an understanding of traditional arts cannot be usefully separated from the folklorist's encounter with the forces of the real world that influence the public presentation of this art.

### **"Task" Cards: Imitating The Ethnographic Encounter**

Sarah Pink notes that:

...working with hypermedia we can make multi-layered audio visual reflexive representations of anthropological research that allow students to 'look behind the text' (both written and visually) to fieldwork experiences...By combining visual and written texts and printed and electronic media we can come closer to representing and learning in a way that draws theory and experience together." (2004, 218, 220)

The Folkvine game enables this drawing together of "theory and experience" that Pink cites by bringing students "behind the scenes" to explore Folkvine.org in search of answers to relevant art- and culture-based questions raised in the ethnographic encounter. Like the ethnographic fieldwork on which the project is based and which the game mimics, "task" card topics deal with biographical issues, themes or topics in art, inspiration, cultural and geographical context, materials and processes in art, stories behind pieces of art, and so on. Questions for the Puerto Rican artist Lilly Carrasquillo's game, for example, concern definitions of traditions and art ("What is a *vejigante* mask?"), functions ("When are *vejigante* masks traditionally

worn?”), changes to the tradition (“How has Lilly changed the tradition when she made her own *ofrenda*?”), themes in the art and values of the artist (“What does Lilly say is the most precious thing in the world? Answer: the sun”), and inspiration (“What kind of art has Lilly made inspired by the Taino Indians?”). These questions delve into a variety of topics relevant to the understanding of an artist’s work and life.

### “Junction” Cards: Imitating The Brainstorming Process

“Junction” cards result in the player advancing or being blocked in the progression of the game. These cards parallel the work of the folklorist who, in planning community events, seeks to adequately interpret the folklore being presented to an artist. For example, again from Lilly Carrasquillo’s game, “junction” questions revolved around appropriate titles for her public event, and major influences on her art. In the case of Lilly Carrasquillo’s public event, for instance, the Folkvine team hopes students will grasp that she is an artist who draws inspiration from a variety of cultures to teach and share art. Students are encouraged to intuit this theme through the exploration of her site and its construction. If students answer these key questions incorrectly, however, they are sent back to answer more “task” cards before being permitted to try again.

The “junction” questions serve as reminders of the folklorist’s job as advocate for the artistic expression of traditional cultures and artists, expressions that elite culture and the mainstream media frequently overlook. As advocates in-training, players of the Folkvine game enact the public acknowledgement of folk art in the public sphere (Russell 2006).

### “Chance” Cards: Kernel Narratives About Public Arts Programming Experiences

As folklorists involved in public programming know, unforeseen events can impact the programs in ways that make for entertaining anecdotes, but not usually for scholarly material. The “chance” cards attempt to deconstruct just that idea. For example, a “chance” card from Lilly Carrasquillo’s game reads:

A well known restaurant owner finds out about Lilly’s event. She calls you and offers to write you a \$200 check to help support your project. Do you:

a)take the money and use it for a celebration party after the event is over?

b)thank them but tell them you really need \$500 because \$200 isn’t enough?

c)thank the donor, use the money on the event, and write them a thank you note?

Other topics include publicity for the event, equipment malfunctions, or issues of language.

Questions such as these have their basis in real life experiences of the Folkvine team in planning public events. Several examples will suffice to illustrate. At an event for Ruby C. Williams, the Folkvine team found the community center locked upon arrival and the office closed. Incorrect directions had been printed on the invitations. Pope John Paul II died the day of Lilly Carrasquillo’s event at the Puerto Rican Association in Orlando (a large proportion of whose membership was Roman Catholic). The city of Tampa and the University of Central Florida could not come to an agreement

## Reviews

on a bomb threat clause in the community center contract for Taft Richardson's event; as a result, the Folkvine team was forced to host an event for over 100 people without the requisite insurance. These circumstances formed the basis for "chance" questions in the game.

Brian Moeran argues:

As an anthropologist, how I record talk and accompanying stories also reflects my own craft of telling stories...In other words, the writing of stories is itself a story of writing, in which, as author, I choose to select certain themes, on the basis of perceived relevance and importance, and ignore others. (2007, 161).

Similarly, Linda Finlay argues that reflexive stories: "open a window on areas that in other research contexts would remain concealed from awareness...[and aim] to expose researcher silences" (2002, 541). With Moeran and Finlay, the Folkvine team members decided that instead of occluding issues of public presentation from the public record, they would draw upon actual experiences, using pseudonyms and other techniques to guard privacy in situations that might be sensitive. Occurrences such as those outlined above are part of the politics of planning an event. Exposing students not only to the cultural context of art but also to the socio-political context of public arts programming provides students with a grounded, holistic view of arts facilitators and artists as members of a complex social network.

### Summation

Timothy Taylor (2002) and Adam Chapman (2004) view digital technology as inherently social. Digital media may in fact lead to fur-

ther social isolation in certain cases, but it can also be used to effectively imitate social processes in ways that draw young people into an appreciation of the culture around them. The Folkvine elementary game employs strategies like imitating the research and public folklore presentation process as part of the structure of the game. Rather than leaving this information on fieldwork and public arts work outside the educational game itself (and relegating it to anecdotes to be shared orally or in written form with colleagues only), the Folkvine team has incorporated it into the logic of the game and of the educational experience. Playing the game, then, requires young players visit the artists' websites to research answers to important questions about the art, give appropriate responses to chance events that are inspired by real experiences of the Folkvine team, and identify the key ideas that express the main themes of the artists' work and worldview. Players of the game thus become public sector folklorists in-training and, through this interactive experience, come to understand important lessons about art in its cultural context.

### Note

The Folkvine Team consisted of an interdisciplinary team of faculty and students at the University of Central Florida. The Folkvine project was funded for three years by the Florida Humanities Council. The curriculum project this review addresses was funded by the Florida Department of State Division of Cultural Affairs and directed by Kristin Congdon and Natalie Underberg. Chantale Fontaine and Nathan Draluck created the programming for the game, and Lynn Tomlinson provided art direction expertise.

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## Book Reviews

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*Traveling Spirit Masters: Moroccan Gnawa Trance Music in the Global Marketplace.* By Deborah Kapchan. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2007. Pp. xi + 325, introduction, notes, bibliography, glossary notes, index, illustrations.

