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Résumé de l'article

Les ethnologues se sont préoccupés ces dernières années de quatre principaux domaines de la culture populaire contemporaine : l'incorporation du folklore dans l'art populaire, les traditions engendrées par les discours et les productions de la culture populaire, les usages de la culture de masse dans des petits groupes, et les mouvements de renouveau folklorique. Dans le domaine des études culturelles — un programme d'études international qui fut fondé à l'Université de Birmingham au cours des années 1960 — des chercheurs ont contribué de façon significative à l'étude de la culture populaire. Leurs travaux rejoignent sur plusieurs plans ceux des ethnologues. Les deux groupes partagent une perspective humaniste, holistique et non-hiérarchique de la "culture". De plus, ce qu'on nomme "culture populaire" dans le domaine des études culturelles est considéré, chez les ethnologues, comme l'utilisation expressive de la culture de masse au sein de petits groupes, c'est-à-dire le folklore moderne. Leurs suppositions pluralistes et fonctionnelles des sociétés necorrespondent cependant pas à l'idée que l'école des études culturelles se fait d'une société, définie comme un ensemble complexe de relations de pouvoirs toujours en changement. La théorie de l'hégémonie d'Antonio Gramsci se révèle particulièrement pertinente dans le domaine des études culturelles puisqu'elle est utile pour l'étude contextuelle des formes de folklore et de la culture populaire; éléments constituant une antithèse. Enfin, les études culturelles peuvent sans doute bénéficier d'une évaluation ethnographique du rôle de la tradition et de la continuité culturelle; une méthode bien développée chez les ethnologues.

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FOLKLORISTICS, CULTURAL STUDIES AND POPULAR CULTURE*

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Introduction

For at least two decades, folklorists and ethnologists concerned with the social dimensions of folklore and popular culture have been encountering stimulating analyses of popular culture written by a generation of scholars from the political left who are linked to "cultural studies." Initially a British academic development, and now an international one, cultural studies is variously referred to as a "project," a "counter-discipline," a "trans-disciplinary approach," or a "movement."[1] The institutional parent of these endeavors is the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at the University of Birmingham. Founded by Richard Hoggart and Stuart Hall in 1964 as a multidisciplinary program of the University's English Department, today CCCS has merged with the Sociology Department and is headed by Richard Johnson. The intellectual impact of CCCS, often referred to as the "Birmingham School of Social Theory," can be partially measured by the growth of eleven departments of cultural studies in Britain, centers of cultural studies in the United States at the University of California at Santa Cruz, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, University of Illinois, University of Miami, University of Ohio, and the University of Pennsylvania, and in Canada, a full undergraduate program in cultural studies at Trent University.[2] Strong core courses in cultural studies also exist within the aegis of

* A version of this article was read as a paper at the Perspectives on Folklore and Popular Culture Seminar, Société Internationale D'Ethnologie et de Folklore, St. John's, Newfoundland, October 14, 1991.

1 A useful interpretive history of cultural studies is Patrick Brantlinger, *Crusoe's Footprints: Cultural Studies in Britain and America*, New York, Routledge, 1990. A recent, extensive anthology of international efforts in cultural studies has been provided by Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula A. Treichler, eds., *Cultural Studies*, New York, Routledge, 1992.

2 Initiated in 1978, this interdisciplinary program has one "classic" folklore course, "Oral Narrative," which examines "oral tradition and its genres, chiefly folktale, epic literature and mythology" [from the program's brochure].

communications departments at Carleton University, Concordia University, and Simon Fraser University.

Cultural studies, recently described as a field "committed to the study of the entire range of a society's arts, beliefs, institutions, and communicative practices," and folkloristics, a discipline that often examines traditional modes of "artistic communication in small groups," clearly exhibit similar interests.[3] While not confined solely to scrutinizing popular culture, folkloristics and cultural studies have both been extensively engaged with that cultural domain. It is the argument here that there are fundamental areas where the perspectives and interests of folklorists and cultural studies scholars converge and it would be of mutual benefit if some cross-fertilization of theory and method would take place. There are also some crucial encumbrances that block such potential and these obstacles present particular challenges to folklorists that will be addressed later. Critical social and political issues in the contemporary Canadian context, i.e., the nationalist movement in Québec, the Constitutional Debate, the Free Trade Agreement, and continuing "widespread concern ... about the threat posed by American economic and cultural power," have placed questions of regional cultures, native cultures, and cultural distinctiveness at a critical juncture.[4] It behooves all students of every sector of Canadian society, therefore, to integrate their findings into a coherent, factual picture so that the people of this country can make some informed decisions about the course of their own destiny. In Canada at least, this is an era in which fragmented knowledge must give way to intellectual synthesis and interdisciplinary commonality.

At the outset it is necessary to posit folkloristic involvements with popular culture. Folklore events are living, emergent, small group, face-to-face encounters in which people communicate through sensory media, engage in creative reenactment (tradition), and generate stylized texts. While such expressive human communications lend themselves to many forms of social analysis, texts, whether composed of the representational codes of language or the presentational codes of paralanguage and non-verbal communication, always possess the potential of being extricated from their social matrices. Such texts may then resemble "superorganic," autonomous entities with a life of their own. Thus, as many folklorists have observed, never before have traditional texts of folklore been geographically disseminated with the speed that they are today through mass

3 Cary Nelson, Paula A. Treichler, and Lawrence Grossberg, "Cultural Studies: An Introduction," Grossberg et al., p. 1-16; Dan Ben-Amos, "Toward a Definition of Folklore in Context," *Journal of American Folklore* 84, 1971, p. 3-15.

