

TO EXPLAIN TRADITION

Elliott Oring
 Professor Emeritus
 California State University, Los Angeles
 e-mail: eoring@calstatela.edu

ABSTRACT

Tradition has been claimed to be a keyword in the folklore lexicon. Yet the word has not proved central to the thinking of many folklorists. More often, the term is simply used to mark territory. By characterizing certain songs, tales, dances, or customs as *traditions*, such expressions and behaviors are declared to be part of the discipline's proper subject. But the term is usually theoretically empty. It is rarely defined, and it raises no critical questions. In this essay, *tradition* is defined, the critical questions evoked by this definition are specified, and some of the ways that folklorists might go about answering these questions are delineated.

KEYWORDS: tradition • change • adaptation • evolution • innovation

INTRODUCTION

What follows is a discussion of tradition and change in terms that are decidedly old fashioned.¹ I will advance no new conceptions or theories and promote no new or arcane philosophical truths. In other words, my topic is tradition, and the question I ultimately want to raise is a traditional one. It has been asked before although it has yet to be satisfactorily answered.

I previously put forward a number of ideas about tradition that I will simply assert here without taking the time to defend or explore them further. (1) Tradition is a process, and that process is a process of cultural reproduction. (2) Folklorists have been less focused on this process than on the study of the products of this process, that is, upon particular *traditions*: the tales, ballads, charms, proverbs, jokes, house types, and costumes of particular social groups. (3) Everything, to some extent, is a product of tradition. Nothing is entirely new. Folklorists have been interested only in a select range of traditional products. Consequently, the study of tradition is a problem for a wider array of disciplines than folklore, but folklore can contribute significantly to this broader inquiry (Oring 2012: 220–224, 231–235).

One of the *raison d'être* of folklore studies was that, in the wake of the industrial revolution, many traditions were dying out, and they had to be documented before they vanished completely. Consequently, folkloristics has been criticized for being fixated on a dying and disappearing subject. That fixation, it has been claimed, dooms the discipline itself, like its subject, to death and disappearance. To remain relevant, folklorists needed to find a truly contemporary subject (Ben-Amos 1971: 14; Kirshenblatt-

Gimblett 1998: 300–302; Bauman and Briggs 2003: 306). This is a position with which I strongly disagree. I have maintained that the study of tradition *is* a truly contemporary subject. The contemporary can only be defined in terms of what is maintained from the past, what is marginalized, and what is destroyed. The old and the new are mutually constitutive. Folkloristics, I claim, would make a major contribution to the understanding of society if it could explain the persistence, the marginalization, the death, and the revival of cultural ideas and practices.

THE QUESTION OF TRADITION

The English Victorian/Edwardian folklorists, just before they themselves disappeared from the intellectual landscape in the first decades of the 20th century, realized that they had failed to address some very basic questions: What is the “modus operandi of tradition” (Jacobs 1893: 293); “How and why do survivals survive” (Marret 1920: 3); and why should a tradition “flourish in one place and not in another” (Burne 1910: 32)? Had these early folklorists addressed these questions, they might have left us with the “Science of Tradition” that they had so casually promised (Edwin Sidney Hartland, quoted in Dorson 1968: 243). As it stands, these questions are still very much with us (Nicolaisen 1990: 42; uí Ógáin 2000: 539).

Tradition is about continuity (Final Discussion 1983: 234; Georges and Jones 1995: 1); how ideas and practices are reproduced within and between generations. Folkloristics, however, has invested much of its capital in the discussion of change rather than continuity. And indeed, change is part of the fabric of our universe. Everything, everywhere, at all times, at some level is changing. The desk before me is oxidizing. The paint on the walls is oxidizing. And much to my consternation, I am oxidizing. Nothing is exactly as it was a moment before. But rather than recognize tradition and change as inescapably interrelated, tradition would come to be defined in terms of change. “Tradition is change,” was a catchphrase touted by some folklorists (Final Discussion 1983: 236; Klein and Widbom 1994). Alan Dundes defined folklore not in terms of orality or continuity but in terms of change and variation (1975: xvii), and there were those who followed his lead. Folklore [the ballad] “exists through change and is defined by its variability [...] The only stable element is change” (Catarella 1994: 472, 474). “Constant change [...] is viewed here as a central fact of existence for folklore, and [...] I accept it as a defining feature that grows out of context, performance, attitude, cultural tastes” wrote Barre Toelken (1996: 7). That change is a “fact of existence” for folklore, as Toelken stated, I would readily acknowledge. That it is a “defining feature,” however, I would question, for if everything is forever undergoing change, it is hard to see how change can be the defining feature of anything.

Of course, the particular *traditions* in which folklorists take an interest constantly undergo change in large and small ways. Change is impossible to avoid. I would surmise, however, that what folklorists might have been trying to accomplish in casting tradition *as* change is the upending of the impression that the objects of their studies are static, bygone, passively acquired, naïve, unimprovable, unoriginal, deteriorating, and – accordingly – inconsequential (Upton 1993: 11–12). By putting the word *change* at

the center of the enterprise, folkloristics can be made to appear vibrant, dynamic, and contemporary (for example, Ortutay 1959: 191). I happen to believe that folkloristics is vibrant, dynamic, and contemporary even without making change its signature, let alone its defining, concern. Yet, without being rooted in a notion of continuity, without explicit recognition of forms, behaviors, ideas, and objects as reproductions of previous forms, behaviors, ideas, and objects, there is no way to identify anything as traditional. Change is what happens to particular practices as they are reproduced and passed on. Reproduction is what *defines* an idea or behavior as traditional.

Although folklorists have taken quite a bit of interest in change, their perspectives on change are not all of a piece. They have conceptualized change in several different ways: as *degeneration*, as *adaptation*, as *evolution*, and as *innovation*. Degeneration occurs when there is a perception of loss – whether of content, structure, style, or meaning – as an expression or practice is transmitted through time. Adaptation refers to changes in content, structure, style, and sense as an idea or practice responds to a new physical, cultural, or social environment. Evolution points to the development of something out of an antecedent form and to the means by which that is accomplished. Innovation refers to the creative changes that are made in the course of reproduction by individual performers. Three caveats need to be kept in mind with respect to these distinctions. First, change is change. Change refers to the differences perceived between one form and another between one moment in time and another. Degeneration, adaptation, evolution, and innovation are not kinds of change. They represent different *conceptions* of such change. Second, these different conceptions might be applied to the very same changes. For example, a change that might be perceived as an innovation might also be perceived as an adaptation or as degeneration. Third, these conceptions are related, although not strictly related, to different historical periods. Different conceptions tended to be emphasized at different times in the historical arc of folklore inquiry.