Deborah Kapchan traces the evolving tradition of Gnawa trance music from its Sub-Saharan African origins to its increasingly commercialized form worldwide in *Traveling Spirit Masters: Moroccan Gnawa Trance Music in the Global Marketplace*. She frames her work geographically in Morocco and France, and theoretically at the crossroads of performance, poetics, and aesthetics. The dancing and drumming trance tradition traveled first along the slave route, and today travels a different sort of trade route—the airwaves of live or digitized world music. Many past studies of the Maghreb have taken largely intellectual approaches, among them explaining trance’s functional aspects, its legibility as cultural text, or its existence as an embodied history of colonialism. Kapchan points out that it is possible to read the history of social theory and its tropes through these studies. What sets her beautifully written ethnography apart is that she also takes the spirit world seriously. The Gnawa ontology is one of difference and its reality can be grasped only in performance. It is not enough to analyze it only intellectually. For Kapchan, Gnawa trance presents more than an object of analysis; it is also a vehicle of knowledge that often possesses her. It is from her unique position as both ethnographer and performer that the reader receives such a rich description of Gnawan practices, history, and possibilities for the future.

A Gnawa *lila* (ceremony) with the *jnun* (spirits) occurs at night. The drummers rhythmically bring the dancer into a trance and the spirits into attendance. The work of a Gnawa ceremony is to give the participants—called “trancers”—knowledge of how the soul travels through life, death, and back to life again, enabling catharsis. The catharsis, however, does not occur through a purging of the spirits from the possessed person; rather, it occurs through the acceptance of living in a possessed state. Catharsis, then, admits and empowers spirit/human cohabitation. The tropes of the colonial legacy of slavery and occupation resonate in Kapchan’s analysis. However, she writes with openness to imagining and living with a multi-personality, which problematizes the notion of personhood in provocative ways. “Spirits inhabit the bodies of their hosts, but cultural worlds also inhabit us, and as people and their sounds, images, and words travel, we are inhabited by more and by different worlds” (6). The reader might ask what it means to be inhabited, to think and speak from a body that is at once yours and not yours. How does culture both embody and express people? Are those possessed not masters in their own houses? Or does the possession offer a sort of freedom? And what does it matter if people are not *really* possessed? How would we know, anyway?

Kapchan writes that there “is a finely nuanced notion of subjectivity among women who are multiply possessed. While all experience is authentic and real for the experiencer, judgments about who is truly possessed (‘the poor thing’) and who is working out stress in an emotional catharsis (‘to her health’ they say afterwards) are common in the discursive world of trancers” (52). Rather than delve into or develop a procedure for



evaluating whether these experiences or the spirits have scientific validity, Kapchan attempts to understand how metaphors of possession inhabit the body, expressing themselves in gesture, and further, how these ritualized gestures—the jerking movements, jumps, and falls—might effect changes of temporal perception and subjectivity. How the trancers interpret their shifted subjectivities both to others and to themselves relates to how they “see” themselves. The out-of-body, otherworldly experience of trance provides an oneiric mirror for an alternative view of one’s self, subject formation, and reinterpreting identity.

Despite the nod to men as trancers, for the most part women’s dance features most prominently in Kapchan’s ethnography. The male Gnawa play the trancing music and, while they also believe themselves possessed, they do not dance. A woman who trances “becomes an object to herself, an actor in a script. The script belongs to the *jnun*. They are the authors, yet their script—which contains the reflexivity that mediation fosters—allows her to see herself as if from the outside, from the perspective of ‘they’—in effect, cinematographically. Like an actor, she is possessed by her role, but is also aware that she is in it” (98-99). This kind of “being-outside-of-oneself” allows for a coming to terms with possession, providing an oneiric mirror for the trancer to see her “self,” to be both in and out of her body. It also allows for the trancer to share her inner space with the spirits and her outer space with the trance community, giving validation through a communal sense of a distinctive aesthetic. Multiplicity no longer seems so exotic.

The metonymic relationship of spirit possession to slavery and colonial violence relate to trancing via re-enactments of op-

pression, re-opening old wounds and past pain. “The spirit possession ceremonies of the Gnawa are metonymic performances in which somatic memories of slavery are invoked and symbolically mastered” (20). This opening, often metaphorically enacted by physical slicing of the skin with knives or burning of the flesh with fire, mimes the wounds inflicted by slavery. The memory of slavery causes pain but also an opportunity for healing. Only by recollecting the wound to discover what emotion, what traumatic event, or what shameful desire became displaced in transference can one heal. Recollection represents a process of self-recognition of the subject within his or her own biography which, in the Islamic Sufi tradition, can be (re)enacted by Gnawa *lilas* and dancing with the *jnun* by reopening or revisiting an old wound or loss.

The temporal wound (re)opened and (re)visited in trance, creates space for other temporalities and beings to enter and circulate, like the *jnun*. The wound or rift, in time, is not simply a void. Revisiting the wound or loss in *lilas* or dreams can be the way to arrive at a kind of resolution, but the memory never truly fades nor does the wound ever truly close. The wound is an opening for change as death is an opportunity for rebirth. Gnawa *lilas* engender a ritualized death and dreaming. In the Islamic Sufi tradition as described Kapchan, the sleeping body mimes death. During sleep, the soul exits the body and travels, meeting other souls and mixing with them. A dream and a trance is a *rih-la*—a moving away from oneself, but it also allows for a rediscovery or remaking of the self. *Traveling Spirit Masters* illustrates this with particularity to Kapchan’s own experience of losing herself and regaining a new identity, and creates a journey for the reader

as well, following the narrative temporal and spatial trajectory of Gnawa trance.

What happens when Moroccan Gnawa trance masters travel to other countries like France to perform their music for an audience uninitiated to the knowledge and practice of spirit possession? Money has long been associated with the Gnawa tradition and is acknowledged as necessary, but is not necessarily condoned. Kapchan attends commercialized performances in France which contain all the spectacular aspects of Gnawa trance without any of the healing catharsis or ritual understanding. How far the spirits can travel, and in what form, are questions Kapchan weaves throughout the text.