4 See Richard Gruneau, "Introduction: Notes on Popular Cultures and Political Practices," *Popular Cultures and Political Practices*, Richard Gruneau, ed., Toronto, Garamond Press, 1988, p. 11-32. Also see Jody Berland's comments concerning "entertainment and the new rhetoric of international trade" in "Angels Dancing: Cultural Technologies and the Production of Space," Grossberg et al., p. 38-51.

media in popular culture (e.g., contemporary legends).[5] Although such mass-mediated texts are often communicated in the midst of other cultural forms, they may be discovered by the alert folklorist wherever the global embrace of space age electronic media take them.

From a performance perspective, however, the social contexts of mass cultural events evince significant experiential differences when compared to their small group, folkloric counterparts. Perhaps the most obvious distinctions have to do with the relatively close spatial and social relations of performers and audiences in folkloric performance and their strong "sense of place." In contrast, today's popular culture performances can manifest large and sometimes enormous spatial and social distances between performers and audiences, and communication in such circumstances is often unidirectional; that is, such performances are characterized by spatially indeterminate (no sense of place) communicative contexts in which negligible or no audience response is immediately discernible by a performer. Conversely, the grammar of many electronic media (television, radio) makes it technically impossible for an audience to respond in an instantaneous, direct, personal manner to the performance of a popular performer, a circumstance that contributes to the high and often transcendent status of many "stars."

The Folklore/Popular Culture Interface

Despite these differences, the obvious bonds of folklore and contemporary popular culture continue to attract extensive attention from folklorists. The dynamic, symbiotic, sociocultural interchange between these forms, the folklore-popular culture continuum,[6] exhibits a variety of associated phenomena that are currently being studied. In particular, four major areas of folkloristic activity should be cited.

1. *The incorporation of traditional small group expressive culture (folklore) into popular art by popular artists and the popular culture industries.* This range of phenomena involves the diffusion, transformation, and commercialization of folklore from small groups to regional, national, and international contexts. Thus folklorist Neil Rosenberg has developed a model for tracking the development of local country music performers from folk-rooted "apprentice"

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5 For numerous examples of legends in the mass media see Jan Harold Brunvand, *The Vanishing Hitchhiker: American Urban Legends and Their Meanings*, New York, W.W. Norton, 1981, or any of his subsequent urban legend anthologies.

6 Peter Narváez and Martin Laba, eds., *Media Sense: The Folklore-Popular Culture Continuum*, Bowling Green, Ohio, Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1986.

status to international "celebrity" status.[7] Hermann Bausinger has analyzed the manner in which "folklorism," the conscious commodification of folklore, transforms tradition into stereotypical forms.[8] In the same vein, Paul Mercer and Mac Swackhammer have shown that a favorite commercial ploy of Newfoundland advertisers has been to maintain that their products are Newfoundland "traditions."[9]

Perhaps the majority of folklore studies of the "incorporation" of folklore by popular culture, however, are more strictly concerned with representational codes of genre and texts than with modes of presentation and commercial intent. In the same scholarly spirit of examining folklore items in the literature of "high culture,"[10] folklorists continue to study the uses of traditional texts in popular art and industrialized entertainments. In my own work I have studied the uses that have been made of folkloric elements in Newfoundland radio programs by broadcaster-performers Joseph R. Smallwood, Ted Russell, and David Ross.[11] Linda Dégh has analyzed "Märchen and Legend in TV Advertising" and concluded that "we live in the world of modern legends, modern magic, modern irrationalism," and that the person "who does not like them, should turn off his television."[12] Harold Schechter's recent *The Bosom Serpent: Folklore and Popular Art*, an aesthetic survey of recurrent folk narrative motifs in comic books, films, and supermarket tabloids, well exemplifies this fruitful approach.[13]

7 Neil V. Rosenberg, "Big Fish, Small Pond: Country Musicians and Their Markets," Narváez and Laba, p. 149-66. Also see Rosenberg's recent study of how a radio performer became a regional "star" by appropriating, transforming, and in turn influencing traditional Newfoundland song: "Omar Blondahl's Contribution to the Newfoundland Folksong Canon," *Canadian Folk Music Journal* 19, 1991, p. 20-27.

8 Hermann Bausinger, *Folk Culture in a World of Technology*, Elke Dettmer, trans., Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1990, p. 116-160; also see Richard Handler's analogous category, "cultural objectification," in "On Sociocultural Discontinuity: Nationalism and Cultural Objectification in Quebec," *Current Anthropology* 25, 1984, p. 55-71 and *Nationalism and the Politics of Culture in Quebec*, Madison, Wisconsin, University of Wisconsin Press, 1988.

9 Paul Mercer and Mac Swackhammer, "The Singing of Old Newfoundland Ballads and a Cool Glass of Beer Go Hand : Folklore and 'Tradition' in Newfoundland Advertising," *Culture and Tradition* 3, 1978, p. 35-45.

