Working Americans:
Contemporary Approaches
to Occupational Folklife

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Contents

Introduction

This issue is devoted to the study of occupational folklife, and was conceived as a necessary response to at least two independent but related developments. The first development, within folklore studies generally, is a growing interest in occupational folklife and the consequent demand for appropriate materials and courses to satisfy that interest. The second, at the Smithsonian Institution specifically, was the housing of the largest extant collection of sound tape recordings of occupational folklife. The need for some bridge between the two, a bridge that would describe this unique archive as well as suggest to folklorists new ways of looking at occupational folklife, seemed obvious.

The Archive of Occupational Folklife, housed at the Smithsonian Institution's Office of American and Folklife Studies, contains over six hundred hours of recordings of narrative performances by occupational groups who participated in the Working Americans program of the 1975 and 1976 Festivals of American Folklife. On these tapes literally hundreds of workers representing over a hundred different occupations tell stories about their work which express their own perspectives on their jobs, their fellow workers, their training, and the organizations that represent them as well as their angers, their joys and their fears. They also frequently reveal aspects (metaphorical, realistic, or dramatic) of the actual work processes that inform and shape their stories. This voluminous record of occupational experience is, to be sure, one that was collected out of its natural milieu, but it has proven to be surprisingly effective in its ability to communicate the insider's view of work through verbal art; and it also suggests a strong functional and stylistic connection between physical work processes and their accompanying narratives. The entire collection has been logged; and the largest portion of it, recorded at the 1976 Festival of American Folklife, has been annotated and cross-indexed by subject, occupation and genre. This corpus of tapes is, of course, preliminary material—the barest skimming of the surface of occupational expression. While representing more groups than have ever

been collected from before, it still passes over many, many more. The next step is to use the collection as an indicator of important in-depth research and fieldwork projects that will explore more fully the occupational experiences that shape our lives in so many positive and negative ways.

To further this greater end the articles comprising this issue were solicited. Robert S. McCarl, Jr. presents a highly convincing operational definition of occupational folklife. Roger D. Abrahams supplies an up-to-date rationale for inquiry into occupational culture, and relates that inquiry to broader sociological and anthropological studies in the past and present. Based on my own and others' experience in the field, I have attempted to outline useful procedures for the investigation of the most typical and least studied occupations in our culture. Jack Santino illustrates one analytical approach to occupational narratives that indicates the indispensability of such narratives to students of occupational culture. And, finally, Archie Green surveys the history of occupational folkloristics, analyzes it for the lessons it contains, defines conceptual problems that cannot be avoided, and points to sources that the student of occupational culture may not ignore.

Increasingly, occupational folklore and folklife are being collected, annotated and studied, but more is needed: more data and more analysis. My hope is that some of our readers will apply their talents to this exciting but often overlooked branch of contemporary folkloristics, and that this issue will suggest theoretical and practical frameworks for their activity.

R.H.B.

Occupational Folklife: A Theoretical Hypothesis

ROBERT S. McCARL, JR.

The study of occupational groups by folklorists demands not only a new approach to oral expression, it also requires an understanding of the work processes and techniques from which this expression is derived. The complex of techniques, customs, and modes of expressive behavior which characterize a particular work group comprises its *occupational folklife,* and the following discussion provides both a definition and theoretical justification of this concept.

In the essay in this issue entitled "Industrial Lore: A Bibliographic-Semantic Query," Archie Green provides a solid and comprehensive summation of the various approaches to industrial/occupational folklore from the work of the early occupational song collectors through that of current scholars.[1] He firmly establishes this area as a legitimate aspect of folklore studies when he states that "the factory, as place, is an appropriate folkloric field, and . . . work, as process, is a field within which folklore emerges and is altered" (p. 96). Beyond this summary by Green, the functionalist approaches of Korson, Beck, Boatright and Hand (based upon studies of the lore and customs generated by members of "classic" occupations like mining, sea-faring and work in the oil fields),[2]

1. Also see the theoretical section in Archie Green, *Only a Miner, Studies in Recorded Coal Mining Songs* (Urbana, Illinois, 1972), 3–31.

2. The following notes refer to the sections of these works that deal primarily with the theory behind a particular collection or essay: George Korson, *Coal Dust*

Coffin and Cohen's folk (cowboy)/ semi-folk (auto-worker) dichotomy,[3] and Nickerson's Redfieldian approach to factory workers,[4] there has been very little theoretical work done in occupational folklife, by which I mean the entire range of expressive culture generated in the work setting. Occupational expression is inextricably linked to the work processes and micro-environments in which it functions, and therefore the study of these processes demands a comprehensive view of the relationship between the forms of communication and the environment in which they occur. Context here is not viewed as a variable background which *influences* the nature of interaction;[5] occupational contexts *are a part* of the interaction itself, i.e., aspects of the occupational environment as they are manipulated by the worker can be and are interpreted symbolically and they therefore can be viewed as a mode of communication.

Levi-Strauss has detailed the effective use by a shaman of ritual manipulations (use of the non-symbolic in a symbolic manner) that communicate a symbolic course which guides a woman through a difficult childbirth. He points out the putting of "the cheek of the patient in contact with the breast of the analyst. The symbolic load of such acts qualifies them as a language. Actually, the therapist holds a dialogue with the patient, not through the spoken word,

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on the Fiddle (Hatboro, Pennsylvania, 1965, [original 1943]), 3–16, 17–28; Korson, *Minstrels of the Mine Patch, Songs and Stories of the Anthracite Industry* (Hatboro, Pennsylvania, 1964, [original 1938]), i-xiv, 1–12; Korson, *Pennsylvania Songs and Legends* (Philadelphia, 1949), 1–16; Horace Beck, "Where the Workers of the World Unite," in *Our Living Traditions*, ed. Tristram P. Coffin (New York, 1968), 58–69; Beck, *Folklore and the Sea* (Middleton, Connecticut, 1973), xiii-xvii, 409–412; Mody Boatright, *Folklore from the Oil Industry* (Dallas, 1963), v-vii; also see Boatright's numerous articles in the Publications of the Texas Folklore Society; Wayland D. Hand, "California Miner's Folklore: Below Ground," *California Folklore Quarterly* 1 (1942): 127–130, 140–141; Hand, "California Miner's Folklore: Above Ground," *California Folklore Quarterly* 1 (1942): 24–27; and Hand, "American Occupational and Industrial Folklore: The Miner," in *Kontakte und Grenzen: Probleme der Volks-, Kulture-, und Sozialforschung; Festschrift für Gerhard Heilfurth*, ed. Hans Foltin (Göttingen, 1969), 453–460.

3. Tristram Coffin and Hennig Cohen, eds., *Folklore from the Working Folk of America* (Garden City, New York, 1973), xxx-xxxv.

4. Bruce Nickerson, "Is There a Folk in the Factory?" *Journal of American Folklore* 87 (1974): 133–140.

5. Dan Ben-Amos, "Toward a Definition of Folklore in Context," in *Toward New Perspectives in Folklore*, eds. Richard Bauman and Americo Paredes (Austin and London, 1972), 5–6.

but by concrete actions."[6] Similarly, "actions speak louder than words" in many industrial contexts and the prank of tying a man's sweater to the lath and plastering it into the wall[7] or nailing a lunch bucket to the floor or workbench illustrates the humorous manipulation of this language of the concrete. This mode of communication extends well beyond the gestural,[8] and approximates that described by Birdwhistell as (non-verbal) patterned, behavioral communication,[9] or what Levi-Strauss has termed the language or science of the concrete through which an artist (or worker) communicates via the manipulation of objects or materials.[10] Just as there are varying levels of latitude, ability and involvement in the artistic environment with regard to these manipulations there are parallel levels in the work context.

Each occupation demands an ability to do something, whether it is repeatedly screwing a nut to a bolt on the assembly line, framing a structure, machining the parts for an electron microscope, or mopping a kitchen floor. In each case, the worker must make decisions and manipulate objects to produce the desired result and it is in the manner and appropriateness of the manipulation (its technique)[11] that the occupational network is born, perceived by other

6. Claude Levi-Strauss, "The Effectiveness of Symbols," in *Structural Anthropology*, Claude Levi-Strauss, trans. by Claire Jacobson and B. G. Schoepf (New York, 1963), 186–206.

7. The tape citations given here were recorded at the Smithsonian Institution's Festival of American Folklife which was held in Washington, D.C. from 16 June through 8 September 1976. These tapes were recorded in the Working Americans section of the festival and the entire collection will eventually be housed in the Smithsonian Institution archives. The citations are broken down in the following manner: Tape Number Smithsonian *Institution, Folklife Program, Working Americans* 1977-503.17 (Recorder counter no. *50*), Franklin "Doggie" Eastman, lather, Washington, D.C.; Tape no. SI-FP-WA-77-503.18 (210–260), Carl Peterson, plasterer, Lenexa, Kansas.

8. Aaron V. Cicourel, "Gestural Sign Language and the Study of Non-Verbal Communication," in *The Body as a Medium of Expression*, eds., Jonathan Benthall and Ted Polhemus (New York, 1975), 204.

9. Ray C. Birdwhistell, "Background Considerations to the Study of the Body as a Medium of Expression," in Benthall and Polhemus, 55–57.

10. Claude Levi-Strauss, "The Science of the Concrete," in *Art and Aesthetics in Primitive Societies*, ed. Carol F. Jopling (New York, 1971), 246. Also see Jurgen Ruesch and Weldon Kees, *Nonverbal Communication, Notes on the Visual Perception of Human Relations* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1956), 89–107.

11. Ken Kusterer, "Knowledge on the Job: Workers' Know-How and Everyday Survival in the Workplace." (Unpublished Ph.D. diss., Washington University, 1976), 221. This is an adaptation of the term used by Kusterer.

workers and stereotyped by outsiders. What is important in this
technique is not its inherent danger, technical complexity, or tradi-
tional nature, but the way in which it is influenced and interpreted
by others in the work group. Technique reflects the "working
knowledge" (what you need to know to do the work)[12] of any work
group, and as it is passed from one worker to another through imi-
tation and instruction, it begins to reveal a pattern of interactions
that is unique to that particular group and almost invisible to the
outside observer.

The term technique is used rather than skill because as Carl B.
Kaufmann points out:

> The difficulty is that we continue to use one word, "skill," to sig-
> nify both the things that a man can do with his hands and the
> things that he knows with his head. They are not comparable and
> merely to say that a worker is "skilled" is to say nothing of the
> changes continually reshaping his job.[13]

Technique is also a more useful term because it indicates a form of
interaction with tools, environment, and other workers that con-
notes expertise and esoteric knowledge. At the same time, it pro-
vides a more specific referent from which work processes and pat-
terns of behavior can be viewed. Some occupations, like tool and
die making, generate a more evident technique than do others,
such as assembly line work, because of the number and diversity of
the processes involved and the varied criteria upon which a crafts-
person or practitioner is judged by other group members. Public
oriented or transient jobs like cab driving or working as a waitress
demand work techniques that include strategies for survival and
success plus constantly changing evaluations of others' behavior as
a daily part of the work experience.[14] In all occupational groups

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12. Ibid., 281–296. Kusterer's concept of working knowledge is complex but basi-
cally it is a recognition of informal work culture as seen from a sociological per-
spective. His summary of the concept is given in the pages cited above.

13. Carl B. Kaufmann, *Man Incorporate, The Individual and His Work in an
Organized Society* (Garden City, New York, 1969), 133.