The future of Gnawa trance appears nebulous. Its status as a tradition in danger of losing its essence as fewer and fewer practitioners perform coexists alongside its status as an exotic world music genre. The identity of Gnawa traditions, not simply its practitioners, is at stake. Perhaps a highly commercialized public form will safeguard its existence, or perhaps the public form will kill the essence of the traditional form. Death, however, as Kapchan reiterates through the book, is not just an ending, but an event that opens up the possibility for other beginnings.

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*Risk and Technological Culture: Towards a Sociology of Virulence.* By Joost Van Loon. London, New York: Routledge, 2002. Pp ix + 234, introduction, notes, bibliography, index.

The Classical Italians warned that *knowledge too hastily acquired is not on guard*. This sage monition applies as much today as ever and finds within the field of technoscience a particularly snug and foreboding fit. A growing body of literature is investigating just how our mode of technoscientific “progress,” rather than embodying control, is instead ushering in an ever-expanding domain of uncertainty and instability. We are coming to discover that each attempt to avert or contain risks through technoscience is responsible for producing further, and even less containable, contingencies. Today, the elephant in the room is at once the bull in the china shop. As nuclear material, non-renewable resources, and virulent pathogens now line the shelves of this proverbial shop, it is becoming apparent just how little difference it makes if the bullwhip is cracked by ill- or well-meaning state agents, non-state agents, or nature herself.

In *Risk and Technological Culture*, Joost Van Loon performs a meticulous anatomy of both deep-rooted and emerging processes by which “risk,” “threat,” “disaster,” and “danger” (all technical terms carrying meanings quite different from their everyday uses) come heavily to bear upon us. For Van Loon, an analysis of risk must focus on perceptions of risk rather than any actual risk, as such. “Risks are always threatening to take

place, they never take place (as disasters do)" (29). In spite of this ontological "absence" of risk, Van Loon's analysis must navigate the complexities and paradoxes involved in treating risk as a special kind of "presence" (insofar as risks do in fact produce actual consequences). In approaching the paradoxical materiality/non-materiality of "risk," Van Loon engages Actor Network Theory (à la Bruno Latour) and the systems theory of Niklas Luhmann, to develop a particular understanding of risk as "virtual" object. In Part II, Van Loon applies his theoretical insights to four case studies of "risk" discourses. Discussing waste management, emergent pathogen virulence, cyberthreats, and riots in their specific historical contexts, Van Loon treats each sub-section as explication of "risk" qua "virtual object" as well as application of theory qua expansion on the conceptual apparatus used to engage "risk."

Ulrich Beck's notion of "risk society," (a very influential idea in Europe that is sadly given rather short shrift in American social sciences) serves as Van Loon's analytic anchor. Risk society, in Beck's formulation, is a concept of the social that recognizes an increasing relevance of "risk" that has slowly replaced traditional concerns with material "scarcity." Our technologies, if they had ever been unproblematic, argues Beck, are finally out of our hands. Beck's risk society notes that benefits and losses are no longer tied to expectations and intent. In his words, we are now dealing with "flows of goods and 'bads,' rather than goods alone" (21). For Van Loon, closely following Beck, this shift con-

stitutes a fundamental transformation in society away from modernity into a yet uncharted kind of present. "A risk society is a society where we increasingly live on a high technological frontier which absolutely no one completely understands and which generates a diversity of possible futures" (14). Viewed sociologically, Van Loon argues that an increased importance of risk relations (i.e. their avoidance and control) vis-à-vis class relations demands a new set of questions for reconciling and understanding the "emergent social (dis)order" (185). This organizational elusiveness accounts for what Beck calls a "risk habitus" on the level of the individual. This can be characterized as a paradox: the arrival of some impending danger is at once a product of expert systems' futility and a justification for their persistence. The upshot of the "risk habitus" is a schizophrenic trust/distrust of expert systems (32) and a general culture of ambivalence.

Moving beyond the ontological insecurity inhering in the individual, Van Loon turns his attention to cultural dynamics. He culls many of his insights from Niklas Luhmann's systems theory (1982, 1990). Systems theory, an offshoot of cybernetics, demotes the privileged conceptions of institutions as such, seeing them solely in terms of networks of communications in a "more or less deliberate set of processing flows, which interact with their environment in order to modify it" (35). Key to the logic of systems is their capacity to become internalized and self-referential (or "autopoietic"). Taking law as a model example of an institutional system, we rec-

ognize that it functions more or less independently insofar as its justifications are entirely internal to the system of law itself: "It affirms itself by assertion" (112). Law reduces all transactions to the logic of law. Economics (as an example of another quasi-independent system) cannot be expressed in legal terms and so finds no truck within this system. Looking at these productions of "internal environments," (at least so goes the argument), we can better understand a certain assumed logic at work in society. It is precisely this self-referential character investigated in systems theory that accounts for a susceptibility to outside, unmarked contingences, i.e. risks.

How, then, do different systems, after they achieve some degree of self-referentiality (autopoiesis), communicate? In Van Loon's estimation, communication between systems is done through a type of "translation." This, he presents in the language of Actor Network Theory (ANT). Citing Latour, Van Loon explores how "risk" itself achieves the status of agent in technoscience and how risks become exacerbated by what he, after Latour, calls "immutable mobiles" (51). This term refers to the maps, models, statistics, figures, or tables arising in one system and imported—a process Latour calls "enrolment") into a distinct system as a "matter of fact." "Technological culture frames risks in particular ways, but cannot contain the contingencies their social and symbolic organization sets into work, as a result of which it destabilizes" (45). As systems become more complex, they include more taken-for-granted elements. Resultantly, the system produces ever-larger un-

marked regions that reveal themselves only through system-breakdown. Such a model as Van Loon's might, for example, help to better understand the particulars of how gaping holes in the United States' security apparatus only came into view after four jumbo jets had simultaneously flown through them, or how billions of dollars of security-patching (including the invasion of two countries) has served to open still other apertures.