10 See the often reprinted essay by Richard M. Dorson, "The Identification of Folklore in American Literature," *American Folklore and the Historian*, Richard M. Dorson, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1971, p. 186-203. Similarly, but from a producer of culture perspective see Anita McGee, "A Mutual Enrichment of Traditions: Folklore in Canadian Drama," *Canadian Folklore Canadien*, 9: 1-2, 1987, p. 19-33.

11 Peter Narváez, "Joseph R. Smallwood, 'The Barrelman': The Broadcaster as Folklorist," Narváez and Laba, p. 47-64; "Folk Talk and Hard Facts: The Role of Ted Russell's 'Uncle Mose' on CBC's 'Fishermen's Broadcast'," *Studies in Newfoundland Folklore: Community and Process*, G. Thomas and J.D.A. Widdowson, eds., St. John's, Breakwater, 1991, p. 191-212; "'The Newfie Bullet'—The Nostalgic Use of Folklore," Narváez and Laba, p. 65-76.

12 Linda Dégh and Andrew Vázsonyi, "Magic for Sale: Märchen and Legend in TV Advertising," *Fabula* 20:1-3, 1979, p. 47-68.

13 Harold Schechter, *The Bosom Serpent: Folklore and Popular Art*, Iowa City, University of Iowa Press, 1988.

2. *Traditions engendered within the discourses of popular culture and its production.* The often cited formulaic nature of popular culture, that is, the dominance of "conventions" (elements anticipated by an audience) over "inventions" (newly introduced elements) in popular culture products, shapes the identifiable, structural basis of popular culture's own "traditions."[14] These recreated, repetitive, sustained popular culture traditions generically define such forms as the mystery novel, the western film, the comic book, science fiction, and bluegrass music. Beyond this fundamental similarity to folkloric form, however, folklorists have been particularly interested in the ways in which the contents of popular culture texts exhibit debates that parallel traditional discourses concerning belief in small group contexts.[15] Thus pro and con arguments regarding the existence of fairies were generated through the mass-mediated phenomenon of the "Cottingley Fairies," photographs of fairies ostensibly taken by two innocent young girls in 1917 and 1920. This popular culture tradition has been aptly interpreted in terms of legend formation and development.[16] A fascinating Master's thesis by Bruce Lionel Mason concerning "crop circles" in England takes a similar tack in tracing public controversies surrounding those anomalous experiences.[17] Another related area of study draws attention to the role of tradition in the production of popular culture through examining the "backstage" occupational folklife (esoteric informal knowledge and expressive behaviours) of workers in the popular culture industries. Focusing on personalities and cultural formation, this type of research yields special insights into the folklore-popular culture interface.[18]

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14 On popular culture formulas see John G. Cawelti, *The Six-Gun Mystique*, Bowling Green, Ohio, Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1970 and Cawelti's, *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1976. For a structural-ideological analysis of the American western film employing the methods of C. Lévi-Strauss and V. Propp see Will Wright, *Sixguns and Society: A Structural Study of the Western*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1975.

15 On folk discourse concerning belief see Chapter 7, "Folkloric Discourse and Supernatural Belief Expression," in Gary R. Butler, *Saying Isn't Believing: Conversational Narrative and the Discourse of Tradition in a French-Newfoundland Community*, Social and Economic Studies No. 42, St. John's, Institute of Social and Economic Research, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1990, p. 125-140.

16 Paul Smith, "The Cottingley Fairies: The End of a Legend," *The Good People: New Fairylore Essays*, Peter Narváez, ed., New York, Garland, 1991, p. 371-405.

17 Bruce Lionel Mason, *Belief, Explanation and Rhetoric in the Crop Circle Phenomenon of Southern England*, Master's Thesis, Department of Folklore, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1991.

18 Peter Narváez, "'I've Gotten Soppy': Send-Off Parties as Rites of Passage in the Occupational Folklife of CBC Reporters," *American Behavioral Scientist* 33:3, 1990, p. 339-352.

3. *The expressive uses of communications media, mass-produced goods, and mass-mediated texts in small group contexts.* Newly introduced technologies, goods, and texts may affect folkloric elements in culture by: supplanting them; altering or transforming their content and/or structure; modifying their social functions and significance. In addition, they may generate new folkloric forms. Elsewhere I have illustrated these categories with stress on the latter circumstance, demonstrating that cultural responses to new technological media often result in various new forms of "media lore," small group expressions relating the meaning of such media to community life.[19] A form of media lore, "media legends," narratives of "true experiences" concerning the humorous ineptitude of actual persons in dealing with new technologies (e.g., blowing out a light bulb, firing a shotgun at a television screen because it depicts a flock of game birds), were the centerpieces of the study. With regards to the content of new technological forms, programmable media capable of generating texts for small groups have been particularly significant in extending the parameters of traditional expressive communication. Folklore studies of "photocopy lore" and family photograph albums exemplify such practices.[20] In addition, people often select and appropriate (excorporate) mass-produced texts for their own purposes. Thus in a recent study of "Coke-Lore" Paul Smith has found that "the contemporary legends and beliefs recorded to date" concerning Coke, "make comment on *every* aspect of Coca-Cola from its *creation* to its *use*."[21] Gerald Pocius has demonstrated how commercial prints of religious pictures have demarcated the living spaces of Newfoundland homes in traditional ways.[22] Jacqueline Beaudoin-Ross has explored some of the historical influences of mass produced stylish urban fashions on rural attire in Québec.[23] In the area of children's folklore, Delf

19 Peter Narváez, "The Folklore of 'Old Foolishness': Newfoundland Media Legends," *Canadian Literature* 108, 1986, p. 125-143.