DEGENERATION

Degeneration is most associated with the idea of folklore as a relic, a remnant of the past. It is a piece of something that once was, but no longer is, alive and whole. This perspective is central to two different approaches to folklore. One approach focused on folklore as a survival of a savage philosophy that over time had lost its coherence and consequently its significance. Time had served it badly, but fragments remained from which elements of that philosophy could be glimpsed and reconstructed much as a way of life might be reconstructed from an archeological artifact. Thus, if a character in a European folktale takes an animal as a husband or a wife (for example ATU 425B), this trait might be viewed as a survival from a time when humans believed themselves kin to animals and descended from them (Lang 1884: liv–lvii).

The other approach was rooted in the romantic nationalistic philosophy of Johann Gottfried von Herder. The poetry that had originated with the ancient founders of the nation was preserved in the mouths of the peasants (Wilson 1973: 825–828). As that poetry in the course of its transmission changed through time, it necessarily degenerated. When something authentic, coherent, and whole is believed to be situated in the

past and is regarded as handed down through a chain of transmission – particularly, but not exclusively, through oral transmission – there is no way that that authenticity, coherence, and wholeness can be sustained.² Change, any change, causes some kind of deterioration. Information is lost. A reproduction, a reproduction of a reproduction, and a reproduction of a reproduction of a reproduction can only introduce greater deviation from the original. What was held to be perfect in the past is inevitably corrupted over time.

Despite an early confidence in the faithfulness of oral transmission – witness, for example, Jacob and Wilhelm Grimms' praise of Frau Viehmann's scrupulousness in her tale telling (Hunt 1884 1: iii–iv) – the numerous versions and variants of a tale, song, or custom forced scholars to rethink this assumption. If the original form of a tradition had changed – had deteriorated – over time, that original would have to be reconstructed. The versions and variants would provide the clues for such reconstruction as they allowed for the inference of an original that could generate just those versions and variants. Folklorists, consequently, set themselves the task of rooting out the corruptions by a rigorous comparison of texts distributed over time and through space in the pursuit of an archetype; the most complete, most logical, and best form of a song or tale (von Sydow 1948: 207; Krohn 1971 [1926]: 59; Thompson 1977: 433–436). This was the goal of Finnish scholars in their initial attempts to identify and isolate the original elements of *Kalevala* poetry. What was discovered was that the mythological elements that had been assumed to be an inheritance from an ancient Finnish people had been borrowed from a larger store of motifs in Scandinavian and other traditions. There was no access to a pure lore created by an aboriginal Finnish folk. Motifs and stories were borrowed and were transformed in the course of their repeated reproduction (Krohn 1971 [1926]: 14). The originals were, for the most part, irretrievable.

If the depressive fact of degeneration could not be dismissed, change itself could be reimagined. As Julius Krohn (1971 [1926]: 15) wrote,

It is after all not the material per se that is most valuable but rather its artistic transformation [...]. Even if the substance [of *Kalevala* poetry] has been borrowed in large part from neighbors, it has been nonetheless so independently recast, has attained such an individual Finnish character [...] that the Finnish people can with pride call this epic their own.

In other words, the changes wrought in the process of oral transmission, rather than destroying the integrity of an ancient poetry could be envisioned as what actually imbued poetry with a nation's character and spirit.

Folklore no longer contained the spirit of an aboriginal folk preserved through centuries in a faithful chain of transmission. Folklore was fundamentally changeable, and it was its changeability that made a song a folk song or a tale a folktale. A song or tale was forever adapting to new conditions. Cecil Sharp (1907: 13) had argued that those who would see the transmission of a folksong as a degenerative process should also regard the final version of a symphony by Beethoven as a corruption of his very first draft! It was, however, Beethoven's final draft that he considered his best, and it was the one that he published. Folksong, for Sharp, was a communal product: "communal in authorship and communal in that it *reflects the mind of the community*" (ibid.: 15, my

emphasis). Likewise, what made a folksong for ballad scholar Phillips Barry (1909: 76) was that it was subject to “communal re-creation,” an infinite series of individual re-creative acts (Barry 1933: 5). It did not matter who had created the song. A song became a folksong as it was endlessly reworked in oral transmission. Change was no longer the destroyer of the original spirit of the people preserved in its lore. It was now the means by which the people imbued lore with its spirit. Old songs, tales, and motifs adapted to new communities, conditions, and tastes. Thus, was change first rehabilitated in the field of folklore. Change itself has been changed from a worry to a watchword.

ADAPTATION

Traditions, it was claimed, come into existence because they are adapted to the conditions of social life, and they disappear when those conditions are altered (Newell 1963 [1883]: 12). Carl Wilhelm von Sydow’s concept of the *oicotype* – borrowed from the science of botany – was based on this adaptive principle. A widely spread tradition “forms special types through isolation inside and suitability for certain culture districts” (von Sydow 1948: 243). Traditions may adapt in certain places and not in others. Hence the uneven distribution of tales and songs across continents (ibid.: 53). Lauri Honko (1981) categorized the kinds of change that can occur in any particular physical and cultural environment. There is the change of elements of a tradition to make them seem familiar when they enter a new local landscape. For example, local flora and fauna may be substituted for animals and plants that are foreign or strange, or imported traditions may be tied to significant sites in the local landscape (ibid.: 19–22). There is also the adaptation in which a new tradition conforms to an already existing tradition environment. For example, foreign supernatural figures are replaced with local spirits or are absorbed into a more encompassing category like the devil. Other unfamiliar aspects of a tradition may be modified to accord with regional standards. Thus, what are perceived as immoral behaviors of story actors may be eliminated, reduced, or otherwise normalized. (Ibid.: 23–26) Then there are the adaptations that are slow but ongoing social factors that rework a tradition. They are less dramatic than the previous types, and they are more responsive to communicative conditions in particular contexts: for example, narrator personality, audience composition, recent events, and current matters of interest within the community (ibid.: 27). Finally, there are the more comprehensive adaptations both in the concept of the environment to which the folklore is adapting as well as to the range of features that are adjusting. Different ecological zones and different occupational pursuits may reshape folk ideas and practices. And what is reshaped may extend beyond content and genre to structure, contexts, and style of performance (ibid.: 28–33).