It should be clear by this point that Van Loon is interested in highly complex abstractions. Some prove more helpful than others. Perhaps Van Loon's most useful distinction is that which he makes between logocentric state apparatuses and the nomadological character of risks (86). For him, state apparatuses are logocentric, which is to say, concerned with order and classification, reduction, and discipline. They represent systems that gesture toward autopoiesis and self-preservation. Anything that fails to fall within the system is to be considered a risk to it. For the logocentric system, risks are understood as boundary transgressions from the outside (82). It is this logocentrism, Van Loon might argue, that allows for gaps, such as those that facilitated 9/11, to form without attracting attention. In short, logocentrism as a political model performs very poorly in "the risk society." "Supplementing this logos" Van Loon suggests, "is the possible availability of nomos—the practice of distributing intensities across a field of forces and intensities that is not its own" (159). Nomos is liquid, flexible, self-reflexive, and emergent. It engages difference as difference, dispels the thought

of “integrity” and forces us to not take the taken-for-granted for granted (193). “For nomos, risk relates to a lack of mobility and movement, to incommunicability of information flows, to codes that cannot be decrypted” (82).

Somewhat surprisingly, even to himself, Van Loon singles out “commerce” as a model nomadic institution. This is due to the way in which commerce “travels through the cracks in the virtual walls of institutionalized modernity” (83). He finds HIV to be similarly nomadic inasmuch as its surrounding discourses infiltrate countless social, political, family, financial, symbolic, and cultural institutions without becoming reified or bracketed by any one of them. HIV, he proclaims, “is a powerful, yet ambiguous code” (83). The work done by Van Loon’s nomos is appealing, to be sure, but there is an (albeit, arguably necessary) irony in his presentation of terms. His critique of logos, conducted in logocentric terms, makes ample sense whereas his characterization of nomos in nomo-centric terms leaves the reader utterly at sea as to how one might operationalize nomological practices – if such is even possible – in “the risk society.”

The aim of this is to argue that from within, from without, and against technological culture, new and old apocalyptic sensibilities have (re-)emerged that have appropriated risks to undermine this autopoietic movement of technical systems and reveal new opening for radical change. (89)

Again, how those openings might be exploited remains largely unclear. The four case studies that make up the second section of the book have little

to do with explaining the difficult first section and trace a tendency toward the commodification of “risk,” i.e. attempts by logocentric technical apparatuses to always transform “risk” into market opportunity. This, however, is not to say that Part II of the book does nothing to assist the reader in unfurling the convolutions of nomos. To note one such example, Van Loon argues that, in light of recycling, “Waste inhabits the ambiguous borders of ‘presence’” (108). He continues, “Hovering between presence and absence, [waste’s] ubiquitous ephemerality poses serious problems even for a culture based on strong boundaries of inclusion and exclusion” (108). The nomadological slipperiness presented by such semiotic obstacles as “recycling waste,” further complicates historical and synchronic treatments of waste, and hence problematizes traditional logocentric distinctions (here, between waste and resource).

If, as Van Loon claims, this work constitutes “an opening up of the state apparatus” (193) in the face of a broad-based tightening up of security regimes (think airport security and the Patriot Act), how well do its insights equip us to survive the apocalypse that awaits “the risk society”? How can we put these insights about technology, science studies, complex systems, logos/nomos, into operation and make necessary adjustments away from a logocentric security apparatus to one of a more nomadological nature? The author’s jejune attempt at answering these questions merits only brief mention here. Borrowing from the likes of Habermas, Van Loon suggests that we work toward a societal substitution of how we conceptualize trust: a re-

placement of the instrumental fidelity with quasi-transcendental, intersubjective *fides*. “There has always been another and more transcendental sense of trust, that manifests itself in a divinely inspired sense of fidelity (*fides*)” (201). It is in these normative claims that a reader feels most poignantly that this work, written largely before, and published directly on the heels of the incidents of 9/11, is already quite dated.

The most unfortunate irony of Van Loon’s difficult style, and the style of the authors whose work he draws from, is that each of his arabesque theoretical distinctions further ensures that the politics of urgency, which he so expertly outlines in the post-9/11 introduction, will play negatively upon any hopes for policy relevance in administrative risk discourses. This is to say that few, and still fewer in any position of influence, will feel compelled to labor through the technical abstractions of this book for the rare moments of clarity. What is most aggravating about this kind of spurning of a wider public is that Van Loon’s ideas merit much attention. Many issues that have come increasingly to the fore since its publication would benefit from Van Loon’s self-reflexive treatment of cross-institutional communication in light of risk and security concerns. Logos and nomos do promise further insight into how certain risks are able to breach security apparatuses, insofar as these terms focus on the nature of the institutions themselves rather than relying on reductionist models and objectified notions of “risks.”

It is less prophetic than pragmatic to state that in the ensuing years, the world will develop an increasingly

acute sense of risk (i.e. “risk habitus”). Events of enormous scale are sure to meet us in the form of deliberate (bio) terrorist attacks on the one hand and/or chance pathogens of tremendous virulence on the other (avian flu seems the likely candidate for the latter, Al Qaeda for the former). Understanding risk in its knowable, and for its unknowable, dimensions is a sensible ambition not only for the purpose of creating better avoidance or containment strategies (i.e. disciplinary regimes which inevitably break down at some point) but also in better contextualizing and problematizing dominant conceptions of technology in light of this emerging “risk habitus” for purposes of preparedness. This book serves as an object lesson in understanding technology not as a means to an end, but as an emergent structuring—a culture of sorts—whose cultivation in the name of progress might signal some quite unprogressive and unanticipated consequences which will structure and be structured by risk. One might call it a low-risk wager to assert that there will be many more books in the coming years that attempt to parse the ever-emergent dynamic relationship between risk and technology. Van Loon’s treatment, in spite of its problems, offers productive insights into how this discourse might proceed in the first half of the 21st century.

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*National Dreams: The Remaking of Fairy Tales in Nineteenth-Century England.* By Jennifer Schacker. Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003. Pp. 198 + notes, bibliography, notes, index, illustrations.

In *National Dreams*, Jennifer Schacker boldly claims that the England of the nineteenth century had no real fairy tales of its own and so had to depend on the collections of folk and fairy tales passed on to them from other nations. Recognizing the political and economic potential of fairy tales in other European countries, English publishing houses sought to translate and print these foreign tales for their English audiences. Schacker argues that in the process, fairy tales became powerful vehicles for conveying cultural knowledge in England. In addition to serving as moral or etiological stories for children, the way they were translated and fine-tuned allowed the English to position themselves as intellectually superior to their foreign neighbors. This, in Schacker's view, helped build an English national identity that ushered them into the twentieth century.