20 Alan Dundes and Carl R. Pagter, *Work Hard and You Shall Be Rewarded: Urban Folklore from the Paperwork Empire*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1978; Paul Smith, *Reproduction is Fun: A Book of Photocopy Joke Sheets*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986; Pauline Greenhill, *So We Can Remember: Showing Family Photographs*, National Museum of Man Mercury Series, Canadian Centre for Folk Culture Studies, Paper No. 36, Ottawa, National Museums of Canada, 1981.

21 Paul Smith, "Contemporary legends and popular culture: 'it's the real thing,'" *Contemporary Legend* 1, 1991, p. 123-152.

22 Gerald S. Pocius, "Holy Pictures in Newfoundland Houses: Visual Codes for Secular and Supernatural Relationships," Narváez and Laba, p. 124-48. More examples of analogous phenomena are provided in Pocius's, *A Place to Belong: Community Order and Everyday Space in Calvert, Newfoundland*, Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991.

23 Jacqueline Beaudoin-Ross, "The Influence of Fashion on Folk Costume," *Canadian Folklore canadien* 10:1-2, 1988, p. 79-98.

Maria Hohmann has provided a contextual analysis of a child's uses made of a commercial plastic "Barbie" doll.[24] The changing forms and "ambiguous role" of tapioca pudding, the twentieth century processed dessert, in the foodways of the Maritime Provinces have been discussed by Heather M. Gillis and J. Estelle Reddin.[25] Kay Stone has assessed women's memories of their childhood responses to the stereotype of the passive, pretty, fairytale heroine-princess that they encountered in children's book and cartoon (Walt Disney) adaptations of the Grimms' Marchen. Among other things, she found that some of her informants "performed a fascinating feat of selective memory by transforming relatively passive heroines into active ones."[26] In like manner, the creation of high-profile figures in the mass media is sometimes matched by the uses people make of such personalities in small groups. Thus, Pauline Greenhill has cited local poetry eulogizing Canadian athlete Terry Fox, who died after attempting to run across Canada in a pilgrimage for cancer research, "The Marathon of Hope" (1980), and she has shown how these expressions validated the regional values of their creators and contributed toward the transformation of Fox into a national folk hero.[27] Similarly, folklore studies of popular culture "fans," i.e., devotees of popular culture celebrities and genres, have detailed complex dimensions of excorporation through thick ethnographic descriptions of social networks and artifactual support systems.[28] The most ambitious folklore study of this kind is Camille Bacon-Smith's *Enterprising Women: Television Fandom and the Creation of Popular Myth.*[29] This account thoroughly documents a little known, widespread network of women's fan "communities" devoted to the television series *Star Trek.* Members of these women's groups traditionally communicate with one another in small group and assembly (conference) contexts using, manipulating, and reinterpreting mass-mediated source products in a multitude of creative ways.[30] Traditional patterns are also observable in small group

24 Delf Maria Hohmann, "'Jennifer and her Barbies': A Contextual Analysis of a Child Playing Barbie Dolls," *Canadian Folklore canadien* 7:1-2, 1985, p. 111-120.

25 Heather M. Gillis and J. Estelle Reddin, "Tapioca Pudding—Food's Interconnections," *Canadian Folklore canadien* 12:1, 1990, p. 39-53. For more foodways examples see the essays in Michael Jones, Bruce Giuliano, and Roberta Krell, eds., "Special Issue: Foodways and Eating Habits: Directions for Research," *Western Folklore* 40:1, 1981.

26 Kay Stone, "Things Walt Disney Never Told Us," *Journal of American Folklore* 88, 1975, p. 42-50.

27 See Chapter Five, "Appropriating a Hero," Pauline Greenhill, *True Poetry: Traditional and Popular Verse in Ontario*, Montreal and Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989, p. 159-210.

28 See "Fans: A Special Section," *Culture and Tradition*, 11, 1987, p. 37-85.

29 Camille Bacon-Smith, *Enterprising Women: Television Fandom and the Creation of Popular Myth*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992.

30 Relatedly, see Edith Fowke's article on "filksongs," songs sung by science-fiction fans at conventions: Edith Fowke, "Filksongs as Modern Folk Songs," *Canadian Folklore canadien* 7:1-2, 1985, p. 85-94.

expressive responses to the texts of mass-mediated events—e.g., the "Challenger" joke cycle,[31] the "yellow ribbon" response to the Persian Gulf War,[32] and modern legends which express anxieties about Satan or AIDS.[33]

4. *Popular folk revivals.* While they exhibit all of the above phenomena, folk revivals have especially attracted folklorists because as revitalization movements, they publicly portray "folklore" and "heritage." Producers of folk revival culture are often engaged in the ideologically purposeful, selective manipulation and invention of tradition for public consumption—in short, conscious, cultural intervention.[34] On the other hand, folk revival may also reflect spirited altruistic, regional, and nationalistic goals, sincere attempts to invigorate cultures, which are assessed as being in need of reparation, through revivifying lost or moribund elements of the past for inspiration and nurture in the present and future.[35]