14. This concept of strategy was suggested to me by Martin Laba and it is dis-
cussed in his paper "Ethnography and the Description and Analysis of Folklore
Behavior" which was delivered at the Canadian Ethnology Society Meeting in
February of 1977. The concept of evaluation in narrative/behavioral performance
was suggested to me by Philip Nusbaum in his unpublished paper "Story-telling
Style Among New York City Taxi Drivers." Also see James Spradley, *You Owe
Yourself a Drunk: Ethnography of Urban Nomads*, (Boston, 1970).

these criteria reflect the major technical and processual concerns of the work group primarily while on the job site or in the company of other workers. At other times an individual may participate in groups or experiences totally unrelated to work. This does not minimize the impact of occupational culture upon a worker's expressive repertory; it merely makes a distinction between cultural roles and influences as this individual moves daily from one group and environment to another and brings into play those modes of interaction which are appropriate to a given context.

Technique, then, is the pattern of manipulations, actions, and rhythms which are the result of the interaction between an individual and his or her work environment and which are prescribed by the group and used as criteria for the determination of membership and status within it. The primary technique of tool and die making is the shaping of positive/negative molds by removing metal from two halves,[15] while the primary technique of glass work in a molding factory is the smooth coordination and movement of raw glass into the kiln, out again, into the mold and then into the lehr.[16] Technique is the *shaping principle* of an occupation, and its transmission from one group member to the next forms the basis of internal and external concepts of a particular kind of work. Within the occupation it is known as "knowing the trade," or being a "good mechanic" or a "good hand." Outside of the work group it is generally referred to as "skill," or an individual is simply referred to as a member of a general work classification (carpenter, dancer, typist, surgeon, etc.) who has "been at it a long time," is "well respected in his trade," or "really cares about her work."

An example will illustrate the pervasiveness of work technique upon the culture of a work group. In his study of longshoremen in Portland, Oregon, William Pilcher states:

An examination of the longshore workplace and the conditions under which longshoremen work is enlightening. There is a general distinction between the ship and the dock. Much less of the behavior described takes place when longshoremen are working on the dock than when the same men are working on board ships, and what does occur is much milder in tone. It is also possible to

15. Tape no. SI-FP-WA-502.02 (680–720), Joe Pintor, Joe Kilzer, Jack Snyder and Bob Tansley, tool and die makers, Chicago, Illinois.
16. Tape no. SI-FP-WA-501.22 (220–400), Bob Newell, glassworker and union representative, Toledo, Ohio; Austin Hemingway, glassblower, Baltimore, Maryland.

distinguish between the kinds of work performed on the ships. On ships where logs or long steel beams and plates are being handled, or where the work is especially arduous, seemingly bitter mutual verbal abuse is almost constant and mock assaults are very frequent. On other shipboard operations, this behavior is not serious in appearance and clearly conveys a sense of easygoing good fellowship as it does among the men working on the docks.[17]

The work process or flow of the longshoreman's job is moving bulk goods into or out of a ship and "stowing items so that they will not shift or fall, or so that the cases of canned goods will not chafe themselves into shreds."[18] This technique (actually a constellation of techniques gained over years of experience) demands physical as well as oral articulation and as can be seen in the above description, involves a direct relationship between shipboard and dock technique and the accompanying expressive behavior. I am suggesting that in the work context these two forms of interaction are parallel modes of communication which are perceived and used as such by the workers themselves, i.e., there are situations in which the work group provides for the "emergence"[19] of performance (verbal and non-verbal) from beyond the daily work flow and conversational background or environment of "meaningful" noise (noise with an understandable meaning to the worker) surrounding the work situation.[20] In the preceding example, the relationship between arduous shipboard work and verbal abuse is in contrast to the less interactionally demanding dock work.

In order to distinguish communication through technique from daily physical interaction, it is necessary to discern a pattern of redundancy through which meaningful or communicative movement, manipulation, and rhythm (the performance of technique) can be separated from that which is not meaningful. Not all activity can be symbolic.[21] Erving Goffman's concepts of substantive and

17. William W. Pilcher, *The Portland Longshoremen, A Dispersed Urban Community* (New York, 1972), 110.

18. Ibid., 97.

19. Richard Bauman, "Verbal Art as Performance," *American Anthropologist*, 77 (1975): 302.

20. Georges Friedmann, *Industrial Society, The Emergence of the Human Problems of Automation* (New York, 1955), 99.

21. Gregory Bateson, *Steps to An Ecology of Mind, A Revolutionary Approach to Man's Understanding of Himself* (New York, 1972), 130–131.

ceremonial rules of conduct are particularly useful in this regard.[22] The daily movement of materials on and off of the dock, taking a patient's temperature, or welding a continuous window mullion are daily activities of a longshoreman, nurse, and sheet metal worker which must conform to certain rules of conduct that facilitate their completion; i.e., they aid the worker by giving him a charter or code of technique that has little or no expressive implication. At other tmes, however, the individual worker may use these same techniques in a performance context. The longshoreman, for example may strain in mock helplessness to get someone to give him a hand, or he may use a high vantage point to make an obscene gesture with a pole or other piece of equipment; the nurse makes the thermometer into an "airplane" to coax it into the child's "hangar"/mouth; and the welder slowly and carefully repeats his welding technique so that an onlooking apprentice can learn the correct processes. These performed techniques are based upon ceremonial rules of conduct which have their "primary importance . . . as a conventionalized means of communication by which the individual expresses his character or conveys his appreciation of the other participants in the situation."[23] They are work techniques that communicate substantively as patterned, normative charters for daily activity and ceremonially as "task-embedded, sign-vehicles"[24] that use the work environment as a performance context and designate the tools, materials, and even normative activities of the workplace with symbolic significance. This expressive dimension of technique, however, is inextricably tied to other forms of communication in contemporary work environments; gesture, verbal art and custom. The relationship between these modes is based primarily upon the work flow itself, and therefore, there are strong parallels between substantive and ceremonial rules of conduct that pervade the entire work culture.

Gregory Bateson, in a discussion of primitive art, states that the determination of meaning in creative action or "skill" is based

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22. Erving Goffman, *Interaction Ritual, Essays on Face-to-Face Behavior* (Garden City, New York, 1967), 53–56.

23. Ibid., 53–54. Also see Lauri Honko, "Memorates and the Study of Folk Beliefs," *Journal of the Folklore Institute*, 1 (1964): 16–17. Honko makes a distinction between cultural experience and cultural explanatory models that parallels the terms I have borrowed from Goffman.

24. Goffman, 54–55.

upon the "interface between the conscious and the unconscious. . . . The sensations and qualities of skill can never be put into words and yet the fact of skill is conscious."[25] He illustrates this concept with Isadora Duncan's comment on dance, "If I could tell you what it meant, there would be no point in dancing it."[26] Bateson interprets this as a comment about the distinction between artistic process and the verbalization of that process, but it is also applicable to the distinction between technique and oral expression in the work place. Both technique and oral expression reflect varying levels of complexity and sophistication: from the use of jargon in a sentence to the performance of a fully developed occupational experience narrative with opening and closing markers and coda;[27] and from the gestural shrug through the highly developed gestural sign language described by Martin Meissner,[28] to the complex techniques of a model maker in a captive tool and die shop within a large manufacturing plant. Much of this communication (verbal, gestural, and technical, in these instances) is substantive in that it merely aids daily interaction by providing a charter for it, whereas occasionally it will be used in a performance (ceremonial) capacity to address a particular issue or make an individual statement. The choice of expressive mode is significant because there are statements that can be made in one mode or context that cannot be made in another. The tool and die maker, for example, has to show the apprentice how to mill a certain piece of stock because words would not communicate the correct information. Conversely, the industrial accident account must be verbally presented. Just as there are environments which are more appropriate for specific kinds of artistic expression (e.g., concert hall/symphony orchestra), occupational contexts shape expression in distinctive ways by both influencing and reflecting the working knowledge upon which they are based (e.g., welding bays/arc welding).

Between (or in addition to) the oral and the technical modes of communication lies the gestural. This mode can become highly

25. Bateson, 138.

26. Ibid., 137.

27. Bauman, 295. Also see William Labov and Joshua Waletzky, "Narrative Analysis: Oral Versions of Personal Experience," in *Essays on the Verbal and Visual Arts*, ed. June Helm (Seattle, Washington and London, 1967), 32–42.

28. Martin Meissner, "The Language of Work," in *Handbook of Work Organization and Society*, ed. Robert Dubin (Chicago, 1976), 257–269.

elaborated where noise and isolation create a situation that requires an individual to make and interpret symbols which have syntactical relationships like sentences and do not require the total interaction between the body and the work environment (as does technique) to make the meaning known. Meissner (discussing hand signals used by sawmill workers) makes a useful distinction between "instrumental" and "expressive" communication paralleling that of Goffman with the following example:

> When an executive toured the plant with one younger and two older women, the setter signed the following sequence on one pass: *big-shot-over-there* (pointing) *three-women*. On the following pass he continued: *one-woman-twenty-five-figure* (outlined with hands) *just right. . . .* This message came through only after a second try, and on a fourth pass he finished with: *she* (pointing) *my girl friend.*

> This conversation network also served technical functions. The head sawyer once gave a light signal to the leverman which would have resulted in sending a work piece to the wrong destination. He told the setter: *I-push-button-wrong-tell-lever-man.* The setter transmitted the message successfully to the leverman, allowing him to retrieve the piece by reversing rolls and sending it to the right place all in a matter of seconds.[29]

The first paragraph describes an "expressive" or ceremonial mode whereas the second describes an "instrumental" or substantive mode of communication. In both cases, sign language is used in a performance context in which the setter presents information in a prescriptive manner that indicates a type of message is being communicated, i.e., the actor is conducting himself in a manner that signals what type of information will be forthcoming.[30] The relationship of this gestural language to technique and work flow in the sawmill is exemplified by the periodic punctuation of the passing carriage that interrupts and paces the first interchange. This also reflects the interstitial nature of gesture as a communication mode

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29. Meissner, 263.

30. Dell Hymes, "Breakthrough into Performance," in *Folklore: Performance and Communication,* eds., Dan Ben-Amos and Kenneth Goldstein (The Hague, Netherlands, 1975), 18; and Goffman, 49, 51. This anticipation of information which both performer and listener expect in a certain form is comparable to Hymes's notion of performance and Goffman's concept of expectation.

which functions between technique and verbal expression, i.e., technique is communicated through total involvement of the body with the work process, while gesture and sign language combine elements of specialized body movement that require at least a partial removal from work processes to allow signing, and verbal communication refers to the work process and other topics although it is removed from it because the individual becomes reliant upon using rhythmic breaks or pre/post/lunch work periods for the interaction. In the actual work situation it is extremely difficult to distinguish one mode from another because individuals and groups may engage in all three forms simultaneously (or their use of various modes would appear simultaneous) and therefore the only possible way these networks could be documented would be through film or videotape. Perception of them as an interrelated complex, however, may provide a more comprehensive view of occupational culture that does not artifically separate and therefore exaggerate the importance of one mode over the other in a given ethnographic context.