Quite a number of folklorists hold that adaptation not only describes a kind of change but that it constitutes an explanation for change. “Change occurs each time new variations are introduced [...]. As this process continues, each new invention is adapted gradually to the needs of the society” (Bascom 1953: 286). “Tradition lives only in individual minds as part of the adaptive process of daily life, so it exists in a steady state of change” (Glassie 1994: 252). “Creative storytellers are the ones who modernize and

renew the folktale tradition to make it attractive for current consumption” (Dégh 1995: 44). “The creative impulse speaks to the fact that tradition is not and has never been something static, the most stable aspect of any tradition being its ability to change in response to changing needs” (Neulander 1998: 226). “Folklore lives through a generally selective process that ensures [...] that traditions will maintain their viability, or change so they can, or die off” (Toelken 1996: 43). “The adaptation of tradition in a specific milieu is naturally not an end in itself. Tradition is only adapted so that it can continue to exist” (Honko 1981: 32). Kuttiyattam [Sanskrit folk theater] “is only still in existence because it has adapted to changing times [...]. Art as a dynamic, creative endeavor *is meant to change*” (Lowthorp 2020: 32, emphasis in original). “Proverbs do not persist or spread for their own sake, as their use and development is dependent on the adaptive environment [...] if they don’t adapt they die” (Szpila 2017: 314).³

The first thing to notice about these propositions is that change and adaptation would seem to have become the *sine qua non* of folklore. Folklore is forever adapting and must do so in order to survive in ever-changing conditions. It would be well to remember that the materials of folklore were first defined by their failure to adapt. They were called *survivals* (Lang 1879: vii): “processes, customs, opinions, and so forth, which have been carried on by force of habit into a new stage of society from that in which they had their original home” (Tylor 1871: 15). Survivals could be recognized because they made little sense. They were striking because they were *out of step* with the times rather than adapted to them. In fact, their meaning could only be grasped through a process of historical reconstruction. How is it that folkloristics moved from a conception of folklore as maladaptive to a notion of folklore as ever-adaptive without anyone calling attention to this transformation?

The second thing to notice is that if folklorists regularly point to instances of adaptations in song, tale, and custom, they have been less inclined to call attention to those instances in which adaptations seem not to have taken place. For example, how is it that in the Jack tale collected in the Appalachian Mountains of North Carolina, the protagonist Jack gets employed by a *king* to rid his kingdom of a unicorn, a boar, and a lion? True, the king behaves like any wealthy landowner, but he is still a king and has a court (even if that court only assembles around the “courthouse”; Hicks 1963). No other element of the tale suggests anything but an American-backwoods setting for the tale. How was this element of the tale not adapted to the Appalachian landscape as well? How is it that lawyer jokes in India have lawyers arguing before juries even though juries have not existed in India for more than a century (Galanter 2005: 254)? Why does a ballad collected from West Virginia to Wyoming continue to be sung about a “Boston Burglar” or does an American sing about deportation to “Botany Bay” (Laws 1957: 174–175) when the transportation of convicts to Australia was officially ended in 1868 and no American was ever transported there in any event?⁴ The ballad “The Lake of Ponchartrain” – a lake located in Louisiana – adapts to the American western landscape by replacing the unfamiliar “the lake of the Ponchartrain” with “the lake of the Poncho Plains,” even if that phrase does not make a great deal of sense. The lake remains “the lake of the Ponchartrain,” however, in a Michigan version. In fact, American ballads often seem to prefer nonsensical phrasings rather than adapt to local landscapes and practices (Laws 1964: 74–75). Why is a song that is otherwise known as “The Banks of

the Ohio" sung about the River Dee in southern Michigan, although there seems to be no River Dee in Michigan (Gardner and Chickering 1939: 80)?⁵ These are admittedly small instances (although there are many others) and perhaps some may be explained away case by case, but the major point is that folklorists have not closely examined exceptions to the oft-cited principle that folklore invariably adapts to its physical and cultural environment. Folklorists seem to have noticed the examples in which an adaptation has taken place but overlook the many instances in which it has not.

The third thing should be more than noticed. There are good reasons to interrogate the oft-repeated principle that adaptive change is what allows folklore to survive. How does one determine which changes promote survival and which do not? What should one conclude when several variants of a form of folklore – an older form and a modified, newer form – seem to be happily coexisting and equally thriving? What should one conclude when a newly changed song or tale reverts to its previous form in later performances?

While, on the surface, it seems perfectly reasonable that folklore forms survive by adapting to changing conditions, it is reasonable only because the proposition disguises a tautology: those forms that survive have obviously adapted, while those forms that have adapted are the ones that survive. The tautologous nature of these propositions is perhaps most obvious in the formulation: "Those variations [of a song] will alone survive which commend themselves to other singers and narrators and are imitated by them" (Sharp 1907: 11). But what could survival mean for a song, tale, or anything else except that other singers, narrators, or practitioners choose to reproduce them? Survival means being reproduced by *definition*. Adaptation means surviving in a changed form. The two terms – adaptation and survival – are not independently defined. Each is defined in terms of the other. Claiming that change ensures survival is like hypothesizing that bachelors should prove to be unmarried and then discovering that the hypothesis is repeatedly and everywhere confirmed.

To make a claim about the survival of traditions that would be legitimate, several things would have to happen. (1) One would have to examine traditions that survived and those that have died out and show *how* and *why* the changes they underwent were responsible either for their continuation or extinction. (2) What exactly it is that survives or is extinguished needs to be specified. Ultimately, it is not a question of whether the particular opening line of a ballad is "I was brought up in London town" or "I was born and brought up in Boston, boys" changes or is maintained. It is whether the song that follows that first line survives. Survival or extinction should concern some song, tale, or practice as a whole.⁶ If change is a determinant of survival, one needs to be clear about what it is that is surviving and the nature of those changes that make that survival probable or unlikely. (3) The question of survival or extinction can only be assessed over a stretch of time, a period in which it is possible to observe versions and variants actually surviving and disappearing. In the short term, pure happenstance may account for the extinction of a variant and have no relationship to the nature of the tradition in question. Ultimately the frequent claims that the survival of a folk tradition can be attributed to adaptive changes and that adaptation is the key to survival is fraught with problems, problems that have not been fully identified, let alone resolved.

EVOLUTION

The idea that traditions change and adapt to new conditions leading to their survival approaches an evolutionary viewpoint whether it is called by that name or not. Several folklorists have explicitly identified their perspective as evolutionary. Axel Olrik, for example, argued for the evolution of folk narrative. He claimed that there is a “struggle for existence” between folk narratives. There are numerous forces – psychological, ecological, and literary – promoting change in the course of narrative transmission. (Olrik 1992 [1921]: 65–89) Selection will take place and those narratives that are most imaginative and have clear and definite plots will receive preference. Those with unclear plots or which contain conflicting ideas will consequently die out. The result is a richer and more artistic narrative and the raising of “the spiritual level of the narrative world” (ibid.: 63).