Cultural Studies

A fundamental area of convergence in cultural studies and folkloristics is that both fields assume an omnibus or inclusive view of culture that derives from the union of literary and anthropological ideas. In the 1950s, the theoretical founders of cultural studies, Richard Hoggart and Raymond Williams, expanded the restrictive, hierarchical use of the word "culture." As Michael Real has observed, in *The Uses of Literacy* (1957) Hoggart developed an anthropological "appreciation of the 'ordinary and homely' culture of British row houses... and three pence weekly fiction magazines."[36] Although subjective value judgments pepper Hoggart's work, his abandonment of traditional "high" and "low" cultural categorization and his appreciation of " working-class life," a life he found

31 Willie Smyth, "Challenger Jokes and the Humor of Disaster," *Western Folklore* 45:4, 1986, p. 243-260.

32 Jack Santino, "Yellow Ribbons and Seasonal Flags: The Folk Assemblage of War," *Journal of American Folklore* 105, 1992, p. 19-33.

33 Diane E. Goldstein, *Talking Aids: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome*, Research and Policy Paper, No. 12, St. John's, Institute of Social and Economic Research, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1991; Paul Smith, "'AIDS: Don't Die of Ignorance': Exploring the Cultural Complex," *A Nest of Vipers: Perspectives on Contemporary Legend V*, Gillian Bennett and Paul Smith, eds., Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press for the International Society for Contemporary Legend Research in association with CECTAL, 1990, p. 113-141.

34 See Chapter 3 of David E. Whisnant, *All That is Native and Fine: The Politics of Culture in an American Region*, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1983, p. 183-252 and Bausinger p. 66-74.

35 See the articles in Neil V. Rosenberg, ed. *Transforming Tradition*. Urbana, University of Illinois Press, in press.

36 Michael R. Real, *Super Media: A Cultural Studies Approach*, London, SAGE, 1989, p. 48-9;

"closer to the ground than that of most other people," freed him from the ideological underpinnings of cultural hierarchy.[37]

With greater theoretical explication, Raymond Williams also expanded the meanings of "culture" on the historical basis of its changing usage in British literary and social criticism. In *Culture and Society* he developed T.S. Eliot's reference to culture as a "whole way of life."[38] This inclusive understanding resembled anthropological definitions, but as Williams argued, anthropologists had avoided contemporary cultures and restricted their analyses to non-Western societies. In *The Long Revolution* Williams detailed a social interpretation of culture as "a genuine complexity" of descriptions used by members of a society to express "meanings and values not only in art and learning but also in institutions and ordinary behaviour." Amplifying his perspective into a "theory of culture" Williams advocated "the study of relationships between elements in a whole way of life." He maintained that "the analysis of culture is the attempt to discover the organization which is the complex of these relationships."[39] In one of his last interviews, Williams was explicit about the importance of elements of "popular culture," an assembly of traits which folklorists will recognize as the domain of traditional expressive culture. As always, however, he focused on the meaning of these forms within the contexts of social relations, a basic commitment of cultural studies. As he stated, he was concerned with that whole range of expressions which never got recognized as culture at all...that of a very active world of everyday conversation and exchange. Jokes, idioms, characteristic forms not just of everyday dress but occasional dress, people consciously having a party, making a do, marking an occasion. I think this area has been very seriously undervalued. We're not yet clear about the relation of those things to widely successful television forms. There is a sense in which everyday gossip passes straight into a certain kind of serial. And there's an obvious relation between the whole joke world and certain kinds of comedy.[40]

In the parallel but longer development of North American folkloristics, literary approaches to folklore texts first fused with an omnibus anthropological definition of culture and a delimited anthropological model of *folk society*.[41] Later this conception transformed into a more embracing view of folklore as expressing

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37 Hoggart, p. 88.

38 Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society*, 1958, rpt. Markham, Ont., Penguin, 1963, p. 229.

39 See Part One, Chapter 2, "The Analysis of Culture," Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution*, 1961, rpt., Markham, Ontario, Pelican Books, 1965.

40 Stephen Heath and Gillian Skirrow, "An Interview with Raymond Williams," *Studies in Entertainment: Critical Approaches to Mass Culture*, Tania Modleski, ed., Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1986, p. 3-17.

41 Robert Redfield, "The Folk Society," *American Journal of Sociology* 52, 1947, p. 293-308; George M. Foster, "What is Folk Culture?," *American Anthropologist* 55, 1953, p. 159-173.

the identities of regional *folk cultures*.[42] In recent decades the bedrock social reference for folklore studies is the *folk group*, "any group of people whatsoever who share at least one common factor."[43] Given these conceptual developments the discipline of folkloristics has exhibited a growing appreciation of folklore not simply as survival but as a living, dynamic component of everyday life evident in virtually every sector of contemporary society. Two aspects of these developments in the social study of folklore, however, have predisposed North American folkloristics to move in directions that are at fundamental odds with cultural studies. To begin with, the folk group idea lends itself to a view of society as being essentially composed of pluralistic interest groups; that is, as members of a complex society we all belong to a variety of different groups simultaneously. Hence, and as Elliott Oring's text *Folk Groups and Folklore Genres* dramatically illustrates,[44] people belong to age groups, ethnic groups, religious groups, occupational groups, and so forth and all of these groups exhibit folklore. The leveling effect of this vision, however, does not encourage an analysis of a dynamic folklore in the midst of intergroup social relations. Secondly, the predominant interpretive method in the social study of folklore, functionalism, assumes that most expressive elements of culture contribute toward an integration of society.[45] This unifying characteristic of functionalist studies also contributes to atomistic conceptions of people pursuing their own traditions in their own small group contexts without conflict.