Although gesture is an important form of communication in occupational settings, it is not as highly developed in most work situations as it is in the mill described by Meissner. Noise and isolation can force workers into a reliance upon non-verbal modes to such a degree,[31] but verbal expression still occupies a prominent place in the communication networks linking individuals in a given occupation. Stories about first days on the job, accident and unusual occurence accounts, jokes, jargon, the use of nicknames, bullshitting, ragging, and stories about particular characters and individuals are common topics of verbal expression. Even though this aspect of occupational experience is perhaps more easily accepted by the folklorist as a legitimate body of material because of the attention paid to it by early investigators, it is no more easily approached and understood in context than technique with which it is inextricably bound. The externally derived categories mentioned above and the model of occupational narrative described below are an attempt to generalize about occupational behavior in order to better understand the relationship between various modes of interaction as they are perceived and practiced within specific

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31. Meissner, 224. He has statistically "proven" that the more highly mechanized an occupation becomes, the heavier its reliance upon non-verbal communication.

work groups and documented by the ethnographer. The following discussion, therefore, attempts a "substantive" (a view of social reality to be tested by the data) as opposed to a "generalization" (which is about the data) hypothesis.[32]

The occupational personal experience story (or fragmented aspects of it like observations about the boss, quick insults, bits of jokes, or joking behavior expressed in passing) is the basis of oral interaction in an occupational group, and as Siegfried Neumann points out, these oral expressions cluster around a middle point (when viewed by the ethnographer) between the day to day concerns of group members on the one hand and unusual occurrences or dramatic event or accident accounts on the other.[33] Neumann's middle point concept is useful because it reveals that the occupational expressions of a particular group form a continuum from the mundane (e.g., patterned conversation about lunch, overtime, etc.), to the central or middle point (accident stories about a recurring exposure in the shop like a dangerous catwalk or particular machine, or accounts of confrontations with a particularly truculent boss), to the extreme (introduction of a new, job destructive piece of equipment or an on-the-job fatality). By viewing the expressions of a particular work group from this perspective (essentially placing the bulk of any corpus of expressions between the hypothetical extremes of mundane conversational modes and descriptions of highly unusual or supernormal occurences), the details and recurrence of middle point expressions as they function between these two poles become a distinguishing characteristic of the group. And when viewed as an adjunct to the shaping principle of technique, they provide an internal ordering of expressive behavior and a basis for comparison to other occupational groups. The shaping principle of cement work, for example, is the flow and precise mixture of various minerals and elements as they are crushed, fed, baked, and fiinally re-crushed, mixed, and sacked. The techniques of workers in this trade demand an awareness of this flow and the ability to keep huge trucks, conveyors, test and

32. Johan Galtung, *Theory and Methods in Social Research* (London, 1967), 341. Cited in Ann Oakley, *The Sociology of Housework* (New York, 1974), 33.

33. Siegfried Neuman, "Arbeitserrinerungen als Erzählungshalt," in *Arbeit und Volksleben*, eds., Gerhard Heilfurth and Ingeborg Weber-Kellerman (Göttingen, 1965), 274–275. I have adapted Neuman's term *mittlepunkt* and accept responsibility for its re-definition.

electrical equipment in twenty-four hour operation to feed the insatiable kiln. The oral expressions, therefore, reflect a middle point (or central) concern for incidents that stop the flow: hands caught in the conveyors, trucks disabled by quarried rock, kilns and equipment damaged by meddling supervisors, or men injured by people too eager to get jammed equipment running again.[34]

Most work-generated verbal expression is related during breaks or at a time when work is not being done before or after the work day. These communications usually have a specific genesis (a previous near-miss recollected from a similar incident that day, or an anecdote about one person that reminds someone of a similar character) and they are often told in the verbal shorthand of jargon or in fragmented form. The same expression told to an outsider (or to another audience not indigenous to the work setting) requires greater elaboration and explanation that extends the account and radically alters its form and refocuses its function.[35] For example, a fire account or fully elaborated occupational experience narrative told by an urban fire fighter to a fellow fireman might take two minutes to recount with such compacted terms as "we had a roast on our hands—the Loo told Lewis to take the nob." The same story told to an audience of outsiders demands the explanation of these terms which not only extends the narrative, but also refocuses its function from specific to general education and entertainment.

Linked to the preceding expressive media of technique, gesture, and oral expression are the customs generated by the work experience. As Tönnies has pointed out, for both habit (individual) and custom (social), our repeated activities can be roughly divided into three general categories: (1) a customary action or habit, (2) a rule or norm of action, and (3) a will or "psychic disposition which sets into motion and pervades a certain action."[36] An example of the

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34. Tape no. SI-FP-WA-77-502.30 (215–320), John Nemeth, cement worker, Northampton, Pennsylvania; Arnold Plowman, cement worker, Manhattan, Montana; Arlyn Plowman, cement worker, Bozeman, Montana.

35. See Michael J. Bell, "Tending Bar at Brown's: Occupational Role as Performance," *Western Folklore,* 30 (1976): 97–97. Bell provides an extremely useful distinction between the form of a folkloristic expression and its performance function in his discussion of work processes in a black Philadelphia bar. For a social anthropological perspective on appropriate-inappropriate occupational expressive behavior see Donald R. Roy, "Banana Time: Job Satisfaction and Informal Interaction," in *Anthropology and Everyday Life,* eds. Joseph Jorgensen and Marcello Truzzi (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1974), 323–349.

36. Ferdinand Tönnies, *Custom, An Essay on Social Codes,* trans. by H. Farrell Borenstein (Chicago, 1961), 29–30.

first is the daily routine followed by an older tool and die maker taking the same route to work, stopping to talk to the same group of co-workers before the day begins, putting his coat and hat on the same peg in the rack, wiping down the machine in the same way, and placing the stock in the machine with a regularity generated by years of repetition.[37] A rule or norm customarily followed in the work place is exemplified by the prescriptions placed upon the activities of a rookie in fire fighting or an apprentice in the printing or construction trades. Informal rules demand that these individuals not only act in certain ways and perform obligatory tasks like cleaning up the work area, making the coffee, and being a "gopher," but they also must exhibit emerging work techniques and processes to the critical scrutiny of the experienced and highly demanding group of journeymen and old hands on the job.[38] The third level of custom (in which the collective will of the group is both exemplified and "set into motion") is exhibited most dramatically in the rites-of-passage for entrance into and exit out of the group (e.g., the novice pilot's ripped shirt tail and the retiree's gold watch party), and is also illustrated by the custom of walking off the job after a work related fatality on construction sites,[39] sending an apprentice for board stretchers or sky hooks,[40] or through the acquisition or wearing of a particular kind of dress that is only acceptable when a certain status is achieved; for example, the polka-dot hats worn by pipeline welders.[41] Returning to Goffman's dichotomy, examples one and two could be viewed as substantive modes of conduct while the third illustrates the ceremonial mode through its use of the natural work context in an expressive, symbolic manner to mark transitions. If technique is the central shaping principle of an occupation which is reflected in and commented upon by oral expression and gesture, then custom and ritual mark

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37. Tape no. SI-FP-WA-77-502.07 (700–865), Al Fischer, Art Zakarsky and Bob Tansley, tool and die makers, Chicago, Illinois.

38. Tape no. SI-FP-WA-77-508.10 (340–460), Larry Beardmore, Mike Pinkerton, and Kenneth Cox, fire fighters, Washington, D.C.; tape no. SI-FP-WA-77-508.22 (612–685), John Marler, printer, Atlanta, Georgia, and Ed Pronich, printer, Washington, D.C.

39. Tape no. SI-FP-WA-77-503.17 (292), Bernie Thornberg, pipe fitter, Landover, Maryland.

40. Tape no. SI-FP-WA-77-502.14 (435), Arnold Plowman, cement worker, Manhattan, Montana.

41. Tape no. SI-FP-WA-77-503.17 (130), Bernie Thornberg, pipe fitter, Landover, Maryland.

movement into and out of the group and maintain its solidarity and separation.

The techniques, gestures, oral expressions, and customs which comprise the occupational folklife of a particular work group are theoretical constructs which have been posited in an attempt to provide a background against which specific work cultures can be investigated. In the actual work situation these elements are fragmented, inverted, and continually mixed with outside concerns of a popular, familial, and ethnic nature (to name just a few) that interact with the work context by constantly borrowing from and adding to it. At the same time the continuing "rationalization"[42] of industrial occupations has continued to divide work tasks into a greater number of less fulfilling techniques (while it appears a contemporary counter-movement is demanding a greater diversity of techniques from specialists in repair and social service jobs)[43] which generates a network of defensive communications that are an integral part of any occupation's communications network.

Georges Friedmann provides a clear example of the causes and results of this network when he writes that,

> Good tool makers at the Establissements Renault, former pupils of trade schools, have told me how important for them was the date of the application of a new system which they felt injured them. From that moment they shammed and "faked" like the others. Where skill exists it may be intentionally degraded under the influence of the economic and psychological conditions of the company.[44]

This shamming and faking (often developing into sabotage) takes many forms that cut across the expressive levels discussed above and in many ways form a "counter" expressive culture that shapes and informs the entire work experience. We must be aware of this aspect of occupational culture by attempting to understand and interpret its pervasive influence in the work place. The question of documenting and reporting this situation, however, is an entirely different matter, and one which forces the investigator to deal openly and honestly with the people with whom he or she is work-

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42. Friedmann, 37–43.
43. Ibid., 197.
44. Ibid., 196.

ing. Their consent and total participation in this process is mandatory because it could have serious personal and economic consequences if it were disseminated without their permission.

I have attempted in this discussion to draw together a number of theoretical approaches and apply them to a theory of occupational culture. My division of this approach into technique, gesture, oral expression and custom reflects the folkloristic and social scientific foundation upon which the model is based. It has also greatly benefited from insights into occupational culture gleaned from occupational autobiographies[45] and from two years of fieldwork experience in various work settings. Although the modes of expressive behavior posited in this model may appear general and perhaps too broadly drawn to apply to all specific work settings, I am confident that any attempt to understand occupational culture will be headed in the right direction if the investigator makes an attempt to understand the work processes and techniques as a basis for all other forms of expressive interaction. The study of occupational groups holds great promise for increasing our understanding of the rules underlying communication processes in general, particularly if we keep in mind the simultaneity and variety of the modes of communication and do not exclude one in favor of another. A continuum from conversation (substantive) to full performance (ceremonial) exists on all levels of communication: technique, gesture, oral expression, and custom. As more in-depth fieldwork and micro-analyses are conducted in work settings, new modes will be discovered and revisions of these preliminary concepts will enable us to refine our methods and make our preconceptions more explicit.

We will never get such opportunities, however, as long as those within the work setting view the ethnographer with suspicion and as anything but another worker practicing the techniques of his or her occupation. Unfortunately there is justification for this sus-

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45. See Mike Cherry, *On High Steel, The Education of an Ironworker* (New York, 1974); Dennis Smith, *Report from Engine Company 82* (New York, 1973); and Meade Arble, *The Long Tunnel, A Coal Miner's Journal* (New York, 1976) to name just a few contemporary examples. The collections that concentrate on personal experience narratives and histories include Studs Terkel, *Working* (New York, 1974); Barbara Garson, *All the Livelong Day: The Meaning and Demeaning of Routine Work* (Garden City, New York, 1975); Nancy Seifer, *Nobody Speaks for Me: Self Portraits of Working Class Women* (New York, 1976); Alice and Staughton Lynd, eds., *Rank and File, Personal Histories of Working Class Organizers* (Boston, 1973); and Louise Kapp Howe, *Pink Collar Workers* (New York, 1977).

picion. Occupational stereotyping and ethnocentrism (resulting in the false distinction between "blue" and "white" collar jobs and the exclusion of women from both the literature and the work place)[46] is the main reason that this rich research field has gone largely unexplored. Before we will be allowed entry into the work place as researchers, we must prove to the people who work there that we have something to offer them. This is an aspect of folklore fieldwork that few of us have been prepared to confront on a daily basis.