Sharp’s model of folk-song change was likewise evolutionary. Evolution, according to Sharp was predicated upon three principles: continuity, variation, and selection. A song enters the repertoires of different singers, and it undergoes variation. Most change is unconscious, but it can also be the result of deliberate invention as well (Sharp 1907: 23). The tune variations (Sharp was much more focused to tunes than words) are then selected according to the tastes of the community. Variations that appeal only to individuals will disappear, those that appeal to the community will survive (ibid.: 29).

Evolutionary paradigms in the explanation of culture are problematic. Here I have only been able to point to the tautology that often underlies evolutionary paradigms (see also Oring 2014a; 2014b). Despite Sharp’s and Olrik’s proclamations of allegiance to an evolutionary perspective, not much in the way of substantive folklore research emerged from it. Although evolution has held some place in folklore research, it is not one that has yet had a significant impact on the field.⁷

INNOVATION

Another conceptualization of change that erupted into folklorists’ consciousness crystallized with a study of a completely different problem – the authorship of the Homeric epics. Were these poems oral or literary productions? Were they created by a single author or compiled and edited from the works of several authors? If they were oral, how was one to account for the preservation of the epics and the fantastic memories of their singers (Lord 1965 [1960]: 7–12)? Milman Parry and Albert Lord took themselves to Yugoslavia to record and analyze a still functioning oral epic tradition. They discovered that such epics were *oral formulaic compositions* generated in the act of singing but produced from traditional poetic meters, formulas, themes (i.e., episodes), and plots. The epic singers were at once both the composers and the performers. They were not merely the carriers of a tradition – although they were that – but artists making and remaking the tradition as they performed (ibid.: 13). And while the singers often claimed to be able to reproduce a song heard only once, or to repeat a song that they had previously sung word for word and line for line, mechanical recordings demonstrated that there was considerable variability in what they produced although all were recognizable versions of the same story (ibid.: 26–29, 69–70, 72–77, 236–241).

Parry and Lord's work deepened the sense of an individual performer as the source of contemporary artistic creativity. There was no degeneration from a pure, inspired, ancient original. Parry and Lord's vision was more than the fact that some epics were art, or that some epics were more artful than others. The oral epic was a composition in the moment of performance. Each epic performance was a creative accomplishment by an individual singer. True, the singer was working with metrical units, formulas, themes, and story lines that were traditional – that is, learned from previous singers – but the individual performance was the result of singers composing a song in response to the exigencies of the moment through the filter of their own aesthetic preferences.

Of course, the notion that the forms of folklore were artistic was old. Von Herder had recommended the collection of folk poetry for its ability to inspire a vibrant national art (Clark 1955: 253). The Grimms saw their *Märchens* as part of that same repository of folk poetry. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, ballad scholars argued over the aesthetic merits of what were perceived to be old and new ballads and whether that merit, or the lack thereof, was the result of their transmission through oral channels. However, the push to place art and performance at the center of the folklore enterprise arose only in the mid-20th century. Only then did folklore come to be *defined* as an artistic product. William Bascom (1949; 1955: 248–250) proposed that folklore was “verbal art”; a creative act situated in an interaction between a performer and an audience. In the 1960s and 1970s, Roger Abrahams (1968: 143–145; 1977: 83), Dell Hymes (1971: 45; 1981 [1975]: 81), Dan Ben-Amos (1971), and Richard Bauman (1975; 1977) were the foremost, if not the only (see Jansen 1957; Ortutay 1959: 181, 190) promoters of this reconceptualization of folklore. Their joint premise was: (1) folklore performance was a sociolinguistic problem that demanded a comprehensive grasp of the context in which the communication took place; (2) folklore was viewed not merely as a communication, but an “artistic communication in small groups” (Ben-Amos 1971: 13). Change that occurred in the course of folklore transmission was to be perceived “as a result of deliberate, intentional [...] choices introduced by the individual artist whose creative genius is not content with mere imitative repetition” (Nicolaisen 1990: 45). This realignment of the folklore project had considerable influence both within and outside the field of folklore (Rudy 2002). Bauman defined the notion of performance as the “the assumption of responsibility to an audience for a display of communicative competence” (1975: 293; 1977: 11). In other words, art, in some sense, is constituted by performance rather than the other way round.

I do not doubt that there are changes that can be regarded as ‘creative’ or ‘innovative’ emerging in the moment of performance (or even before). But there are things not to like about the notion of creativity or innovation. Pointing to creativity is like referring to God; it puts a stop to all further questioning. Creativity becomes a prime mover. There is no getting behind it. It stands as a force beyond which there is no appeal. If creativity itself could be analyzed, broken into psychological and social parts and processes with the mechanisms laid bare, it would no longer be creativity but something that could be elucidated; a result of specifiable, determinative forces. The appeal to creativity is much like the Romantics appeals to ‘genius’; something that simply is and which lies beyond rational or material explanation.⁸ We can discuss creativity from now till doomsday without learning anything about tradition as a process other than to say that cultural reproduction sometimes occurs in unanticipated, interesting, and perhaps

appealing ways. But if we want to answer the question “How is it possible for a viable and vital folk tradition to continue over a span of centuries without diminution” (Nicolaisen 1990: 42), the concept of innovation or creativity seems likely to prove woefully insufficient.⁹

This is why ‘performance theorists’ eschew the problem of tradition altogether. For them, tradition is a trope; it is a reference to the past invoked in the course of a performance (Bauman 2004: 25–28, 147). Bauman calls this not *tradition* but *traditionalization*, a term coined by Dell Hymes (1975: 354) referring to “what people do to keep a sense of traditionalized identity alive.”¹⁰ The traditional only exists when someone appeals to it, when an “effort to traditionalize has brought it into being” (ibid.). In other words, traditionalization is a discursive act which may or may not have real world referents.¹¹ There is no appeal to actions, forces, or causes. It is talk, and while talk can itself be a cause (although no one has yet specified when talk and what kinds of talk have consequential effects), it is unlikely to offer answers to the questions I am posing.