The object of Schacker's study is the folklore book or collection of traditional tales. All of these volumes were chosen by English publishing houses, she argues, because they had already achieved huge popularity in their native lands. Schacker specifically analyzes the contributions of four major works to the creation of a national identity in nineteenth-century England. These collections include, *German Popular Sto-*

*ries* translated by Edward Taylor from Grimms' original *Kinder und Hausmärchen*, *Fairy Legends and Traditions of Southern Ireland* by T. Croffton Croker, *Arabian Nights* translated (and rewritten) by Edward Lane; and Webbe Dasent's *Popular Tales from the Norse*. Schacker contends that rather than asserting their own patriotic identity through fairy tales, the English came to understand themselves, as well as foreign nations, through the literature of their European neighbors. By placing emphasis on compilers as situated between two cultures, Schacker examines their influence on the text in framing audience perception of the Other. Adeptly darting between folklore, Victorian studies, children's literature and publishing history, *National Dreams* emerges as a cohesive and focused work on the role of folklore collections in nineteenth-century England.

Schacker's examination of these folklore collections leads her to conclude that they owe their popularity in England to elitist attitudes valuing literacy over orality. The tale collections of foreign nations were compiled by collectors of oral folklore, who then rewrote the tales in a literary style for their English audiences. These collectors often changed parts of the story, sanitized the language to make them appropriate for children, or incorporated what they considered "literary elements" that were lacking in the originals. This process allowed the English to distinguish themselves from other nations on the basis of their literacy, relegating the oral tales of foreign cultures to the genre of "folklore."

Schacker is attentive to the textual frameworks, context, aims, publish-

ing details, and cultural history of each tale collection. In her analysis of *German Popular Stories*, she emphasizes translation issues, collector/compiler troubles, history of publication, and notes that the English version did better than the original Grimms' at press. She examines Croker's famous methodology and less studied colonialist stance when she writes about *Fairy Legends and Traditions from Southern Ireland*. For *Arabian Nights*, Schacker explores the implications of Lane's Arabian scholarship and an Egyptian national context for the English. Taking a cue from Propp, she closely analyzes the structure and conventions of *Popular Tales From the Norse*, as well as national particularities within an Indo-European heritage of language and literature.

Schacker also includes illustration histories that suggest how the traditional accompanying artwork can be seen both as part of the text and as essential to helping formulate the image of the Other. "In the analysis of fantasy," she says, "ethnocentrism often shapes the underlying conception of the real." Her critique of Richard Dorson is noteworthy; she criticizes the way he tried to downplay the degree to which proto-folklorists had catered to popular reading tastes. She offers instead the notion that their very popularity can be seen as a driving force in textual histories of these tale collections. Schacker's provocative conclusion brings the study of nineteenth-century fairy tales to the present day. She asks her readers to consider contemporary uses of "multicultural folklore" in the classroom, which are often intended to educate children

about foreign cultures. In doing so, she forces us to question the assumption that folktales from other countries give us unmediated insight into the Other.

Schacker has smoothly developed her rigorous research into a volume of value to folklore scholars and others interested in literary history in the making of national identities. In a work that successfully incorporates theory from such diverse fields as literature, folklore, history, sociology, political science, and humanities, Schacker demonstrates how these folklore collections, when considered through the multifaceted lenses of these disciplines, represent an intellectual movement in nineteenth-century England.

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*Tex[t]-Mex: Seductive Hallucinations of the "Mexican" in America.* By William Nericcio. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007. Pp 1 + 248, figures, illustrations, notes, bibliography, image credits, index.

William Anthony Nericcio has published a timely and powerful study on the images of the "Mexican" in American culture. *Tex[t]-Mex: Seductive Hallucinations of the "Mexican" in America* is timely, even though the author admits to a sixteen year long gestation period, because of the United States' intensified focus on securing borders for national security and the recent border wall proposal. *Tex[t]-Mex* powerfully blends ethnic, cultural, and film studies with a strong theoretical foundation that uses humor to expose the agenda lurking beneath the Mexican stereotypes that invade American academia, film, and even cartoons.

Nericcio constructs his close reading of the Mexican stereotype using a Backstory, two Image Gallery sections, and five chapters. The chapters include topics such as Hollywood films, actors, cartoon characters, and a hopeful look at contemporary Chicano/a artists. Visual supplements throughout the book bolster *Tex[t]-Mex's* central theme of the importance of images on stereotypes. The images range from hand-drawn sketches to elaborate collages of board game box tops, surgical procedures on Speedy Gonzales, advertisements of Aunt Jemima, and boxes of Tide. To reinforce why these images are so vital

to his argument, Nericcio cleverly juxtaposes these infectious, defamatory Mexican portrayals with Hitler's order to "his media industry to create a mass of *common visionaries*" (17).

The Backstory explains the whys and the hows of this sophisticated take on handling Hispanic "types." Nericcio explains how growing up in the border-town of Laredo shaped his early thinking (and his own name changes). This book grew out of a vendetta for *Speedy Gonzales*, but the mission of the text is strictly archival. Nericcio seeks to chronicle how the entertainment industry has created a particular type of character embedded with Mexican traits and how that type has evolved to affect both individual Americans and American popular culture as a whole. The Backstory also offers readers historical accounts of the Mexican revolutions and border battles that coincided with the burgeoning of Hollywood industry.

The first two chapters give the reader a Hollywood history lesson. Chapter One, "Hallucinations of Miscegenation and Murder: Dancing along the Mestiza/o Borders of Proto-Chicana/o Cinema with Orson Welles's *Touches of Evil*," explains why *Touch of Evil* is the quintessential *Tex[t]-Mex* film. Welles produced a film about a border town that reinforces cultural stereotypes with the majority of the cast; however, one Mexican completely disrupts the type-cast by not being dirty, drunk, or sexualized. While looking critically at *Touch of Evil*, Nericcio engages both film theory and Chicano critical theory.

From that critical advantage, Nericcio dissects Margarita Carmen Cansino's

(Rita Hayworth's) Hollywood career in Chapter Two. His poignant remarks reveal Ms. Hayworth as a studio simulacrum, an actor whose subtle Mexican traces were deliberately erased for profit and exploitation.