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46. Andrew Levison, *The Working Class Majority* (New York, 1975), 48–51. Also see Oakley, 1–28. Her discussion of sexism in sociology (both the discipline and the communities sociologists study) would appear to be valid for the other social sciences and fieldwork oriented disciplines as well.

Towards a Sociological Theory of Folklore: Performing Services

ROGER D. ABRAHAMS

Clearly the idea of "folk" is a sociological concept inasmuch as the term commonly refers to social units which manifest a profound sense of shared values, interests, and activities. Even if we define the folk, with Alan Dundes, as any group of two or more people who share something, we focus on the shared elements and the means by which this sharing establishes a minimal sense of groupness.[1] Perhaps not so clearly, folk has carried with it a political and economic meaning, for in most of our employments of the term, an underclass (in analogy to a peasantry) is evoked: one fixed in a marginal socio-economic relationship to a more centrist and dominant group. The contrast set we usually employ then is folk/elite, realizing at the same moment, however, that elites will have, inasmuch as they adhere in groups, a lore as well. Very recently, this folkloristic interest in the underclassed and the marginal has been carried one step further, and we have addressed ourselves to those emerging traditions which arise in outsider groups—whether they are excluded ethnic enclaves or the self-isolating "freak" or fanatic groups.

Our early folkloristic interest in peasant peoples reveals an ongoing fascination with minority "outsider" groups including Afro-Americans and Gypsies as well as the lore of full-time all-male occupations (seafaring, cowpunching, logging, mining). More recently, however, this concern has been broadened to "voluntary associations," groups engaged in intense activities-in-common—like

For Archie.
1. Alan Dundes, *The Study of Folklore* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1963).

[19]

motorcycle "bikers," cavers, truckers, or dopers. In the main, this reveals our strong bias toward self-contained enclaves who appear to be self-sufficient in their ideals, but who, in fact, pursue activities which arise directly out of a surplus-goods economy.

In the main we have studied occupational lore whether of agrarian peoples or those in the cattle, lumber, or sea trades, with an aim to explore the pursuits of a group brought together in the production of surplus goods but outside of an urban environment and commonly with a sense of the self-sufficiency of those entering into the trade. Folk*lore* comes to be separated from folk*life* to the extent that we pursue the distinction between their work practices and the life of such socio-economic enclaves (especially their entertainments). *Folklore* comes to be associated generally with the expressive dimensions of traditional culture; in contrast, *folklife* commonly means the ways the group works together and the devices deployed by the group in carrying out that work. The two converge, of course, especially when functional objects are described by stylistic and even aesthetic criteria. Most of us get very restless when we are forced to distinguish them, feeling that their conjunction perhaps is more important than the disjunction.

Yet, by not distinguishing between the two, and by retreating from employing the European contrast of material and spiritual culture (artifacts and mentifacts), we have allowed ourselves to pursue our profession without a deep consideration of what we are up to, and—perhaps more important—what we are not doing. As Archie Green has long argued, the lore of the entire range of working people deserves serious attention from folklorists. Without acknowledging it, we have remained primarily committed to studying the play (and especially the entertainments) of essentially agrarian peoples. Even when the work is less tied to the land, if worker lore is collected it tends to be that generated by playing while at work, as in Alan Dundes and Carl R. Pagter's collection of comic documents informally reproduced (often through xerography) and circulated primarily among office workers.[2] For one reason or another,

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2. Alan Dundes and Carl R. Pagter, *Urban Folklore from the Paperwork Empire* (Austin, 1975). Though this material is most commonly circulated within office settings and employs office technology for its reproduction and dissemination, the authors assume that the reader is so familiar with "office culture" and its material manifestations that we hear nothing about who it is that uses these entertainments, why and how they are produced.

In a similar vein, those few works on occupational lore which have appeared in

agrarian people celebrate themselves through ceremonial and fes-
tive enactments or through elaborate re-enactments of the courtship
(or family-making) and its relative successes and failures.

However, lore in abundance exists in a wide range of occupations,
lore which arises from the social dimension of work itself or from
the workers as they group themselves outside of the actual working
situation. It is therefore interesting and timely to collect and
theorize about the self-expression of workers concerned with telling
about their work in stories, songs, formulaic speeches and dialogues,
and especially in the special languages that emerge from the com-
munity of workers. In this essay I will survey some features of
American life with reference to patterns and values placed on work
and play; by this I hope to add dimension to our own discipline
while making a contribution to a sociological theory of social ag-
gregates: group, community, society.

I

We are dealing, then, with social collectivities, at play and at
work. Folklore, among other things, is an expression of the means
by which membership in a community of understanding, judgment
is established, maintained, and celebrated. Studies of lore may be
found which are explicitly concerned with the making of social
boundaries between groups and the exploration of the quality space
existing at these boundaries. This intergroup lore primarily has
focussed on a group's stereotype of others and of self. Developing
upon William Hugh Jansen's concept of the esoteric-exoteric (S-X)
factor in folklore[3] as well as Fredrik Barth's comments on the social
dynamic of bounding mechanisms,[4] these few studies have pri-
marily focused on the iconography of stereotyping in the dynamic

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the United States by George Korson, Mody C. Boatright, and Archie Green are dis-
cussed in surveys of folklore resources as regional or contextual studies of texts;
for example, see Jan Brunvand's *Folklore: A Study and Research Guide* (New York,
1976), 21, 56, and 71, and D. K. Wilgus *Anglo-American Folksong Scholarship since
1898* (New Brunswick, 1959). Brunvand does have a paragraph on p. 82 on occupa-
tional-group lore, but mentions only two representative works; Wilgus devotes ten
pages to the subject of work-related songs (189–90, 204–5, 226–27, 317–20). But see
Elliott Oring, "Whalemen and Their Songs: A Study of Folklore and Culture,"
New York Folklore Quarterly (1971): 130–152 for a signal attempt to recapture occu-
pational concerns through a close reading of already collected lore.

3. William Hugh Jansen, "The Esoteric-Exoteric Factor in Folklore" in Dundes,
43–51.

4. Fredrik Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* (Boston, 1969).

of intergroup relations.[5] But unrecognized, for the most part, in recent folkloristic developments has been that the collectivity under scrutiny has changed from *communities* to smaller and perhaps more serendipitous *groupings* whose life-in-common is engendered less by a sense of tradition and social and natural place as it is by common purpose and enterprise and shared presuppositions about who the "significant others" are who actively enter into the establishment of boundaries.

Whereas folklorists began with studies of the lore of communities, more recently our interest in the lore of play-groups and of occupations has grown. This has been accompanied by an interest in the simpler, and yet more heterogeneous contemporary groups, the "ad-hocracies" to use Alvin Toffler's term for the more spontaneous gatherings that arise for some common (but not necessarily productive) activity.[6]

There are numerous ironic inconsistencies of conception with regard to the relationships between folklore, tradition and the homogeneous community, inconsistencies that may force us to rethink our value orientation, our idea of "the good life." To be sure, our ongoing interest in traditions of expression (and traditional expressivity) takes for granted that lore arises and persists in *communities,* groups with a deep sense of common purposes and values, and which share a vocabulary of reasons and motives by which a deep sense of commonality may be acted on. What we find on close perusal, however, is that these very expressions and events ostensibly most expressive of community are to be found (and sometimes in just as great or greater abundance) in more casual kinds of groupings. I am thinking here of gatherings which arise from the shared situation at conventions, on an airplane, even while standing in a line. In such situations, the participants share expectations and existential state, and bring with them rules more or less in common with regard to how to handle the situation and the encounters with others that grow out of the situation. But in the encounters, formulaic observations about life and the weather, quips and more formal jokes, and personal experience accounts of similar past ex-

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5. Representative examples are Richard M. Dorson's works among many ethnic American groups, especially his *Bloodstoppers and Bearwalkers* (Cambridge, Mass., 1952), as well as my own *Positively Black* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1970).

6. Alvin Toffler, *Future Shock* (New York, 1970). 108–129.

periences arise spontaneously.[7] Here, an experience in common rather than membership in a group brings individuals together. When this goes on in an especially intense environment, like at a retreat or a traditional market place, individuals are often type-cast as performers, and engage in the very kinds of storytelling, singing, or even crafting of objects that produce the objects and texts that have been the folklorists' stock in trade. Yet they do not perform, in such circumstances, to members of their own community; indeed community has little to do with situations of this sort.

One could begin to generate commonsense hypotheses about social groups and folklore that ignore—or at best sidestep—the usual sociological preconceptions about the relation between traditional expressivity and such homogeneous communities. The performing of items of lore in stress situations creates a sense of groupness in itself, especially when the lore addresses the common problems of the individuals in that situation. Further the greater amount of time any gathering spends together, the more the "goings on" will find spontaneous coordination, and the greater number of points of common reference and items of expression members of the collectivity will tend to produce. Similarly spatial constriction will contribute to the sense of the organic character of the collectivity, thus producing an increasingly shared expressive repertoire. Further, the more goal-oriented and threatening the enterprise in common, the more lore will develop from the experience (for instance, stories will be produced by individuals telling of similar past experiences). Finally, as soon as a group begins to sense its enduring "groupness" through both shared goings on and the expectation of what is to come (as in waiting in a queue overnight or being stranded at an airport for days), the development of new expressive lore will go from small items to larger ones; special in-group terms (jargon, slang, cant), nicknames, proverbs, superstitions and situated joking will arise. Only in later and highly repeated situations of this sort will rituals (like initiation) or songs become a part of the life of the group. Therefore, the intensity of the goings on, the depth of the involvement in the celebration of the situation and the amount

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7. There are some interesting sociological studies of role-making in such adhocracies. See, for instance, Leon Mann, "Queue Culture: The Waiting Line as a Social System," *American Journal of Sociology* 75 (1969): 340–54, as well as Erving Goffman's summative statement in *Relations in Public* (New York, 1971).

and type of lore encountered within self-defined groups might serve as a gauge to how long the group has existed, as well as how common the group-making situation is.

These factors would be more widely recognized had folklorists not been going through a long period in our history as a discipline during which *lore* rather than *folk* was our primary concern. In our thirst for collection and analysis in terms of transmission and distribution of stable items, we have assumed that for lore to persist, a conservative sense of community had to be maintained. Furthermore, because much lore observably could be collected more easily and readily from older people in conservative agrarian or pastoral settings, the folklorist assumed that this was the most appropriate kind of group to approach in search of such items of wisdom and entertainment. But it should be noted that it is not just this type of economic enterprise that produces groups or even communities of the sort that will entertain each other within a confined social space; in fact, there are numerous other occupational situations in which traditional expression takes root.