In contrast to this static, behaviourist perspective, cultural studies, has adopted an understanding of society as a complex set of power relations in dynamic flux. As John Fiske has noted, cultural studies "is crucially concerned to analyze social differences, not pluralistically, but as part of a structured system of domination, subordination, and struggle."[46] There are semantic shifts in this discourse that become crucial. These concern the term "mass," as in "mass culture," and "mass society," and its relation to "popular." Williams was adamant in his separation of these concepts and in his ideological rejection of "mass society."

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42 Richard M. Dorson, *Buying the Wind: Regional Folklore in the United States*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1964.

43 Alan Dundes, "What is Folklore?," *The Study of Folklore*, Alan Dundes, ed., Englewood Cliffs, N.J., Prentice-Hall, 1965, p. 1-3. For the history of literary-anthropological approaches to folklore in the United States see Rosemary Lévy Zumwalt, *American Folklore Scholarship: A Dialogue of Dissent*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1988.

44 Elliott Oring, ed., *Folk Groups and Folklore Genres: An Introduction*, Logan, Utah, Utah State University Press, 1986.

45 See William R. Bascom, "Four Functions of Folklore," *Journal of American Folklore* 67, 1954, p. 333-349 and for a critique of functionalist analysis in folklore studies Elliott Oring, "Three Functions of Folklore: Traditional Functionalism as Explanation in Folkloristics," *Journal of American Folklore* 89, 1976, p. 67-80.

46 Joe Galbo, "An Interview with John Fiske," *Border/Lines* 20/21, 1990/91, p. 4-7.

I do not think any of my relatives, friends, neighbours, colleagues, acquaintances, as masses. The masses are always others, whom we don't know, and can't know. There are in fact no masses; there are only ways of seeing people as masses. What we see, neutrally, is other people, many others, people unknown to us. In practice, we mass them, and interpret them, according to some convenient formula. It is the formula, not the mass, which is our real business to examine.[47]

On the other hand, cultural studies does admit the phrase "mass culture" with a specific meaning equated with Max Horkheimer's and Theodor Adorno's concept of "culture industry," i.e., industries that produce consumable commodities for profit and operate in ways that ensure their own reproduction.[48] The relationship of "mass culture" to "popular culture" is that some of the products manufactured by the culture industries are "taken up, re-worked, re-cycled, reproduced by the people, and what they are made into is popular culture," a participatory culture of "practices and processes, not like mass culture, [a culture] of commodities."[49] As Fiske has argued, "popular culture is made by the people at the interface between the products of the culture industries and everyday life."[50] For cultural studies, therefore, the meaning of "popular culture" is confined to what in folkloristics is "the expressive use of mass-produced goods, and mass-mediated texts in small group contexts" (area three above).

Students of the Birmingham School have pursued this "active audience" approach to culture in what now have become classic works in cultural studies. Rather than viewing the manipulation of mass culture within small groups purely from a functional perspective, studies such as Paul Willis's *Learning to Labour* and Dick Hebdige's *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* have examined expressive behaviours both semiotically and through the theoretical lens of subculture (subaltern society) and hegemony.[51] This interpretive frame assumes that the relations between a ruling class and subordinate classes are not a matter of ideological imposition; rather, they involve a struggle for *hegemony*, that is, cultural as well as political leadership. Western Marxist Antonio Gramsci viewed these relations as a "moving equilibrium" exhibiting continual struggles, nego-

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47 Williams, *Culture and Society*, p. 289.

48 See David Held, *Introduction to Critical Theory: Horkheimer to Habermas*, London, Hutchinson, 1980, p. 90-2.

49 Galbo, p. 5.

50 John Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture*, Boston, Unwin Hyman, 1989, p. 25.

51 Paul Willis, *Learning to Labour: How Working-Class Kids Get Working-Class Jobs*, London, Saxon House, 1977; Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, London, Methuen, 1979. For a feminist critique of these works see Angela McRobbie, "Settling Accounts with Subcultures: A Feminist Critique," *Screen Education* 34, 1980, p. 37-49, rpt. in Tony Bennett, Graham Martin, Colin Mercer and Janet Woollacott, eds., *Culture, Ideology and Social Process: A Reader*, London, The Open University, 1981, p. 111-124.

tiations and re-negotiations in which a dominant class seeks the assent of subordinate (subaltern) classes not simply through overt threats and force (political society) but covertly in struggles over meanings and significations in culture (civil society). Clearly, in terms of power these cultural negotiations occur between unequal parties and for a dominant class to maintain hegemony the process must result in a sense of apparent accommodation and apparent compromise. A component of these seeming accommodations is that hegemony works through an alliance of social factions in which members of a subordinate class live their subordination by being "inserted into the key institutions and structures which support the power and social authority of the dominant order."[52] Gramsci's theory of hegemony is a sophisticated conception that goes beyond the traditional understanding of ideology as a formal system of values and beliefs, for it envisions dynamic processes of transformation and incorporation, therefore providing an analytical design for assessments of the paradoxes and contradictory pressures of people manipulating culture in the midst of social structures characterized by dominance and subordination. Within this scheme hegemonic ideology becomes, therefore, an aspect of everyday life and popular culture; Iain Chambers has described it as "a process that seeks pacifically to transform a particular distribution of powers, choices and directions into appearing 'natural,' 'fair,' and 'normal'; appearing as simply the expression of shared 'common sense.'"[53]