The third chapter, "Autopsy of a Rat," asks the reader to focus on, and simultaneously imagine, a reconciliation of various critical and cultural images including certain entertainment characters like Freddy Lopez in *A Very Retail Christmas*, *Speedy Gonzales* and *Ren and Stimpy*. To ensure that readers can understand the author's deconstructed *Speedy Gonzales*, Nericcio catalogues definitions of loaded terms and confesses his obviously psychoanalytic theoretical bent. Nericcio contends that violence can be discovered in a stereotype's etymology and that the reproducibility of stereotypes does the most damage—distribution equals recognition. *Speedy Gonzales* is a violent stereotype; he looks, speaks, and dresses the way that a Mexican supposedly does, but he is not Mexican; he is a "Mexican" as imagined by the Americans who were once at war with Mexico. Additionally, another major concern about *Speedy* is his intended audience. This popular animated star has come to function in children's memories as a reinforcement of a politically charged type of "Mexican" on "American" soil. The image of *Speedy* lingers well into adulthood.

The last two chapters of *Tex[t]-Mex* focus on images of the Mexican that should linger, but do not. The fourth chapter, on the tragic tale of film star Lupe Velez, reminds readers that Velez's big-screen sexuality paved the way for

more recent Hispanic sex-icons/actors such as Jennifer Lopez and Selma Hayek. Nericcio employs four accounts of vomiting (from disparate authors) to construct his argument for Velez—Luce Irigaray, Frantz Fanon, Rosario Castellanos, and William Faulkner. Nericcio wants readers to help "clean up the mess" and shut the door "on one of the more bizarre chapters" of Mexicans in American culture (172).

After Velez's tragic suicide, Nericcio ends *Tex[t]-Mex* on a hopeful note in Chapter Five. In "XicanOsmosis," Nericcio claims the only response to the negative image overload is a "broadcast of other and othering images" (191). Citing Tino Villanueva's poetry, Manuel Alaverz Bravo's and Adam Sergio Rodriguez's photography, and Gilbert Hernandez's illustrations, Nericcio proves that positive images are available and ready for mass distribution.

The borders *Tex[t]-Mex* defines are similar to the borders that separate high culture and popular culture. Thus, Nericcio concludes that by analyzing negative images of the "Mexican" in popular culture, underlying stereotypes can be deconstructed. Nericcio admits that he let go of his anger for *Speedy Gonzales*; he instead doggedly catalogues and exposes the empty shells of other negative stereotypes. *Tex[t]-Mex*'s strengths resonate because of the author's honesty, his deliberate use of humor, and his ability to confront an age of visual ideology with many images. *Tex[t]-Mex*'s weaknesses are declared by the author in the Backstory. The chapters are not logically or chronologically ordered because they are ordered according to the

author's personal encounters. Nericcio tries to complete amazing feats of cohesion with the introduction paragraphs but gaps remain. Other distractions are apparent. Almost every page offers a different image, an additional anecdote, or a sidebar; the reader can get lost in the myriad of visual options. The varied visual options, constantly shifting tone, and authorial confessions also make this work's audience appeal ambiguous. Serious critical theorists might be confused by the rambling prose; graphic design students might miss the crux of the argument.

Quite possibly, reaching a wide-ranging audience is the author's intent. Anyone (academic or not) can pick up *Tex[t]-Mex* and find a worthwhile passage because Nericcio connects Derrida to cartoons and *Speedy Gonzales* to simulacra storytelling. *Tex[t]-Mex* provides a timely and powerful archive of the Mexican stereotype in American popular culture that bloggers and theorists can equally appreciate.

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*Check It While I Wreck It: Black Womanhood, Hip-Hop Culture, and the Public Sphere.* By Gwendolyn D. Pough. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2004. Pp. 265, introduction, notes, bibliography, index, illustrations.

In *Check It While I Wreck It: Black Womanhood, Hip-Hop Culture, and the Public Sphere*, Women's Studies professor Gwendolyn Pough makes significant contributions to both black feminist thought and hip-hop scholarship. A third-wave feminist of the hip-hop generation, Pough critiques rap music's masculinist dynamics but stops short of dismissing hip-hop culture as inherently misogynistic or thoroughly corrupted by commercialism, as is the tendency for second-wave feminists and other scholars who came of age before rap. Rather, Pough convincingly argues that hip-hop offers rhetorical tools to invigorate black feminist discourse and increase its relevance to new generations of female intellectuals and activists of color.

Central to Pough's argument is the conceptualization of hip-hop as not simply an aggregation of artistic texts and performers – as is the case with most research on hip-hop, which takes the form of cultural history – but as a sphere of discourse, an expressive space within which young people, including young black women, communicate their experiences and articulate their political concerns. Yet it is a contested, male-dominated space in which women struggle for room to maneuver; hence, Pough's central metaphor of “bringing wreck,” the hip-hop slang term that “connotes fighting, recreation, skill, boasting, or

violence" (17). More specifically, she asserts, bringing wreck with regard to black women in hip-hop means to "fight hard and bring attention to their skill and right to be in the public sphere" (17).

Another key term Pough continually invokes is the aforementioned "public sphere," a concept she productively mines to develop her spatio-political theorization of hip-hop as a locus of political and personal expression. Her primary theoretical orientation derives from the Black Public Sphere Collective, a group of African-American scholars who in the mid-nineties reworked critical theorist Jürgen Habermas' influential notion of the "public sphere" of civic participation to include the activities of black civil society. In Chapter One, Pough offers a succinct synopsis of Habermas' central claim: that the public sphere is an egalitarian zone of democratic debate in which individuals put aside personal differences and private interests to talk about a common good.

Pough's first chapter serves as a useful introduction to the basics of public-culture theory for those unfamiliar with the literature. Here Pough also provides an astute overview of the Black Public Sphere Collective's key criticism of Habermas: that those bourgeois spaces he idealized – the cafes, meetinghouses, and salons of the eighteenth century – were always hostile to minorities as well as women, who could not as easily bracket off their differences as a private matter. Pough asserts that "as a result of Black history in the United States...these concepts have to be rethought when applied to Black participation in the larger

U.S. public sphere" (17). *Check It While I Wreck* is part of a growing body of scholarly efforts to rethink the traditions and practices of African-Americans in relation to Habermasian ideals, framing black culture in the U.S. as a "counter-public" formed in response to bourgeois exclusions and thriving today in places of African-American congregation, from barbershops to Baptist churches to street corner block parties, as is the case with hip-hop.