There are other reasons, of course, why folklorists have looked to agrarian communities as the source of our materials—not least of which is our basically pastoral sympathies; our need to sentimentalize our immediate agrarian past. An extension of this direction of thought argues that somehow the modern industrialized and urbanized world has so fractionalized lives that people do not communicate with each other during work, much less talk about their work. The received notions on the matter, since the beginning of the philosophical response to the Industrial Revolution, is that there is a basic distinction between work and leisure (or play) and that the more repetitive the work the greater the sense of "alienation."[8] This alienated state, it is assumed, arises because workers

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8. For an extended discussion of the relation between work and alienation see Alisdaire Clayre, *Work and Play* (New York, 1974). Clayre establishes the essential fictional base of this notion, and, in passing, notes many worker commentaries which dispute the alienation hypothesis without a firmer set of contextual factors. Nonetheless it is a presumption of many intellectuals, Marxist and otherwise, to view automation as dehumanizing, and to assume that there are no countervailing factors. But see the many sociological-ethnographic studies that would modify this position by studying the entire range of communications between workers on the job. For a recent survey of the relevant scholarship, see Martin Meissner, "The Language of Work" in *Handbook of Work, Organization and Society*, ed. Robert Dubin (Chicago, 1975).

not only are given repetitive jobs but are discouraged from communicating either on the job or off. The conditions of the assembly-line are, then, presumed to prevail in all other mechanized work situations. But, as Martin Meissner notes in his recent survey, the spatial arrangement of work and workers, and the technical requirements calling for attention to detail is more central in defining the communication situation than the repetitiveness of the work or the institutional setting in which the work takes place.[9]

This set of assumptions concerning alienation is unwarranted. Not only do we have indications of a great deal of occupational expressive lore arising out of certain occupations (such as working on the railroad), but even in industrial jobs that involve an assembly-line approach to the production of goods, other factors arise—often, in fact, in response to the mechanization of the job—that encourage the workers to group, make common cause, and produce the kinds of slogans and exemplary satires that quickly become not only traditional but the core of feeling and understanding characteristic of the classic homogeneous community.

Barbara Garson's recent study of routine work and workers, *All the Live-Long Day,* for instance, resounds with talk about how people maintain their sanity by developing joking and stalling techniques "on the line," how they develop a sufficient sentiment of common cause by drinking together in off-hours, thus developing a sense of groupness resulting in an informal collective bargaining session.[10] This interesting book, however, is far from original in making this point. The classic case study in this area, Donald F. Roy's "Banana Time," details how a number of individuals in a factory engaged in highly routine and repetitive work found themselves in a conversational group organized around a number of repeated pranks which, at one and the same time, both articulate and undermine the status system[11] if only for the moment. By develop-

9. Meissner, "Language of Work," 227 ff.

10. Barbara Garson, *All the Livelong Day* (New York, 1976), 99–126.

11. Donald F. Roy, "Banana Time: Job Satisfaction and Informed Interaction," *Human Organization* 18 (1959–60): 158–68. See also Don Handelman and Bruce Kapferer, "Forms of Joking Activity: A Comparative Approach," *American Anthropologist* 74 (1972): 484–517, which introduces the important distinction between setting-specific and category-routinized joking, using a workshop to characterize the emergent traditions arising from status-provoked tensions on the job. The paradoxical and self-cancelling qualities of joking are noted throughout the literature on joking relationships. Renato Rosaldo notes, for instance, that in such situations,

ing situational joking on the job, hierarchy can be celebrated at the same time as status is somehow equalized.[12] It is, of course, precisely in such areas of repeated and often formulaic interaction that folklorists will begin to find common ground with sociologists and social anthropologists. The ways in which *ad hoc* groups arrange themselves often occurs, as in this factory setting, by the cleverness by which items are given voice as much as by the statuses assigned within the hierarchy of the commercial institution. In fact, the ability to joke or even "lecture" informally but effectively may create an alternative status structure on the job, one that may undercut to some extent the company's hierarchy. Further, examining the content of these repeated expressive items and routines leads us into the area of how individual members begin to articulate who is included in the group and who is regarded as a significant outsider.

II

To address ourselves to such factors as these is simply to relate the objects and items of lore more freely in a theoretical manner to both groups and communities; thus we provide ourselves with sociological frames of reference by which lore may be related to other objects in the life of a social grouping. Folklore, from this perspective, is the expressive means by which a sense of participation in a life larger than self is achieved through shared activities and the common values and experiences that underlie them. To be sure, this is a circular argument: groups, even of the most ad-hoc variety, exist because they draw upon a common fund of expressive and instrumental features of culture which are, in fact, the major evidences of this sense of groupness. To use the existence of such

those in the relationship come to "laugh about what divides and unites them." "Metaphors of Hierarchy in a Mayan Ritual," *American Anthropologist* 30 (1968): 535. See also Mary Douglas, "The Social Control of Cognition: Some Factors in Joking Perception," *Man* 3 (1968): 361–76, *passim*.

12. For a representative view, with interviews and examples of joking, see Charles R. Waller and Robert H. Guest, *The Man on the Assembly Line* (Cambridge, Mass., 1952), 65–79; Pamela Bradney, "The Joking Relationship in Industry," *Human Relations* 10 (1957): 179–87; Craig C. Lundberg, "Person-Focused Joking: Patterns and Function," *Human Organization* 28 (1969): 22–28; A. J. Sykes, "Joking Relationships in an Industrial Setting," *American Anthropologist* 68 (1966): 188–193. Again see Meissner, "The Language of Work" for a review not only of joking but other in-group occupational languages.

lore then to establish that a sense of groupness exists is self-evident However, by looking at lore from this perspective, the esoteric and exoteric factors of the lore are underscored, and aspects of the dynamic of the group are focused upon which otherwise might go unnoticed.

The principles surrounding the discussion of the esoteric-exoteric factor in folklore might usefully be extended to include not only stereotyping mechanisms as they are manifested in lore, but slang or jargon or any other device by which in-groupness and common experience are given expressive embodiments. Looking at lore in this way would focus on the ways in which the dynamic of group boundary-making is asserted, emphasizing with equal strength the devices of social structure and the status-making forces which emerge both from within the group and from outsiders' perceptions of the group and its members. To be sure, this dynamic is most clearly seen in the operation of stereotypes in minority or "freak" communities—social groups whose status in the larger society is under constant surveillance. But this lore of social groups is paralleled by the expressive productions of occupational groups in which social status in the larger society is far from the major focus of group concern.

Nonetheless, it is evident that groups which identify themselves by the work they do (rather than by the ways they play and celebrate) also employ the same esoteric-exoteric devices as the primary means by which they establish and maintain their sense of groupness. An extension of the hypotheses concerning the social base of lore, then, would be that the amount of folklore produced will be directly proportional to how exceptional are the activities carried on in common. Certain occupational as well as social groups are regarded as more strange either because of the special skills involved, especially when they lead to high risk situations repeatedly, or because of the deviant or marginal status of its members. Such a perception by themselves and by outsiders will inevitably affect how members choose to express membership when together, both in private and public. How often do we hear the most stable members of the larger community expose themselves as "mad" or as "freaks" when it comes to vans or gems, boats, birds, or whatever. We see this outsider image operating most fully in workgroups operating in isolated settings: seamen, lumberjacks, cowboys, whalers, miners,

railroad men, and in some regards, criminals, in prison and out.[13]
Folklorists have been attracted to collecting from members of such
occupations because they are full-time as well as "outside," and
because the work was carried on in controlled and intense environ-
ments close to what Goffman has called "total institutions."[14] They
are also high risk male occupations in which experience and exper-
tise enter into the life of the group constantly, leading to the de-
velopment of traditional modes of educating and initiating in the
special languages as well as activities of the working community.
Here we are involved with living situations in which all involved
must commonly instruct and entertain each other; thus, a great deal
of lore can be collected in such groups. But we cannot disregard the
outcast factor operating in these work groups. Men, it is assumed,
enter them as alternatives to and retreats from "straight" family
life. Larger society therefore tends to fear and shun individuals who
are engaged in this occupation and its accompanying life-style.
Their emerging traditions of lore emphasize and to some extent
rationalize this exclusion, commonly by emphasizing the greater
vitality (or virility) of those who follow this lifeway. This same
separation from society not only invoked aspects of negative stereo-
typing (underscoring the anti-social qualities of rowdiness, lack of
cleanliness, and so forth) but also positive aspects emphasizing the
hardiness, and adventurous characteristics of such work.

III

The history of folkloristics offers little to one interested in the
occupational lore of these groups, and even less to one interested
in groups engaged in more mechanized work. For that matter, there
is very little reflection of the socio-economic situation of those from
whom most of our data has been collected, the peasants. All too ob-
viously the interest of our profession has lain elsewhere (in the con-
tent of the lore). However, it has become increasingly evident that

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13. But see Archie Green, "The Workers in the Dawn: Labor Lore" in *Our Living
Traditions* ed. Tristram P. Coffin (New York, 1968), 251–62, where he argues that
this sense of community membership in isolation was maintained in some degree
in early labor and industrial lore, especially in connection with union activities.

14. Cf. Erving Goffman, *Asylums* (New York 1961). Of course, these work situa-
tions are total, in the main, only by virtue of circumstance, not by the usual en-
slavement or incarceration.

the major problem explored in expressive traditions of agrarian peoples relates to aspects of what Freud called "the family romance"—relationships within the family unit including how they are affected by the introduction of others into it. For every folktale or song explicitly concerned with farming there are tens and maybe hundreds that focus on leaving home and community in search of wealth or wife or both.

There is an obvious relationship between the agricultural enterprise and the family romance, for in such enterprises the family is the basic unit of production and consumption. To see the love-death song, so characteristic of the Anglo-American classic tradition, as a first-level projection of the problems encountered by those living in such restricting circumstances is hardly a profound sociological observation.

I bring up this gap in the scholarship only because it contrasts so dramatically with the lore of occupational groups in the same culture area: loggers, whalers and sailors, cowboys, even miners. The major difference between these occupations and farming or ranching is that these jobs involve wage labor, the need to leave home and family, are carried on in all-male environments, and in situations which often make it difficult for a man even to have a family. In common with folk communities, performers in these occupational groups come from within the group and have repertoires which are an accumulation of the older items of tradition and pieces which are the inventions of the performers themselves. Somehow, however, these new, if highly formulaic inventions, focus on the working group itself and its activities in common, making heroes or clowns of notorious workers, and celebrating events in which we hear of the most dangerous aspects of the work (even while surrounding the record of these deeds with descriptions of working life as dirty, lonesome, and boring). In this lore, much is made of the difference between those who work in those trades and others, either the "greenhorns" who can never understand the demands of the job, the bosses who don't provide the proper equipment or who try to trick their men out of wages due, or other outsiders with whom the workers are called on to deal on a regular basis.

The collection of occupational lore begins, then, with groups who embody their work concerns in their leisure creations. Like

peasants, they are people who provide their own entertainment. But their social isolation, being voluntary in the main, is somehow attached to their sense of being and belonging. Proud of their calling, yet conscious of being considered rootless and strange, they talk and sing of the hardships of the job and its comic aspects.[15]

The lore of peasants and of these special occupational groups shares an important feature. With farmers, as with loggers and cowboys, work and play are separate endeavors; the relative time of work and play being determined by seasonal conditions and the demands of the market. Folk performance is carried on in the main during slack seasons when the weather cycle prevents the hard work from being carried on, or in the case of the lore surrounding festivals, at those special creases in the seasons, those places set aside to dramatize the passage of the year and its work-cycle.[16] The domain of work and play tends to be rigidly separated in such occupations, play being the subordinate activity.

These were often jobs taken to make enough money to buy land and set up a home and family. They were carried on, then, by people in transition, or by ones who became accustomed to and stayed with these essentially outsider trades—marginal people. It is interesting to note that this feature has, in great part, been inherited by those who enter to into service occupations; especially those which call for intense server-client relationships, like bartenders, cabdrivers, or prostitutes.

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15. Bruce Jackson argues in his series of books on Texas prison lore that this sense of choice, this retreat from the family and the straight world, operates in the lives of most caught criminals. See Jackson, *In the Life* (New York, 1974); *Get Your Ass in the Water and Swim Like Me* (Cambirdge, Mass., 1975); *Wake Up Dead Man* (Cambridge, Mass. 1972).