Hegemony, however, is never total or stationary. As Williams observes, "at any time, forms of alternative or directly oppositional politics and culture exist as significant elements in the society."[54] Thus cultural studies has often focused on "subculture," defined by Hebdige as "the expressive forms and rituals of subordinate groups."[55] It is the antithetical, transformational nature of subculture, its "hidden messages," that have been discerned by Hebdige. He notes that certain commodities are open to a double inflection: to "illegitimate" as well as "legitimate" uses. These "humble objects" can be magically appropriated; "stolen" by subordinate groups and made to carry "secret" meanings: meanings which express, in code, a form of resistance to the order which guarantees their continued subordination.[56]

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52 Antonio Gramsci, "Antonio Gramsci [selections]," Bennett et al., p. 185-218; John Clarke, Stuart Hall, Tony Jefferson and Brian Roberts, "Subcultures, Cultures and Class: A Theoretical Overview," *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain*, Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson, eds., London, Hutchinson, Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, University of Birmingham, 1976, p. 9-74.

53 Iain Chambers, *Popular Culture: The Metropolitan Experience*, London, Methuen, 1986, p. 210.

54 Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1977, p. 113.

55 Hebdige, p. 2.

56 Hebdige, p. 18.

The Folkloristics/Cultural Studies Interface

In emphasizing the interrelatedness of culture and society, the outlook of cultural studies has much to offer folkloristics, for many of the expressive behaviours that folklorists examine are ideologically antithetical and persons who perform these expressions are often in the midst of struggles with hegemonic forces that actively incorporate, eradicate, supplant, alter and transform their folklore. Folklore works, such as John Greenway's *Folksongs of Protest*, Roger Abrahams' *Deep Down in the Jungle*, and Mark Slobin's *Tenement Songs*, would have benefited from the theoretical considerations of cultural studies.[57] Some contemporary folklorists, notably Manuel Pena in Texas and Diarmuid Ó Giolláin in Ireland have successfully used the hegemonic frame.[58] British scholars Michael Pickering and Tony Green have adopted the Gramscian paradigm in their investigations of vernacular song.[59] Moyra Byrne has written an illuminating article on "Antonio Gramsci's Contribution to Italian Folklore Studies."[60] In Newfoundland Gerald Sider's study *Culture and Class: A Newfoundland Illustration* uses the semiotic-hegemonic conflict model of the Birmingham School in his examinations of several items of Newfoundland folklore and language.[61] Similarly, a preliminary investigation of song, culture and development in the Canadian Maritimes by Brunton, Overton, and Sacouman reflects the influence of cultural studies in the the authors' challenge to students of folksong who utilize "the romantic-individual approach," and maintain a "unicultural context" that "glosses over class relations and the processes of class-cultural formation."[62]

From the view of social folkloristics, however, there are deficiencies in cultural studies. While often stressing an active audience, many cultural studies' works ultimately rest on certain assumptions of passive consumer society that

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57 John Greenway, *American Folksongs of Protest*, New York, Pertua Books, 1960; Roger D. Abrahams, *Deep Down in the Jungle: Negro Narrative Folklore from the Streets of Philadelphia*, Hatboro, Pa., Folklore Associates, 1964; Mark Slobin, *Tenement Songs: The Popular Music of the Jewish Immigrants*, Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1982.

58 Manuel Peña, *The Texas-Mexican Conjunto: History of a Working Class Music*, Austin, University of Texas Press, 1985; Diarmuid Ó Giolláin, "The Fairy Belief and Official Religion in Ireland," Narváez, *The Good People*, p. 199-214.

59 Michael Pickering and Tony Green, "Towards a Cartography of the Vernacular Milieu," *Everyday Culture: Popular Song and the Vernacular Milieu*, Michael Pickering and Tony Green, eds., Milton Keynes, Open University Press, 1987, p. 1-38.

60 Moyra Byrne, "Antonio Gramsci's Contribution to Italian Folklore Studies," *International Folklore Review* 2, 1982, p. 70-75.

61 Gerald Sider, *Culture and Class in Anthropology and History: A Newfoundland Illustration*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1986.

62 R. Brunton, J. Overton, and J. Sacouman, "Uneven Underdevelopment and Song: Culture and Development in the Maritimes," *Communication Studies in Canada*, Liora Salter, ed., Toronto, Butterworths, 1981, p. 105-132.

ignore the possibility of popular culture as "culture actually made by people for themselves."[63] It is often a given in these works that *the consumption of certain items of mass culture and the transformation of those products are essential aspects of subcultural struggle*, i.e., in contemporary society people must obtain mass produced consumer goods in order to creatively develop (*bricolage*[64]) a culture of resistance. Fiske is explicit on this point: "popular culture is the art of making do with what the system provides."[65] Responding to mass cultural goods in order to invest them with new meanings is not unlike the prevalent consumer hope that during the Christmas season retail stores will stock the kinds of presents that one may best transform into messages of personal, emotional commitment. While this is a meaningful activity, such an emphasis neglects the possibility of there being other creative activities outside the consumer role in modern contexts. In the case of Christmas, for example, the creation of "handmade" gifts, such as artifacts from regional materials and foodways from local gardens, and non-material gifts, such as singing, versifying, dramatic performances and other emergent forms all reflect localized, grassroots culture, concerns of modern folkloristics that do not fit the "consumption-transformation" model of cultural studies.