I have nothing against the close study of performances. Ethnography is, after all, the basis for everything folklorists do. The actions of people engaged in singing songs, telling tales, posing riddles, or uttering charms is where the folkloristic project begins. A focus on artistic creativity grants the folklorist a sense of wonder and admiration at the products of individual performers and a respect for their abilities as well as a respect for the various communities in which those abilities are nurtured. It allows for the delineation of the principles underlying an individual’s or group’s aesthetics expression (for example, Hymes 1981). But what the study of performances has given us to date is microscopic analyses of particular events that do not seem to speak to some of the larger questions in the study of tradition; namely, why certain forms and practices are reproduced and why certain others are not, and why certain practices are maintained in one place but not in another.

ADDRESSING THE QUESTION

All in all, the conceptions of change held by folklorists have not been particularly helpful in explaining either the change or the continuity of traditions. The changes that have been conceptualized – degradation, adaptation, evolution, innovation – often describe, but rarely explain, how or why traditions change, and they do not address the continuity of tradition; that which makes a tradition a tradition in the first place. I believe Honko (2013: 325) erred in suggesting that the question of continuity was the least problematic or fruitful for folklore research. For the problem of tradition continuity is one with the problem of tradition change. Those traditions that are stable are subject to the very same array of forces that promote change. So why are some traditions eliminated or transformed when conditions are altered while others are not? For those traditions that endure, what is the source of their resistance?

We are deceived if we believe that traditions continue through some kind of inertia. A tradition needs to be reproduced both within a generation and between generations. Tradition is a matter of action, of doing. If a tradition continues, it is because there are forces that keep people acting and acting in the same manner as before. It may be that

these are the same forces that previously operated. It is also possible that a new set of forces has come into existence that nevertheless serves to maintain the tradition in something akin to its previous trajectory. The point is that forces are always operating, whether in the maintenance of traditions, in their transformation, and in their elimination. There is no situation in which forces are not in operation. To understand traditions, how and why they thrive or perish, the folklorist needs to identify those forces and grasp their particular effects.

There are a number of ways that folklorists can set about this task. I cannot spell them out here in any detail, the best I can do is list them. The first is the production of ethnographies, but specifically targeted and comparative ethnographies. That is ethnographies that do not begin with an interest in a particular social group or folklore genre, but that focus on a particular problem. A targeted ethnography would focus on groups undergoing particular social, economic, technological, and political changes. The ethnography would examine the specific influences of such changes on traditional practices; that is, the actual processes by which a change undermines, reinforces, or enhances traditional practice.

Comparative ethnographies would center on the question of why a tradition persists in one place yet seems to be disappearing in another. It would examine groups undergoing similar kinds of social change and look for similarities and differences in the effects of these changes on the maintenance and extinction of traditions. Such ethnographies would attempt to tease out the operation of those forces that seem critical in understanding how and why particular traditions persist or disappear. Of course, this kind of research is by no means new. It was prominent in anthropological research years ago when anthropologists moved from the practice of salvage anthropology to the study of social change. There are, of course, examples in the folklore literature as well.¹²

Another approach to the question of tradition is epidemiological (Sperber 1996: 25–27). The basic question posed by an epidemiological approach is, “Why are some representations more successful than others in a given human population?” In order to answer such a question, the distribution of various cultural practices has to be explored (ibid.: 49). What mechanisms account for such a distribution? What conditions favor the spread of particular representations and what conditions limit them? In other words, what makes certain cultural ideas and practices “contagious,” and what makes certain social groups open or resistant to their spread? An important factor in answering some of these questions is identifying *attractors*; psychological and environmental properties that make certain ideas and practices attractive to groups in particular circumstances.

Experiment is yet another approach to the question of why traditions are maintained or disappear. Folklorists often imagine that experiments are procedures carried out in laboratories by people in white coats with precision instruments wielding an array of statistical methods (Noyes 2019: 181). While a good number of experimentalists probably do conform to this image, the conception is far too narrow. An experiment is simply a *controlled observation*. It is an observation that is deliberate, purposive, and capable of producing results that are contrary to wishes or expectations. It is an observation that should be – at least conceptually – repeatable, and the results of the observation should be intersubjective; that is, there should be agreement by different observers as to what

has been observed (Kaplan 1964: 126–128). The results of the observation should be capable of generating, as well as testing, hypotheses about the world.

There are various kinds of experiments: heuristic experiments, exploratory experiments, boundary experiments, simulation experiments, nomological experiments, crucial experiments, and pilot studies (ibid.: 148–152). And experiments can be performed using first-hand ethnographic observations, published ethnographic accounts, archival records, maps, surveys, tests, cross-cultural statistical data, and data produced under laboratory conditions. The crucial element of an experiment is a *design* that leads to a specific and previously unknown observation.

CODA

In closing, I would like to pose a problem that I hope will provide a concrete illustration of the more abstract points I have been making. The problem concerns some counting-out rhymes that children employ for choosing an *It* for a game or in choosing up sides for teams. Cognitive psychologist David C. Rubin in his book, *Memory in Oral Tradition* (1995) shows how such rhymes can remain stable over many generations of children. A counting-out rhyme is used to count people, and it must be repeatable if children in a group are to accept its results as valid. Consequently, counting-out involves repetition, alliteration, and assonance in addition to rhyme and a regular and pronounced meter because their poetics make them memorable and constrain their variation within narrow limits. Thus, in a rhyme like “Eenie meenie miney mo / catch a tiger by the toe / if he hollers let him go / eenie meenie miney mo,” what is caught – in this case a tiger – in the second line can only be replaced by a two syllable word, and it has to be something that has toes or at least something that can be described as feet, and indeed, virtually all variants of the second line of the rhyme adhere to this principle so that on occasion, monkey, rabbit, piggie, froggie has been found in the place of tiger (ibid.: 240–241).¹³ While the poetics of the verse allows Rubin to explain the stability of such rhymes, he is at a loss to explain how “Eenie meenie miney mo” came to replace a different rhyme in the counting-out repertoire of children. Before “Eenie meenie miney mo” became dominant, another rhyme seems to have held pride of place among English-speaking children: “Onery, twoery, tickery, teven / alabone, crackabone, ten and eleven / tweedleum, twadleum, twenty-one.” Rubin noted the increase in meaningful words and phrases in “Eenie meenie miney mo” over “Onery twoery tickery teven,” but this merely describes a difference and does not explain why one rhyme should have replaced the other (ibid.: 247–250). In fact, a comparison of common English counting-out rhymes with uncommon counting-out rhymes showed no significant difference in their proportions of meaningful and meaningless words (ibid.: 231–232). And if one thinks about it, the nonsense terms in a counting-out rhyme might seem more magical and thus more suitable to what is essentially regarded as a divinatory procedure.