16. For reasons beyond me, the literature on folklore and periodicity in which celebration is tied to life passage, has provoked little interest in American folkloristics. This may simply be a retreat in the face of the excesses of the Anglo-American tradition of myth-ritual criticism which is just a by-path in the "calendar custom" literature. On the other hand, American intellectual tradition has focused more on space than time in constructing our distinctive pioneer-puritan world view. Truly our overwhelming fascination with spacializing time through our focus on life as a pilgrimage, a journey, a trip seems to have subordinated the temporal dimension of our traditions. The French, on the other hand, seem to operate exactly the opposite, temporalizing space—i.e., turning spacial determinants into temporal factors. This is the essential thrust of Van Gennep's work, notably on rites of passage but seasonal celebrations in France as well. See Arnold Van Gennep, *Rites of Passage* (Chicago, 1960), and more recently Jean Duvignau, *Fetes et Civilizations* (Paris, 1973) and A. Van Gennep, *Manuel du Folklore Francais Contemporaire* (Paris, 1947), Vol. I.

IV

Up to this point, I have been implicitly drawing upon a model of social and technological change, in which agricultural enterprises have been superceded by industrial ones, and now beyond this to both a new conjunction of occupational opportunities, and a new value system *vis à vis* work itself.

There are a number of ways at getting at the process and the result of social and cultural change that have relevance for folklorists. Usually we look at alterations in shifting modalities of social organization such as family, modes of governance, exchange, or religious enactments and conceptions. More useful for the present purpose will be to look at the shifts in patterns of work and leisure, and how, as the organization of work grew more rationalized and complex, and more oriented toward the production of demand-created goods, the physical and psychological distance between the producer and the consumer became ever greater.

Edward Shorter, in his recent and self-consciously simplified survey of the history of work rehearses some common notions of change:

> There was, once upon a time, such a thing as traditional society. What we have now and have had for the last fifty years or so is clearly modern society. And the social history of the West may be written as the story of how one gave way to the other. . . . All the threads in the fabric of popular life were unraveled and then rewoven together: how people lived in families, how they interacted with their neighbors in communities . . . how men and women earned their livelihoods.[17]

Shorter goes on to outline the different "stages" in this transformation: from *artisanal work* in which the trained individual or workshop is responsible for the production of a piece of merchandise, and in which the worker recognizes both the total process of production and the quality of workmanship expected; to *industrial work,* in which the worker is only one part of a complex fabricating process, does not necessarily know what that place is nor what the product "means" in the largest sense (much less what quality is demanded); and *technological work* in which multi-competence is

17. Edward Shorter, ed., *Work and Community in the West* (New York, 1974) 1.

demanded from highly trained and versatile workers, who, artisan-like, know the whole production process.[18] Shorter's concerns with those of many other sociologists is on how the worker regards him-self, his fellow workers, and the products being turned out. As noted, the received sociological notion about mechanization of em-ployment has been that by dividing up the job so greatly, and mak-ing the worker feel a part of (or even subservient to) a machine, and by separating the producer from the consumer, the very notion of *community* is undermined. Questions of quality of products and of life in this condition come to be neglected as no one is assignable to responsibility.

Robert Heilbroner also breaks our work history into three per-iods that coincide in great part with Shorter's divisions. He notes that between 1800 and 1850 while still primarily an agrarian na-tion, our farm production doubled not because of an increase in demand but by virtue of the invention of machinery. "Between 1800 and 1900," Heilbroner notes, "the race between technology and demands on the farms was won by technology at the expense of the farmer."[19] This not only led to a demographic shift from country to city, but a change in the nature of products as well as the extent of productivity.

He regards the year 1869 as the turning point in this process, for from that point we switched from an economic focus on farm goods, to the production of "goods that have been taken from the earth, fabricated, processed, packaged and transported to the place of sale."[20] This was the period of the factories and the railroads, then, in which the self-made man, that American brand of radical indi-vidualist, ironically became himself the product of mass-produc-tion, making himself by learning to exploit new power sources and an expanding inflowing labour supply. The wandering outsider hero of this saga was the Yankee peddler (later the travelling sales-man) who was on the road creating this demand. Then, we enter what Heilbroner calls "a curious period" from 1900 to the present in which the growth of marketing calls forth "demand-creating in-ventions," devices we don't need but learn to want. Heilbroner makes this tripartite division to point up the characteristics of the

18. Shorter, 3–5.
19. Robert Heilbroner, "Work and Technological Priorities: A Historical Perspec-tive," in *The Future of Work*, ed. Fred Best, (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1973), 53.
20. Ibid.

major shift which has occurred in the make-up of our present work-force, which has gone from being heavily agrarian to manufacturing to what has come to be called "service occupations." His explanation: with food production, demand is relatively fixed (or "inelastic"): with manufactured goods, it is relatively fixed ("elastic enough to provide a kind of staple layer of employment"); and with services, demand is considerably elastic.[21] With those services regarded as most demeaning, (i.e., most repetitive and therefore boring) again technology comes through and machines are invented to do "the work." But the more affluent we become, the more services we can be convinced we need.

A tenet of this theory of occupational stages is that the industrial process somehow destroyed the sense of community characteristic of the family farm or trade. Corollary to this destruction was an acceptance of the fiction of alienation due to dehumanizing work routines. In great part, therefore, folklorists have rarely looked to the factory or the blue-collar worker as participants in the kinds of traditional expressive activities which most interested us, for we have accepted the sociological "given" that there would be a disappearance of lore with the destruction of the folk community. This presumption was encouraged by realistic and naturalistic fiction, as in the novels of Thomas Hardy in England and William Faulkner in the United States; literature which explicitly details the loss of pride in craft in the onslaught of industrialization, and the concomitant dissolving of community situations in which folk values and attitudes were reflected in performance. The triumph of naturalism in fiction parallels, then, sociological studies which underline the growing sense of alienation of city-folk. The fact that those involved in the movement from farm to small town to urban neighborhood emphasized that they carried with them into the cities numerous features of an operating sense of community had little effect on the thesis that urbanization is anathema to the ideal of homogeneity and cooperation.

Whether or not work during this period created a sense of isolation among workers and induced anomie, the most recent developments in occupational structuring pointed to by Shorter, Heilbroner and many others, would promise that there have been countervailing forces successfully contending with alienation. The kinds

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21. Heilbroner, 54–57.

of expressive devices which folklorists collect and analyze will be
discovered as people group in common purpose. When that purpose
is the communication of knowledge and the creation of exchange
(albeit commercial) relationships, one can predict that routined,
patterned, self-consciously rehearsed expressive means will develop
and be transmitted as an essential—if not always acknowledged—
element of carrying out the job. In all low status jobs, but especially
those in which the worker "serves," (whether it be a master, a cus-
tomer, or even one's community or nation) one can witness tradi-
tions passed on from worker to worker, ways in which the recurrent
problems of the interactions occasioned by the job are routinely
solved.

V

All manual labor has maintained its position as low-status work,
as have those jobs in service which involve keeping other people's
material lives in order: being a day laborer, working construction,
delivering milk or being a waitress, bartender, or a body-massager,
all of these remain low status work—but only if one manifests a
long term commitment to the job. If life goals involve further edu-
cation and thus more technological or professional work, and one
takes a job as a bartender or custodian as part of the process of
"finding yourself," that transforms the low-status occupation into
part of one's education. In such a case, serving becomes a way of
proclaiming one's individuality and yet one's willingness to be a
productive member of society. The transformation of an occupation
into part of one's education means essentially the redefining of that
work in positive social terms. In such a situation, work at these
"low" positions is regarded by one's elders as "good for you," a
character-building experience which leads to being a good citizen.
Being in a service occupation involves putting oneself in a posi-
tion of performing activities which normally would be regarded as
demeaning. The study of such occupations, though not as interest-
ing to folklorists because they sometimes involve only a part-time
career and are not as isolating or dangerous as say logging or whal-
ing, are nevertheless in a highly illustrative social position in our
society because they mark a time of transition. Ironically, their very
marginality is a major part of the attraction of such jobs because,

when limited by time they provide access to an egalitarian social move. By taking on a low-status service job, everyone appears to begin at the bottom and work toward the top; thus the fiction is maintained featuring the self-made man. In fact, the success of many service enterprises relies on attracting workers who have no long-term ego-investment in the job, regarding it as only a way of proving themselves while paying their way through school, or providing enough where-with-all that they can get by until they "get their shit together." By putting on such employees at less than full-time, employers can sidestep the need to pay the legal minimum wage.

Reflecting this work situation in which it is often difficult to diagnose what kind of person (status-wise) is serving you, we have placed an ever greater stress on the importance of a social egalitarian style of interaction in serving encounters. Though social distinctions remain between the boss and the worker as well as between the various levels in a work hierarchy, nonetheless all workers hope and expect to be treated "as human beings." More and more, those in charge wish to be known as an open and available person, one who, when in contact with his subordinates, will nevertheless interact with them in languages of equality—by "just talking," or more important, by holding open the possibility of such conversation turning into more intensive interaction like joking or arguing. Joking and arguing are, of course, two activities that place those engaged in the talk on the level of equal standing; status considerations only arise from the *tendenz* of the actual joking or vilification, and not from any received social status.

Though *conversations* or *having a talk* tend to be catch-all native terms for a wide range of our speech activities, the common thread of these diverse interactions are that: (1) theoretically there is equal access to the state-of-talk for everyone involved; (2) all will listen to what the speaker is saying; (3) all are expected to impart significant information, i.e., have a *point* and *make it* during a *turn*; and (4) no one should deliver prepared speeches in such engagements, but rather interact spontaneously and responsively.

This drift places the roles of service occupations in an especially anomalous social position. The service interaction carries, in many dimensions, an inherited social apparatus; performing services, being "in service," or having employment as a servant or a

serving-man hold strong low-status connotations. Being forced to *serve* someone, to *take orders* or *directions,* means placing oneself in a social position sufficiently subservient that though interactions are carried on conversationally, joking or arguing is precluded. However, there is a strong potential for embarrassment for both, for few people today wish to dramatize status in this manner. Thus a great deal of negotiation commonly takes place in service encounters in an attempt to get served and yet not be accused of being superior. Thus, one must play an interactional role as either server or served which all involved recognize as somehow departing from the desired egalitarian norms. Furthermore, everyone in the interaction retreats from being accused of either *playing a game* or *playing a role.* Openly making a game of the service encounter too may involve either the response of lack of seriousness and therefore being on the edge of the disorderly; or alternatively, being inappropriate coercive, manipulative, needlessly engaging in a contest of wills. Overtly playing the service role, on the other hand, places one in the way of being accused of overly demeaning self and ceremony, or of "having a line"—that is of being unspontaneous, rehearsed, therefore cunning.

In spite of this, we ask for service knowing that the one serving us has in fact had to rehearse a variety of "lines" and that in being served we are equally practiced in appropriate lines of response. The most profound irony is that in such engagements we all operate under the fictions of spontaneity in conversation but judge the server by the criteria of style in performance—that is, by the appropriateness of the routines performed and by the style by which the service is carried out.

It is precisely these routines, and the ways in which they are learned and used that have proven to be rewarding places to begin the study of the folklore of service occupations. Inevitably, stories arise in which examples of the recurrent problems of the group are re-enacted, thereby causing other things drawing the line between the members of the occupational group and the significant others —those on whom they wait and to whom they deliver. These are further spelled out in the personal experience stories in which *testimony* is given to the professional abilities of the service-person, or an account provided for some challenge to the teller's status.[22]

22. For a discussion of this kind of personal experience narration, see my "Negotiating Respect" in *Talking Black* (Rowley, Mass., 1976), 59–63; "The Most Em-

Such stories, in combination with the jargon of "the trade" (the in-group names for paraphenalia, routine activities, and types of outsider-customers dealt with) make up the largest part of the lore to be collected from members of service occupations.