Although Pough directly links hip-hop to the enduring legacy of black public culture in the U.S., she argues hip-hop exists today as a counterpublic in its own right in which African-American youth "claim control of the public's gaze and a public voice for themselves" (17) despite oppressive ideologies and structural conditions that continually marginalize them. She acknowledges, however, that the public voice of hip-hop culture has largely been male. Part of her project is to criticize the gender inequities within what she calls the "uniquely testosterone-filled space" (9) of hip-hop. More optimistically, however, she locates moments in hip-hop's thirty-plus year history in which women's voices broke through the bass-and-baritone bluster of rap music, issuing street-level feminist critiques. She defines these ruptures continually in terms of "bring[ing] wreck – that is, moments when Black women's discourses disrupt dominant masculine discourses, break into the public sphere, and in some way impact or influence the U.S. imaginary, even if that influence is fleeting" (76). Pough argues that, because hip-hop culture fosters the kind of fierceness necessary to "bring wreck" to

one's opponent and, by extension, one's oppressor, it can serve as an important platform for future feminist expression; that hip-hop's powerful rhetorical tools can be wielded as political weapons by women as well as men.

To those who view hip-hop as mired in male chauvinism, this may seem an odd assertion, and one that is difficult for Pough to back it up since her claim is largely prospective. Her argument about hip-hop's political utility for women of color is less a thesis than a forward-looking call-to-arms for black feminists to "take up the cause and utilize the space that Hip-Hop culture provides in order to intervene in the lives of young girls" (11). *Check It While I Wreck It* contains rousing, manifesto-like passages about hip-hop's potential value to black feminism, which Pough argues needs to be more "accountable to young Black women" and to "come down from its ivory tower" (192). She contends that "if conversations and critiques of rap music and Hip-Hop culture move past merely dismissing it, we will start thinking about this particular public sphere in different ways - ways that can start to tap the potential for a more productive struggle against sexism and point the way toward meaningful disruptions of patriarchy" (13). What she lacks in evidence from the current state of hip-hop she somewhat makes up for with her engaged, impassioned tone.

Although the history of empowered female participation in hip-hop is somewhat spotty, Pough does manage to highlight a number of moments in which black women "brought wreck," or made powerful contributions to hip-

hop. Among the most famous instances Pough invokes is Queen Latifah's Grammy-winning rallying cry "U.N.I.T.Y.," in which the rapper calls for an end to sexual harassment, domestic abuse, and the denigration of black women in the African-American community and beyond. Pough characterizes the song as a "pedagogical moment" (88) for young black women, men, and listeners at large, a lesson in feminism delivered in the contemporary language of the streets.

Pough's overview of women in hip-hop includes not only artists working in popular music but also film and literary genres. One of Pough's most impressive qualities as a researcher is her breadth of knowledge about hip-hop culture, which encompasses numerous modes of expression, but also about black women's history, which she often invokes to contextualize the artistic output of contemporary black female hip-hoppers, suggesting they are part of a proud but often overlooked lineage of "womanist" African-American expressive traditions. She stresses cultural continuity throughout the book, devoting her entire second chapter to the literary practices of hip-hop's "foremothers" who, according to Pough, include nineteenth-century clubwomen and pamphleteers, early twentieth-century blues singers, 1960's civil-rights activists, 1970's Black Arts poets, as well as everyday black women keeping African-American storytelling and folk traditions alive.

In Chapter Three, the author persuasively links the activities of women in hip-hop to the vernacular practices of these foremothers - speech acts historically associated with black women such

as “sass,” “talking back,” “going off,” “turning it out,” and “being a diva” (78). She is at her best when finding these historical continuities, connecting both the artistry and the negative portrayals of women in hip-hop to modes of behavior and representation that preceded them. Throughout the rest of the book, Pough demonstrates a keen ability to deconstruct stereotypes as well as the cultural sensitivity to parse inherited codes of behavior assumed under racist and patriarchal conditions. By linking contemporary hip-hop performance to the kinds of everyday outspokenness black women have employed as a survival skill throughout U.S. history, Pough is able to substantiate one of her greatest insights – that female rappers, like their foremothers, use frankness, audacity, and spectacle to combat their own invisibility in the U.S. public sphere. Given that “one has to be seen before one can be heard” (21), the raunchy costuming of Lil’ Kim, the roughneck posturing of Eve, and fantastical music videos of Missy Elliott can be seen in an interesting new political light, regardless of whether one feels these images are “positive,” or that they tow the correct line for feminism.

Though largely convincing, Pough’s broad historical claims sometimes come at the expense of close textual reading, to which the author devotes little time or space. Her interpretation of musical, cinematic, and literary representations of black b-girls in Chapters Four, Five, , and Six are provocative yet too brief. More could be said, for instance, in Chapter Four about the homophobia Pough detects in the autobiographies of

Queen Latifah and Sister Souljah, who, the author argues, fall victim to the “myth of the strong Black woman” (122) as the backbone of the heteronormative black family. This important observation speaks to the way in which even empowered women of the hip-hop generation can be influenced by patriarchal norms.

Also significant and worthy of further development is Pough’s discussion in Chapter Five about the castration threat “ghetto girl” characters pose to male leads in gangsploitation films. By Pough’s account, the genre is rife with these female figures – represented by the “hoochie mama,” the “hood rat,” the “gold digger,” and the “baby mama,” – who represent traps to young inner-city black men. Whether money grubbing, sexually voracious, or overly opinionated, these characters are always portrayed, Pough argues, as posing a danger to the precarious masculinity of the films’ main characters. Those familiar with the genre would likely agree with Pough, yet she provides only the briefest mention of the roles played by actresses such as Jada Pinkett Smith, Regina King, and Nia Long, and even briefer descriptions of the sequences in which they are featured.

The conclusions Pough draws from these and other texts are compelling, though somewhat flattened by the fact that she does not provide a great deal of original source material – in the form of direct quotes, song lyrics, or scene-by-scene sketches – from which to build her interpretations. The reader of *Check It While I Wreck It* simply has to trust Pough’s readings of these works with-

out having access to the kind of textual evidence one would expect in a more literary-style analysis. Ultimately, though, Pough establishes the authority necessary to render her claims believable. Her credibility is premised largely on the personal passion she brings to this project as well as her expansive knowledge of hip-hop culture, black feminist thought, African-American history, and public-sphere theory. She skillfully puts these elements in conversation with each other, offering a youthful and dynamic remix of already established areas of scholarship that is potentially useful to both academics and activists.