Another folkloristic criticism of many cultural studies is their synchronic nature and their concomitant neglect of cultural continuity and tradition. Concentrating on the dynamics of culture and cultural change, cultural studies are frequently overly devoted to decoding alterations of style in given situations. While this form of analysis is illuminating, it is incomplete, for by slighting the temporal dimension such approaches fail to take into account elements of cultural continuity and the tradition-directedness of much antithetical behaviour. My own examination of the social uses of contemporary songs of labour protest in the company town of Buchans Newfoundland during the 1970s, revealed that these activities and cultural products derived from community traditions of protest as well as regional traditions of satirical songmaking. Ignoring traditional models and past precedent would have provided but a limited understanding of these expressions and their social relations.[66]

A last folkloristic dissatisfaction with many works of cultural studies is that while they maintain the importance of ethnography, they often lack the rich phenomenological, ethnographic data base derived from the humanistic field-

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63 Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, London, Fontana, Flamingo, 1976, p. 237.

64 Hebdige, p. 102-106.

65 Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture*, p. 25.

66 Peter Narváez, *The Protest Songs of a Labor Union On Strike Against an American Corporation in a Newfoundland Company Town; A Folkloristic Analysis With Special References to Oral Folk History*, Ann Arbor, Michigan, University Microfilms International, publication no. 86-07-398, 1986.

work that provides contemporary folkloristics with an actualized grasp of reality. For instance, although cultural studies have been very concerned with audience resistance to massification, the fact remains that for the most part their works on popular culture have not cited the views and commentaries of fandom in the manner that Bacon-Smith has in *Enterprising Women* or that the ethnographies of Diane Tye, Patrick Byrne, and Melissa Ladenheim have in a special issue of *Culture and Tradition* devoted to fans.[67] These folklorists interviewed fans at length, they did not simply assume the aesthetics of their subjects on the basis of textual analysis. The fieldwork methods of folkloristics could greatly benefit the arguments of cultural studies.

Conclusion

A section of Richard Middleton's recent cultural studies work *Studying Popular Music* is a testimonial to the positive dialogue that can take place between folkloristics and cultural studies, for although Middleton is critical of the term "folksong," he does cite the "enormous" contributions of folksong scholars and he strongly advocates the use of folkloristic methods to study continuity, commonality, variance and processes of transmission in popular music.[68] It is hoped that more cross-fertilization of this kind can take place, particularly in Canada, a crossroads of scholarship between the Americas and Europe, where distinctive, synthesized academic traditions of textual and media analysis have developed (Harold Adams Innis, Marshall McLuhan) and where the significance of regional popular cultures has long been recognized.[69] For ultimately in their

67 Diane Tye, "An Ethnography of a Beatles Fan," *Culture and Tradition* 11, 1987, p. 41-57; Pat Byrne, "The Three Sisters: An Ethnography of Three 'Carlton Showband' Fans," *Culture and Tradition* 11, 1987, p. 58-68; Melissa Ladenheim, "'I Was Country When Country Wasn't Cool': An Ethnography of a Country Music Fan," *Culture and Tradition* 11, 1987, p. 69-85. Paul Willis' works (*Profane Culture*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978; *Common Culture: Symbolic Work at Play in the Everyday Cultures of the Young*, Milton Keynes, Open University Press, 1990) are some of the best examples of humanistic ethnography in cultural studies.

68 Richard Middleton, *Studying Popular Music*, Milton Keynes, Open University Press, 1990, p. 131-135. Middleton's criticism of the term "folk" and its derivatives for reasons of their past hegemonic uses and class associations is shared by Dave Harker (*One for the Money*, London, Hutchinson, 1980, p. 24) and Pickering and Green (p. 13). While there is no doubt that these terms have been historically used in ways that have conveyed class dominance and paternalism, their usage in English-speaking North America today commonly refers to informal knowledge, as in "the folklore of the office," "the folklore of baseball," and so forth. Like "culture" before it, transformational forces have altered "folklore" into a generalized, not a rigidly class-based category. Such a transformation has not occurred in Britain.

69 See Arthur Kroker, *Technology and the Canadian Mind: Innis / McLuhan / Grant*, Montreal, New World Perspectives, 1984, and Martin Laba, "Popular Culture as Local Culture: Regions, Limits and Canadianism," *Communications Canada*, R. Lorimer and D.W. Wilson, eds., Toronto, Kagan and Woo, 1988, p. 402-421.

appreciation of people and their expressions, most students of folklore and cultural studies who are concerned with popular culture stand on the same ground, i.e., they reject ideological pretensions to false "neutrality" and are actively committed to a rational critique of culture that recognizes not only artistic expression but social oppression as well.