Carola Ekrem (2000) noticed something similar in the children’s rhymes of Finland Swedes. The rhyme *Äppel päppel pirum parum puff / kråkan satt på tallekvoist / hon sat ett hon sa tu / ut skall du vara nu* (“Äppel päppel pirum parum puff / the crow sat on a pine branch / she said one she said two / and out you go now”) has flourished for over a

century both among Swedish- and Finnish-speaking children in Finland. Yet the rhyme *Kalle Lång fick en gång / höra på en vacker sång / ding dång ding dång / ut med dig för denna gång* (“Kalle Lång did one time / listen to a beautiful song / Ding dong, ding dong / and out you go this time”) lost much of its popularity. Ekrem notes that the most popular rhymes were increasingly ‘action rhymes’ which presumably means that nonsense phrases are replaced by meaningful phrases describing actions; an observation not out of keeping with Rubin’s comment about “Eenie meenie miney mo” (Ekrem 2000: 293–295; Rubin 1995: 249). But again, Ekrem’s observation is simply a good observation. It is descriptive but not explanatory. No reason is given as to why more sensible and action-based rhymes should replace nonsensical ones, nor would these observations precisely explain the continued popularity of *Äppel päppel* or the decline of *Kalle Lång*.

So, here is the assignment. Explain why certain children’s long-lived rhymes are replaced by new ones. Ascertain whether there is a general trend to replace nonsense rhymes with more meaningful ones, and if so, account for this trajectory. One might think the example of children’s rhyme somehow trivial. It is not. In fact, it might be argued that if folklorists are unable to account for stability and change in children’s rhymes, they are unlikely to be able to account for stability or change in anything else. Furthermore, the question of how and why traditions are maintained, although a major question, does not initially require a major answer. Answers to begin with can be small, local, partial, and tentative. But whatever the answers, they should also be somehow testable. They should move from interpretation to evidence-based explanation (Oring 2019: 144–147). Only then will folkloristics begin to make a major contribution to understanding the forces that give rise to traditions, give them shape, and determine their fate. Only then will our inquiries begin to resemble the ‘Science of Folklore’ that was imagined in the earliest period of our history.

Of course, why traditions survive or die in particular times and places is not the only question that can be asked about them. Folklorists also pay attention to emic notions of continuity and change in traditions. Informants can provide their own descriptions of change, articulate reasons for change, and describe the means by which they believe change occurs. How and when individuals invoke the past – traditionalization – are part and parcel of a folklorist’s study of tradition, or, I should say, the rhetoric of tradition. Likewise, the meanings of traditions are open to both etic and emic analysis. The role of tradition in maintaining individual and group identity and cohesiveness (and divisiveness) is another matter of concern to folklorists. But I would contend that the question of how and why traditions persist or die out is one that is embedded in the very meaning of the word *tradition*, a word composed from Latin roots signifying to ‘hand across’ or ‘hand down’. Why a practice is handed down or fails to be handed down is a question that folklorists need to address if they are to continue to employ the word *tradition* as part of the definition of their enterprise.

NOTES

1 This essay originated as a keynote lecture presented at the 10th International Conference of Young Folklorists organized online by the University of Tartu, Estonia on May 20, 2021.

2 See Thomas Percy's (1886 [1765] 3: 13) comments on manuscript copies of ballad poetry.

3 Actually, the Polish proverbs employed in the memes that Szpila studied must remain very much alive for the meme parodies to prove successful.

4 In fact, "the Boston Burglar" is an Americanization of "Botany Bay" but both songs were collected in southern Michigan at about the same time (Gardner and Chickering 1939: 323, 335).

5 There is a Dee Lundeen Falls in Michigan but apparently no River Dee or Dee River.

6 This is a concept that is in itself problematic. Certainly, we cannot be speaking of the survival of a particular performance or even a text since these are bound to change in some small if not large ways. Should we be talking about the survival or extinction of tales in which a character named Cinderella loses her shoe at a ball, or tales that generally conform to ATU types 510A or 510B, or tales of the persecuted heroine more generally, or magic tales, or folktales as a whole? And at what point should it be acknowledged that a series of changes ultimately results in a song or tale that no longer resembles its original so that it has failed to survive precisely because it has been so transformed by its adaptations?

7 In fact, the total number of articles in folklore journals in English that employ the term evolution in their titles numbers only 18, and not all of those are actually about folklore change. One, for example, is about the change in the concept of folklore and the field of folkloristics. Another is about the idea of evolution in a work by Herbert George Wells. Most employ the term evolution as a synonym for history and concern the development of a particular tune, dance, legend, or religious figure. In other words, evolution is not a theoretical term.

8 Leslie White regards a genius as someone who is known for making a significant discovery or invention. This discovery or invention, however, is a cultural act which he explains in terms of the synthesis of preexisting cultural elements. If the elements are there, they will eventually be synthesized in someone's brain (White 1949: 203–205). The genius is the one who happens to, or is believed to, synthesize it first.

9 Contrary to William Nicolaisen's intent, however, as he hopes that the creativity of the performer lies at the center of the maintenance of traditions. In this respect he is like those folklorists cited above who see adaptation as the key to the maintenance of a tradition.

10 I do not find it helpful when a term is employed to define itself.

11 While I have no problem with employing traditionalization as a term to label the invocation of the past in relation to present practice, I would also want to use it for the act of identifying a model for future reproduction. Following the engagement of a group of people in some activity, the proposition, "Let's make this a tradition" would also seem to be a traditionalization. Hymes further suggests that the term *traditionalization* would serve to universalize folklore's realm of discourse as it labels a universal disposition and need (1975: 354), but this should also be true of the word tradition. Traditions are also universal. Tradition – cultural reproduction – exists even when a reproducer fails to acknowledge it or is unaware that such reproduction is taking place.

12 Carla Bianco (1974) studied the transplantation of villagers from Roseto, Valfortore to the United States. They did not settle in the cities but founded a new community in Pennsylvania also named Roseto. Bianco noted the differences between the Italian and American communities but did not precisely explain how the changes in the new community occurred. For example, harvest songs disappeared in Pennsylvania because the migrants were no longer engaged in agricultural work. But as the villagers regretted their loss, one wonders why they were not revived in some other musical format – the town maintained a strong instrumental band tradition – but left them to dwindle within individual memory (ibid.: 31, 129). The decay of story traditions in the United States was attributed to the influence of television (ibid.: 78). She noted that Rosetans

did maintain story traditions into the second generation whereas they were quickly lost in Italian immigrant groups that had moved to cities (*ibid.*: 79). Changes are described, but not precisely, and the explanations that are offered are very general.