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*American Science Fiction TV: Star Trek, Stargate, and Beyond.* By Jan Johnson-Smith. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2005. Pp. 308, acknowledgments, introduction, notes, bibliography, index, illustrations.

Jan Johnson-Smith, a senior lecturer in film and television theory at Bournemouth University's media school in the United Kingdom, has provided a much-needed analysis of science fiction television through an examination of the narrative and visual patterns that the genre has produced. Science fiction television has spawned legions of fans and clearly occupies an important niche in American culture, and Johnson-Smith takes on the ambitious task of sorting through the multitudes of applicable media content in *American Science Fiction TV: Star Trek, Stargate, and Beyond*.

Johnson-Smith opens the book by introducing the science fiction genre to the reader and simultaneously acknowledging that defining the genre has been a contentious matter amongst "sf" fans. In fact, this very debate will likely determine many readers' sentiments about the book. Johnson-Smith is cautious to group shows such as *The X-Files*, *The Twilight Zone*, and *The Outer Limits* with mainstream science fiction television. Instead, she places much greater focus on shows like *Star Trek*, *Stargate SG-1*, *Babylon 5*, *Space: Above and Beyond*, and *Farscape*, a choice which may alienate fans (no pun intended) and scholars looking for a broad overview of the genre.

The opening chapter does a fine job of exploring the historical context of sci-

ence fiction, paying homage to speculative literature and science fiction's role in the history of developing ideas about the future. In her discussion of metalinguistics and neologisms, Johnson-Smith notes that different approaches to science fiction such as satire and parody, as evidenced in films like *Brazil* (1985) and *Galaxy Quest* (1999), respectively, "offer comment upon our own world through metaphor and extrapolation, with utopian or dystopian visions of alternative realities" (30).

The book caters to the interests of both fans and scholars alike, which is problematic at times. In Chapter Two, "Histories: The American West, Television, and Televisuality," Johnson-Smith provides a lengthy discussion of how science fiction television redeveloped themes from Westerns to create "a new frontier." This is not a new development for scholars, but Johnson-Smith's cumulative approach will appeal to lay readers. Indeed, Johnson-Smith continually revisits this theme throughout the book, arguing that the Western mythos stems from an innate desire for exploration, thereby contributing to the allure of science fiction television. The book often reads like a dissertation, which it was in a previous incarnation, and those familiar with the correlations between the Western and other genres may feel quite distracted by Johnson-Smith's overzealous "name-dropping" of films and television shows to contextualize her arguments.

Clearly, the highlight of *American Science Fiction TV* is Johnson-Smith's coverage of *Star Trek*, perhaps the most important and influential American science fic-

tion program of all time. Johnson-Smith discusses the representations of gender and race in the series, which again is not exactly groundbreaking, but is nevertheless enjoyable to read and yields some interesting observations. For example, Johnson-Smith points out that *Star Trek* has been considered by some critics to be "naïve" and even racist for envisioning a white, American-led future. Intriguingly, she also notes that the infamous interracial kiss between William Shatner and Nichelle Nichols on the original *Star Trek* series, while brave, occurred while both characters were forcibly under the control of an alien power, "so it can be viewed alternatively as a clever plot device with positive intentions, or as a less constructive expression of inter-racial [*sic*] relations, and a myriad of positions in between" (82). Johnson-Smith also offers compelling analysis of *Star Trek's* utopian idealism and the narrative and visual styles that the series propagated.

In Chapter Four, Johnson-Smith turns her attention to militarism in science fiction television. Another strong point of the book, Johnson-Smith's analysis of invasion and warfare in science fiction is riveting and complete, with a colorful sampling of numerous films and programs that have broadcasted the theme of Earth under threat. Johnson-Smith also surveys the impact of Vietnam on science fiction, arguing that "American mythology was fundamentally trapped" by the war (133) and brings attention to the popular theme of colonizing space, and military history. Chapter Five, *Wormhole X-Treme!*, explores concepts of space travel and its limitations, parallel worlds and dimensions, and time trav-



el. Johnson-Smith's discussion of time travel depictions and paradoxes is particularly fun and insightful. Chapter Six examines *Babylon 5* and contemplates the narrative patterns, types of verbal and visual imagery, music, and plot devices employed throughout the series.

Despite the insightful analysis and range of topics presented by Johnson-Smith, there are also some disappointing absences in the book. Given that the author is a native of the United Kingdom, there is surprisingly inadequate consideration given to the influence of British science fiction television on American programs and fan-bases. There is no mention of technologically groundbreaking British programs such as *Space: 1999* (led by American actors Martin Landau and Barbara Bain) or the long-lived sci-fi comedy series *Red Dwarf*; there are only vague references to the longest running science fiction program in history, *Doctor Who*, a program that clearly has influential ties to American science fiction programs like *Quantum Leap*. Furthermore, science fiction television cannot be adequately reviewed without some discussion of its influence and creation of fan culture, and this topic is ignored throughout the book.

Still, *American Science Fiction TV* is, for the most part, a successful effort. It is an excellent introduction to the literature on science fiction, which will greatly aid the efforts of other scholars hoping to expand on the genre's impact on American culture, but lacks the depth that most scholars would likely hope to see in a book purporting to fully cover American science fiction television. For

a book that claims to be "the first full-length study" of the television genre, it is too narrow in scope. The material that Johnson-Smith scrupulously analyzes is well-written and interesting, but may be off-setting for those looking for a broader work on science fiction television and its impact on culture.

The relationship between science fiction television and fan culture deserves further study. Conventions, costume and apparel patronage, festival attendance, and gaming are revered staples of the most ardent sci-fi fanatics and demand scholarly attention. After all, these material manifestations of sci-fi culture are among the most tangible measures of their impact on popular culture. I expect that this book will be regarded favorably by fans, especially enthusiasts of *Stargate SG-1*, *Babylon 5*, *Farscape*, and the *Star Trek* franchise, but will greatly underwhelm scholars looking for a definitive publication on science fiction television and its impact on popular culture.

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