An example: in Studs Terkel's *Working*, an airline stewardess is discussing the various tensions of her job. After going through the indignities of being told by her supervisors exactly how to dress, smile, put on make-up and so forth, she turned to the problems posed by passengers:

> There's an old story on the airline. The stewardess asks if he'd like something to drink, him and his wife. He says, "I'd like a martini," the stewardess asks the wife, "Would you like a drink?" She doesn't say anything, and the husband says, "I'm sorry, she's not used to talking to the help." When I started flying that was the first story I heard.[23]

The story leads to a discussion of the proverb "the customer is always right," and from there to the strangely ambiguous status felt by many people today thrust into service positions *vis à vis* not only their customers but their supervisors: "They call us professional people but they talk to us very young, childishly."[24]

The development of lines and routines as part of one's work are as characteristic of professional interactions as service encounters. Doctors or lawyers, teachers or social workers, whoever is called upon to regularly engage in the delivery of "professional" services, operate under the same conversational fiction but to different ends. Each profession develops certain routines by which its practitioners explain the nature of the service; the much joked about "bedside manner" of the doctor is only one of many presentational strategies and sets of routines that members of that profession develop as a means of maintaining professional identity. There are key differences, of course, between the service-worker and the professional; for one, the professional gives advice about our own lives, in the

barrassing Thing that Ever Happened: Conversational Stories in a Theory of Enactment," *Folklore Forum,* in press.

23. Studs Terkel, *Working* (New York, 1973), 45.

24. Terkel, 47. There are similar discourses on professionalism and its tests in various occupations throughout this work, as well as in Garson, *All the Livelong Day,* and, with even greater detail in James Spradley and Brenda Thomas, *The Cocktail Waitress* (New York, 1975), esp. 29–58, and 87–100. The importance of joking relationships on the job with co-workers, bosses, and customers is stressed throughout these sources.

main, while the service person sells or delivers or fixes things. With professionals then, his "good talk" is not intended to produce anything but a reaction on the part of the client or patient. With others providing services, the talk they engage in is at least supposed to be subordinate to the products being purveyed or maintained.[25] Indeed the issue of professionalism is at the center of workers' attitudes toward self, fellow-workers and those significant outsiders with whom the workers come into contact. Consequently, a great many of the stories which occupation members tell to each other (as well as to clients, customers, and employers, where appropriate) turn on status considerations such as whether those who practice that occupation generally operate professionally, whether they are treated "like pros," or in very special cases, whether an occupation is to be regarded as a profession—as opposed to serving, "just doing a job," or as work outside such considerations, as with artists. Such discussions of professionalism also often turn to accounts of the way things used to be, and then stories illustrating pride in craft emerge —usually followed by a lament focusing on why considerations such as care, craft, even art have disappeared.

Anyone, of course, may be a *real pro* at what they do, simply by being so good one gets paid for it. Or someone may be referred to as being professional in some dimension because of the extent of education, training, or experience he has gone through to get to his present position. Clearly, having a professional commitment to one's work and being a member of a profession involve different (if related) considerations of status.[26]

Being a professional may refer to a number of personal qualities, most of which relate to the control one is able to assert expressively and personalistically within the working situation. A *real pro* is someone who has both learned the operation of a job and is able to

25. There are a number of interesting sociological studies of service routines, focusing on specific occupations and the jargon and slang developed out of both service encounters and the passing of service techniques to other workers. See, for instance, Stephen J. Miller, "The Social Base of Sales Behavior," *Social Problems* 12 (1965): 15–24; Jerome J. Salomone, "The Funeral Home as a Work System," Fred Davis, "The Cabdriver and his Fare," John P. Reed, "The Lawyer-Client: A Managed Relationship?" all in *The Social Dimensions of Work,* ed. Clifton D. Bryant (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1972); T. E. Levitin, "Role Performance and Role Distance in a Low Status Occupation: The Puller," *Sociological Quarterly* 5 (1964): 251–260.

26. For a recent history and critique of the ideal of professionalism, see Burton J. Bledstein, *The Culture of Professionalism: The Middle Class and the Development of Higher Education in America* (New York, 1977).

transcend the routine character of the occupation, bringing an individual "something" to it, a personal style or a unique strategy or simply a competence to endure in the face of the boredom or the tension. Where style becomes an especially marked feature of one's abilities, the worker is called an *artist* as well as a *professional* at the job. Both make references to the source of personal control of the individual, and arise as themes in occupational stories as a means of maintaining the status potential involved in the work. But more than this, the focus on style and intensity of focus inherent in the ideal of professionalism has actually provided a middle term between work and play. A professional approach, after all, is characteristic of both.

This change is part of a larger social questioning going on concerning place and importance of work in our lives. Until recently for most Americans, our name in the community was determined, in the main, by our work—"what we do"—while we did not care to be known as a player. Playing, playing at, with, or around was not something of which we wanted to be accused. Our work determined much of our public selves, and play was kept a private matter. Progressively, play as it became professionalized has come more acceptable as a public activity; being known as a player, a performer, even a "gamesman" in business, is not only no longer stigmatized but applauded.[27]

Certainly an important feature of this changeover has been that the family is no longer primarily a unit of production but rather has become the locus for the consumption of goods and services. This, of course is a by-product of ongoing technological mastery and the onset of the post-industrial age. As the occupations which have been important in the past become obsolescent they are put onto a stage or in some other kind of play-frame—we look at them more and more as interesting performances. Thus we go to a blacksmith today not so much to have something made as to witness the process and style of something being made by hand.[28] What was a process of product-making becomes, in such a situation, an occasion for talk about the process.[29]

27. E.g., Robert Maccoby, *The Gamesman* (New York, 1977).

28. For a detailed discussion of family work into a show, see Dean McCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Clan* (New York, 1976).

29. This is hardly a new phenomenon. It seems to go back at least to the beginnings of self-consciousness about manufacturing. Factories seem to have devel-

Thus, one can see at folk festivals, theme parks, and living museums, a capsule history of *homo faber* in a series of tableaux performances. Not only does this framing make hand-workers into players as well, but it casts work itself as leisure activity. This process produces numerous ironies, ones which do not go unnoticed or uncommented upon by the elders of our tribe when they encounter work *cum* show.

Further, and perhaps more important, this recapitulation contributes to our nostalgic and reflexive sense of our own past and present. Just as we replay the entire history of man's experiences in the visual arts or in music, not only at museums and the concert hall but in books, phonograph records, on the radio and television, so we can also be brought to experience in one place and event our immediate past developments, in the area of work. Folklorists have, in fact, played no little part in promoting this popular educational experience. But strangely enough, in our fieldwork and in our writings, we have little analyzed the very social changes we have lamented.

The importance of such discussion for folkloristics is patent; but what has not been sufficiently discussed has been how this shift has affected the ways in which we view our mission. We have been collecting and analyzing lore from those many small groupings who are either "folk" (i.e., peasant) or folk-like inasmuch as they share language, attitudes and values. With regard to the occupational groups which we have studied, the groups make up a unit of socioeconomic behavior, inasmuch as groups like cowboys and loggers carry on both economic and social activities together; that is, both working with and entertaining each other. Nevertheless, such occupational groups do not make up a community in the same sense that agrarians or pastoralists do, much less hunters and gatherers. For they are now engaged in an enterprise that: (1) is part of a larger economic process, and (2) it is one which actually calls for them to voluntarily give up family and home-community and take on a group made up of peers.

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oped tours of some sort in the United States at least as early as the Lowell Experiment. For a recent discussion, see John Kasson, *Technology and Civilization* (Baltimore, 1977). That such tours were being held in England and the Continent is certain, though I know of no study of their phenomenon. But see George Moore's novel *The Mummer's Wife* (New York, 1961) for a humorous scene which takes place in a tour of a ceramics factory in Stoke-on-Trent in the late nineteenth century.

There have recently been some attempts by sociologists and anthropologists as well as a few folklorists to study the expressive traditions of other kinds of groups, ones which are considerably less full in their sense of community. In collecting and analyzing data from such voluntary groups as sororities and musical organizations on the one hand, or whorehouses and cocktail bars on the other, we have arrived at a point where we seem to mean something different by community, or perhaps more simply, we encounter and observe other kinds of social grouping than ones based on the concepts of home-place, family, and friendship networks. For some time, it has been an article of faith that with the growth of heterogeneous and capitalistic societies, we are living alienated lives, in what Robert Nisbet has classically called "the quest for community." Nisbet provided us with a classic description of community—one which comes close to the ideal of "the folk" that folklorists and anthropologists have been employing and which in opposition to society or civilization, informs the thinking of the pastoral or primitivistic social theorists from Rousseau to Tönnies. "Community" Nisbet argued "is the product of people working together on problems of autonomous and collective fulfillment of internal objectives, and of the experience of living under codes of authority which have been set in larger degree by the persons involved."[30] The codes of authority he contrasts with power; authority has the conviction of past practice, of tradition, while power is control imposed from a political and economic center far removed from the group.

Liberal sympathies demand that we reject such power and join in the lament over the loss of community which attends the loss of local autonomy. In fact, one of the strongest unstated motives for the study of folkways has been to preserve the practices of work and play characteristic of autonomous and homogeneous groups. But it would be folly indeed to idealize to any great extent the way of life actually found in such communities, for there is much constraint involved in such communities that we would find anathema to our democratic predilections—not least of which is the obligatory statuses of association and the rituals that articulate this sense of received and ordained social and economic order. Furthermore, Nisbet's notion of community is couched in terms of the very ideology he seems to wish to have us reject—community he says is

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30. Robert Nisbet, *The Quest for Community* (New York, 1970), xvi.

a "product" of group members "working together" toward a common end. A more contemporary notion, it seems to me, would be to emphasize the shared psychological states of *communion* and *communitas,* and thus to emphasize the centrality of celebration, of playing as well as working together in our emerging notions of what meaningful social groupings ought to look like. Thus we might reform Nisbet's definition of community to mean "the *process* of people *working and playing* together, attaining a sense of shared enterprise and values through an agreement on rules, appropriate styles of interaction and reasonable outcome to the activity in common." To the utilitarian notion of community as a means to arrive at agreed upon ends would be added the semiotic notion of community as a group sharing a system of signs and meanings, motive and values, and scenes and events in which meaning may be put into practice intensely. The question which such an approach poses would be: is the possibility of productivity and usefulness what really brings people together, or is it rather the expanding of possible events and the development of styles by which our energies may be successfully coordinated? The quest for community in these terms would not point away from work. Rather, it would have us look at work as an important way in which our collective energies might be coordinated and shared. In such a case, community would be a state of mind, and living in one might be momentary or it might take many lifetimes.

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Strategies for Collecting Occupational Folklife in Contemporary Urban/Industrial Contexts

R O B E R T   H .   B Y I N G T O N

How one goes about investigating occupational folklife will obviously be influenced by what one considers occupational folklife to be. I have accepted Robert McCarl's hypothetical definition of occupational folklife (p. 16) as consisting chiefly of technique, gesture, narrative and custom, with technique the nucleus from which the other forms derive, and would further emphasize the necessary informality of the network of these expressive behaviors. I also agree that because of the interdependence between occupational folklife and the work setting itself, the researcher should consider them to be inseparable, and their relationship in context one of the important focuses of his fieldwork. I believe, moreover that an emic or insider's perspective—ideally that of a trusted participant observer—is the only one that allows the researcher an accurate view of occupational folklife. I realize, also, that such a perspective is rarely available and that the normal ethnographer's participation/observation in an occupational subculture will be limited by a varying number of factors and consequently be less direct.