Aili Nenola-Kallio (1981) studied the decline of the lament tradition in Karelia and Ingria. Ingrian laments were on the verge of extinction. 19th-century Lutheran ministers were an important cause of decline in Ingria of wedding and funeral customs as well as the associated lament tradition. In some cases, they forced congregations to sign contracts to reform their rituals. Russian Orthodox church authorities in Karelia attempted to reduce the lament which was forbidden by law. Nevertheless, the church only managed to end the lament tradition in cities and among the higher social classes. The Orthodox priests in the rural areas did not concern themselves with them. Why the Lutherans were successful while the Orthodox were not is not entirely explained. But it is noted that the Ingrian customs only entered their final decline when the Lutheran communities were dispersed to different parts of the Soviet Union in the 1920s and 1930s.

13 The word *nigger* was once the dominant term in the rhyme but was expurgated as social values changed (Rubin 1995: 238). (Curiously, references to nigger even show up in the counting-out rhymes of Finland Swedes; see Ekrem 2000: 293.) My own childhood experience might serve as a counterexample to Rubin's contention that there is a semantic constraint on the nature of the replacement noun in the second line of the verse as something having toes or at least feet. In the rhyme I remember, the second line was "catch a nickel by the toe." A nickel, being an American five-cent coin, has no toes or feet. While the word would seem to have replaced 'nigger' somewhere in the rhyme's history, this was not something done within my play group. Neither I nor the other children in my group would have ever heard or known the word 'nigger.' The word 'nickel,' however, was very familiar and served the rhyme even though it made no sense as it had no toes to be caught. This lack of sense did not bother us. Thus, the change from 'nigger' to 'nickel' might just as easily been a result of mishearing or rationalization as expurgation. The use of the term nickel in the rhyme was also recorded in New Zealand (Bauer and Bauer 2007: 198).

REFERENCES

- Abrahams, Roger D. 1968. Introductory Remarks to a Rhetorical Theory of Folklore. – *Journal of American Folklore* 81 (320): 143–158. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/537664>.
- Abrahams, Roger D. 1977. An Enactment-Centered Theory of Folklore. – *Frontiers of Folklore. AAAS Selected Symposium 5*, edited by William R. Bascom. Boulder, CO: Westview, 79–120. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429050756-5>.
- ATU = Uther, Hans-Jörg. 2011. *The Types of International Folktales: A Classification and Bibliography* 1–3. Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia.
- Barry, Phillips. 1909. Folk Music in America. – *Journal of American Folklore* 22 (83): 72–81. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/534309>.
- Barry, Phillips. 1933. Communal Re-Creation. – *Bulletin of the Folksong Society of the Northeast* 5: 4–6.
- Bascom, William R. 1949. Folklore. – *Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology, and Legend* 1–2, edited by Maria Leach. New York, NY: Funk and Wagnalls, 398.
- Bascom, William R. 1953. Folklore and Anthropology. – *Journal of American Folklore* 66 (262): 283–290. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/536722>.
- Bascom, William R. 1955. Verbal Art. – *Journal of American Folklore* 68 (269): 245–252. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/536902>.
- Bauer, Laurie and Winifred Bauer. 2007. Playing with Tradition. – *Journal of Folklore Research* 44 (2/3): 185–225. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2979/JFR.2007.44.2-3.185>.

- Bauman, Richard. 1975. Verbal Art as Performance. – *American Anthropologist* 77 (2): 290–311. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1525/aa.1975.77.2.02a00030>.
- Bauman, Richard. 1977. *Verbal Art as Performance*. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland.
- Bauman, Richard. 2004. *A World of Other's Words: Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Intertextuality*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Bauman, Richard and Charles L. Briggs. 2003. *Voices of Modernity: Language Ideologies and the Politics of Inequality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511486647>.
- Ben-Amos, Dan. 1971. Toward a Definition of Folklore in Context. – *Journal of American Folklore* 84 (331): 3–15. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/539729>.
- Bianco, Carla. 1974. *The Two Rosetos*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Burne, Charlotte S. 1910. Presidential Address: The Value of European Folklore in the History of Culture. – *Folk-Lore* 21 (1): 14–41. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/0015587X.1910.9719913>.
- Catarella, Teresa. 1994. The Study of the Orally Transmitted Ballad: Past Paradigms and a New Poetics. – *Oral Tradition* 9 (2): 468–478.
- Clark, Robert T., Jr. 1955. *Herder: His Life and Thought*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Dégh, Linda. 1995. *Narratives in Society: A Performer-Centered Study of Narration*. *Folklore Fellows' Communications* 255. Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia.
- Dorson, Richard M. 1968. *The British Folklorists*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Dundes, Alan. 1975. *Work Hard and You Will Be Rewarded: Urban Folklore from the Paperwork Empire*. Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press.
- Ekrem, Carola. 2000. Variation and Continuity in Children's Counting-Out Rhymes. – *Thick Corpus, Organic Variation, and Textuality in Oral Tradition*. *Studia Fennica Folkloristica* 7, edited by Lauri Honko. Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 287–298.
- Final Discussion: On the Analytic Value of the Concept of Tradition. 1983. – *Trends in Nordic Tradition Research*. *Studia Fennica* 27, edited by Lauri Honko and Pekka Laaksonen. Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 233–249.
- Galanter, Marc. 2005. *Lowering the Bar: Lawyer Jokes and Legal Culture*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Gardner, Emelyn Elizabeth and Geraldine J. Chickering. 1939. *Ballads and Songs of Southern Michigan*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3998/mpub.9690760>.
- Georges, Robert A. and Michael Owen Jones. 1995. *Folkloristics: An Introduction*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Glassie, Henry. 1994. Epilogue. – *The Spirit of Swedish Folk Art*, edited by Barbro Klein and Mats Widbom. New York, NY: Harry N. Abrams, 247–255.
- Hicks, Ray. 1963. Big Man Jack Killed Seven at a Whack. – *Ray Hicks of Beech Mountain, North Carolina Telling Four Traditional Jack Tales*, recorded by Sandy Paton and transcribed by Lee B. Haggerty. Side 1, track 2. Huntington, VT: Folk Legacy Records FTA-14.
- Honko, Lauri. 1981. Four Forms of Adaptation. – *Adaptation, Change, and Decline in Oral Literature*, edited by Lauri Honko and Vilmos Voigt. Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 19–33.
- Honko, Lauri. 2013. Traditions in the Construction of Cultural Identity. – *Theoretical Milestones: Selected Writings of Lauri Honko*, edited by Pekka Hakamies and Anneli Honko. Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 323–338.
- Hunt, Margaret, ed. 1884. *Grimm's Household Tales* 1–2, translated by Margaret Hunt. London: George Bell.
- Hymes, Dell. 1971. The Contribution of Folklore to Sociolinguistic Research. – *Journal of American Folklore* 84 (331): 42–50. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/539732>.
- Hymes, Dell. 1975. Folklore's Nature and the Sun's Myth. – *Journal of American Folklore* 88 (350): 345–369. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/538651>.

- Hymes, Dell. 1981. *In Vain I Tried to Tell You: Essays in Native American Ethnopoetics*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.9783/9781512802917>.
- Jacobs, Joseph. 1893. The Folk. – *Folk-Lore* 4 (2): 233–238. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/0015587X.1893.9720155>.
- Jansen, William Hugh. 1957. Classifying Performance in the Study of Verbal Folklore. – *Studies in Folklore. Indiana University Publications Folklore Series 9*, edited by W. Edson Richmond. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 110–118.
- Kaplan, Abraham. 1964. *The Conduct of Inquiry*. San Francisco, CA: Chandler.
- Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara. 1998. Topic Drift. – *Journal of American Folklore* 111 (441): 281–327. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/541312>.
- Klein, Barbro and Mats Widbom, ed. 1994. *Swedish Folk Art: All Tradition is Change*. New York, NY: Harry N. Abrams.
- Krohn, Kaarle. 1971 [1926]. *Folklore Methodology Formulated by Julius Krohn and Expanded by Nordic Researchers*, translated by Roger L. Welsh. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.
- Lang, Andrew. 1879. Preface. – *The Folk-Lore Record* 2: i–viii. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17441994.1879.10602560>.
- Lang, Andrew. 1884. Introduction. – *Grimm's Household Tales*, edited by Margaret Hunt. London: George Bell, xi–lxxv.
- Laws, G. Malcolm. 1957. *American Ballads from British Broad-sides*. Philadelphia, PA: American Folklore Society.
- Laws, G. Malcolm. 1964. *Native American Balladry*. Philadelphia, PA: American Folklore Society.
- Lord, Albert B. 1965 [1960]. *The Singer of Tales*. New York, NY: Athenaeum.
- Lowthorp, Leah. 2020. Kutiyattam, Heritage, and the Dynamics of Culture. – *Asian Ethnology* 79 (1): 21–44.
- Marret, R. R. 1920. *Psychology and Folklore*. London: Methuen.
- Nenola-Kallio, Aili. 1981. Death of a Tradition. – *Adaptation, Change, and Decline in Oral Literature*, edited by Lauri Honko and Vilmos Voigt. Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 135–146.
- Neulander, Judith S. 1998. Jewish Oral Traditions. – *Teaching Oral Traditions*, edited by John Miles Foley. New York, NY: Modern Language Association, 225–238.
- Newell, William Wells. 1963 [1883]. *The Games and Songs of American Children*. New York, NY: Dover.
- Nicolaisen, William F. H. 1990. Variation and Creativity in Folk-Narrative. – *D'un Conte ... à l'autre: La variabilité dans la Littérature orale*, edited by Veronika Görög-Karady. Paris: Centre Nationale de la Recherche Scientifique, 39–45.
- Noyes, Dorothy. 2019. “Incalculably Diffusive”: Revisiting the Disciplinary Deficit (a Response to Elliott Oring). – *Journal of American Folklore* 132 (524): 175–184. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5406/jamerfolk.132.524.0175>.
- Olrik, Axel. 1992 [1921]. *Principles for Oral Narrative Research*, translated by Kirsten Wolf and Jody Jensen. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Oring, Elliott. 2012. *Just Folklore: Analysis, Interpretation, Critique*. Los Angeles, CA: Cantilever.
- Oring, Elliott. 2014a. Memetics and Folkloristics: The Theory. – *Western Folklore* 73 (4): 432–454.
- Oring, Elliott. 2014b. Memetics and Folkloristics: The Applications. – *Western Folklore* 73 (4): 455–492.
- Oring, Elliott. 2019. Back to the Future: Questions for Theory in the Twenty-First Century. – *Journal of American Folklore* 132 (524): 137–156. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5406/jamerfolk.132.524.0137>.
- Ortutay, Gyula. 1959. Principles of Oral Transmission in Folk Culture. – *Acta Ethnographica* 8: 175–221.
- Percy, Thomas. 1886 [1775]. *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* 1–3. London: Swan, Sonnenschein, Lebas, and Lowry.

- Rubin, David C. 1995. *Memory in Oral Tradition: A Cognitive Psychology of Epic, Ballads, and Counting-out Rhymes*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Rudy, Jill Terry. 2002. Toward an Assessment of Verbal Art as Performance: A Cross-Disciplinary Citation Study with Rhetorical Analysis. – *Journal of American Folklore* 115 (455): 5–27. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/jaf.2002.0011>.
- Sharp, Cecil. 1907. *English Folksong: Some Conclusions*. London: Simpkin.
- Sperber, Dan. 1996. *Explaining Culture: A Naturalistic Approach*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- von Sydow, Carl Wilhelm. 1948. *Selected Papers on Folklore*. Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger.
- Szpila, Grzegorz. 2017. Polish Paremics Demotivators: Tradition in an Internet Genre. – *Journal of American Folklore* 130 (517): 305–334. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5406/jamerfolk.130.517.0305>.
- Thompson, Stith. 1977. *The Folktale*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Toelken, Barre. 1996. *The Dynamic of Folklore*. Revised edn. Logan, UT: Utah State University. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt46nrng>.
- Tylor, Edward Burnett. 1871. *Primitive Culture* 1–2. London: John Murray.
- uí Ógáin, Ríonach. 2000. Aspects of Change in the Irish-Language Singing Tradition. – *Thick Corpus, Organic Variation, and Textuality in Oral Tradition*. *Studia Fennica Folkloristica* 7, edited by Lauri Honko. Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 537–555.
- Upton, Dell. 1993. The Tradition of Change. – *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review* 5 (1): 9–15.
- White, Leslie. 1949. *The Science of Culture*. New York, NY: Grove.
- Wilson, William A. 1973. Herder, Folklore, and Romantic Nationalism. – *Journal of Popular Culture* 6 (4): 818–835. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0022-3840.1973.00819.x>.