One further clarification is in order at this point. The range of occupational subcultures and settings is enormous, and there is no comprehensive approach that can be generally applied to all of them. As Abrahams and Green [this issue] have pointed out, some

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have been investigated more than others: rural (and sometimes urban) craftspeople working in personal shops or cottage industries, epic (and usually enclaved) occupations like miners, loggers, sailors and cowboys (in which category I am inclined to include other "romantic" or risk-filled occupations like policework, firefighting, working on high steel, and trucking), perhaps equally romantic deviant groups like thieves and prostitutes, and a scattering of contemporary, and less popular, blue collar and white collar occupations. Principally because this last category of occupational groups in urban and industrial settings, factory, and office, has not received as much attention from folklorists as other occupations, I have been obliged to focus chiefly upon the strategies for fieldwork among them. They are groups in which methodological constraints, hitherto rarely encountered, are imposed upon the folklorist in the collection and application of data, and in which so far only a handful of folklorists (as distinct from sociologists and anthropologists), have had sufficient experience to develop even the rudimentary strategies limned out here. Most of these folklorists, including myself, were at one time or another associated with the Working Americans program of the Smithsonian Institution's Festival of American Folklife and charged with ferreting out occupational folklife for presentation at the Festival. The following guide to research among blue and white collar occupational groups has been drawn from our collective experience, therefore, and cannot properly be attributed to a single individual.[1]

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

Since their jobs generate the most pervasive cultural influences in most people's lives—income, social status, life-style—work is a highly sensitive area to investigate, and the ethnographer preparing to study occupational groups from the perspective endorsed here requires some orientation in addition to the general approaches suggested by Kenneth Goldstein[2] or James Spradley and David McCurdy.[3]

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1. The substance of this article depends more upon the experience and ideas of other people than it does on mine, and their names listed here should be considered more as co-authors than incidental contributors: Robert S. McCarl, Jr., Robert E. Porter, and Jack Santino. For my use and interpretation of their experience and ideas, however, I am wholly responsible.

2. Kenneth S. Goldstein, *A Guide for Fieldworkers in Folklore* (Hatboro, and London, 1964).

3. James P. Spradley and David W. McCurdy, *The Cultural Experience: Ethnography in Complex Society* (Chicago, 1972).

First, work is an esoteric and highly specialized area of one's life which is rarely shared with anyone but another member of the same occupational group. This is not immediately apparent, since what one "does" is perhaps our most important feature of cultural identity and is both requested by and quickly supplied to any new acquaintance. But the conventional response, "I'm a banker," or "I'm a cutter in a clothing factory," which almost invariably satisfies the questioner, does not in fact answer the question. This means that, however familiar the persons of the butcher, the baker, and the candlestick maker may be to us in daily interaction, when we approach them as workers, we must approach them as members of foreign communities (which they basically are), and attempt to view their unique rhythms, techniques, and stylized forms of communication *as* workers with a sensitivity and openness that will allow us to perceive these phenomena as they themselves do.

Second, even if we do not accept in whole or in part McCarl's definition of occupational folklife as an interrelated complex of technique, gesture, narrative, and custom *in situ,* we should divest ourselves of the inappropriate, if understandable, expectations of finding in urban/industrial work contexts such conventional genres as songs, tales, beliefs, games and the like. They are not characteristic, and occur, if at all, with such infrequency and ephemerality that they are usually irrelevant.

That having been said, let us consider the formidable task of gathering ethnographic data in contemporary, highly structured, urban/industrial, work contexts where, if occupational folklife as we have defined it is to be documented, much of the fieldwork must take place.

Getting In

On the assumption that you do not already occupy a participant observer's vantage point as a typist, apprentice bricklayer, machine operator, arc welder, or some other typical position in an occupation you are studying; and that lack of time, lack of an appropriate employable skill, or other constraints put that ideal vantage point out of your reach; you must gain entry to the work site as an acknowledged ethnographer of sorts, whether you use that term or not. And whatever way is opened to you will be strait. Both union and management distrust outsiders. In the case of management there are fears of industrial espionage or liability for injury sustained by a visitor to the work site. The unions tend to regard academics not

directly associated with the labor movement as naive or supercilious, and treat them accordingly. The workers themselves are basically uncomfortable with any outsider on the job who represents to them a possible threat from management, the union, government or a number of other institutions that daily do them real or imagined harm. These factors and others make for highly complicated fieldwork contexts fraught with suspicions and hostilities of which the outsider has no conception; the last thing the ethnographer should expect is to be accepted at his or her own valuation.

How does a fieldworker gain access to the work site and begin to understand enough about the work to comprehend the processes and interactional networks involved? Beyond the normal preparations and fieldwork strategies of background reading (in which should be included a comprehensive review of the labor press, union journals particularly, in the occupation you are investigating), hanging out in bars, and identifying important informants, it is also necessary to educate organized labor, management, and the workers themselves about a number of theoretical and practical ideas concerning folklore. To gain entry to the work place, you have to justify your work to a group of people who, in the first place, are not usually interested, and in the second, have understandable problems comprehending your preliminary definitions of an emerging specialty in an amorphous, little-known, and always contentious discipline.

The first step, then, is education. You have to get a preliminary hearing in whatever occupation you hope to investigate, and then educate everyone involved about why it is you want to observe them, ask questions, take pictures, etc. In almost every instance the entryways are two: through management or through organized labor. Either can be instrumental and often essential in gaining the necessary acquiescence and cooperation of the other. Do not imagine you can avoid either by having a friend slip you into the plant or office. These are strictly controlled, carefully supervised work environments; even if you do manage to slip in, you will not stay long, and your chances of earning the necessary trust and gaining the necessary permissions will be seriously diminished, if not lost entirely.

Management

When the occupational context is one in which the workers are

organized and represented by a union, it is one that is determined by negotiated contracts and in which the production environment and its effect on the workers are influenced far more by the bargaining agreements in effect than they are by any common ground with and good will toward management. Our experience has been that in such situations the sponsorship of management (reflected initially perhaps in a guided tour by a plant or office manager, who will also introduce you around), is the kiss of death to the elicitation of cooperation from the workers themselves, and obviously not worth whatever canny wooing of the company higher-ups that will necessarily have preceded it. You will be identified as an adversary in a situation where adversary relationships are the name of the game, and the distrust if not outright hostility of the workers will be too difficult to overcome. I remember vividly and can still feel the impact of the workers' attitudes toward me—ranging from wariness to what struck me at the time as distilled hatred—on one occasion when I toured the great River Rouge plant of the Ford Motor Company accompanied by the plant's Chief Engineer. After that any attempt on my part to document actual work processes would have been literally dangerous. The single exception to this kind of result occurred in a printing plant when our management guide was low echelon, had come from the ranks of the workers themselves, shared their values and knowledge, and had retained their trust. However, such an individual is a rarity in plant management.

On the other hand, management sponsorship when solicited through a trade association can be far more efficacious. A trade association is normally formed and funded to represent the interests of an entire industry (or an important sector of that industry), particularly to legislative bodies at various levels of government; and their personnel, while unquestionably on the side of management, are normally more imaginative, more PR conscious, and less parochial than the average company executive. Consequently, they tend to respond more sympathetically to suggestions that in-depth ethnographies focused on workers' skills can do their industry no harm and might possibly be of some benefit. Since they still leave the ethnographer branded with the stigma of management sponsorship, however, trade associations are chiefly useful when they represent industries in which the workers are not organized. If you are interested in the occupational folklife of oil drilling, for example, the sponsorship of the Independent Oil Producers Association

would open a door to the oil fields where, principally because their work is itinerant, the workers are not organized, and a wholly different relationship (based in part on the workers' recognition that the economic risks of the entrepreneur are greater than their own) exists between employers and employed. While the permission of the former to do fieldwork (easily enough obtained through the good offices of the IOPA) is obviously necessary, it does not in any way stigmatize the fieldworker in the eyes of the roughnecks and roustabouts whose folklife is being documented. If you wish to do an ethnography of long-haul or straight (city) rig truckers, a similar opportunity would be offered by the trade association of the independent owner-operators, the ego-ideals of most truckers. In such instances the tension between labor and management, particularly the intensified antagonism of the former for the latter, does not exist, and the sponsorship of the front office can be more of a help than a hindrance. Unfortunately, there are not many sectors in the complex of urban/industrial occupations where "The Company" is not regarded with distrust by the great majority of workers.

The Union

The most reliable approach to urban/industrial occupational ethnography is through a labor union. In the house of labor are many mansions, however, and their differences are not purely jurisdictional. Some are affiliates of the AFL-CIO, some (like the powerful United Auto Workers, United Mine Workers, and the International Brotherhood of Teamsters) are not. While almost all large unions have both "international" and local or district organizations, the relationships and balance of power between these levels vary a great deal from union to union. Some will join in loose affiliation with other unions in the same general industry (entertainment, say, or construction) and form a Council, similar in purpose to a trade association, while others will go it alone. Some, more often the older, will restrict membership to occupations within a single industry (UMW) or even occupation (UBCJA), but increasingly the unions are conglomerate-minded, and will represent (like the massive Teamsters) a myriad of otherwise unrelated occupations. Therefore, before making your approach to the union with jurisdiction over the occupation(s) you wish to investigate, you should gather as much information as you can about its history,

structure, difficulties, successes and current goals. Then make your approach.

Eventually you will need a stamp of approval from both the local with jurisdiction over your selected work site and the head-quarters of the international (the latter is particularly important if you are asking the union to fund your fieldwork in whole or in part), and you can begin in either place. But while the interna-tional would obviously recommend itself as the logical starting place if you had an important contact in their union hierarchy, our experience suggests the greater efficacy of going directly to the local and trying out your fieldwork proposal on the highest local official you can talk to.

Whether you make your first pitch on the international or local level, however, bear in mind that your values and interests as a folklorist will not necessarily coincide with those of the union of-ficial you are talking to, and may occasionally conflict. I was at-tempting to solicit the assistance of a high official in the Teamsters one time, and mentioned that an interesting cluster of truckers' lore surrounded their use of CB radios. The official frowned and his eyes glittered with wariness and suspicion. So I dropped the subject. I learned later that at the time the Federal Communications Commis-sion had been considering new penalties for the illegal use of CB radios by truckers, one of which would have been to suspend the entire operations of any company whose drivers had been convicted of illegal use of their CB—thus possibly putting thousands of Teamsters drivers temporarily out of work. Had I persisted in a definition of truckers' folklife that included the CB radio, I am sure I would have left that office empty-handed. It is important, there-fore, to be conscious of such possible conflicts and to read any cues you are given quickly and accurately. It should be more than obvi-ous by this time that getting permission from the governing author-ities to study/participate in a modern urban/industrial occupation is very different from eliciting the cooperation of informants. So much time and hassle are sometimes required that the ethnog-rapher can quite rationally conclude that it is not worth the effort.

If you have persisted, however, and have managed to sell a (pre-ferably local) union official on your fieldwork plan, even tenta-tively, ask for the opportunity to go into the shop with a union representative when he goes there to service it, as well as permis-

sion to present your ideas to the rank and file, at the next union meeting. If the union is sold, your acceptance by the management, however grudging or uncomprehending, will be automatic. For reasons not wholly clear to me, management seems not to refuse such a request from their union. In all our experience I have not known it to occur, even once.

In selling the union, however, it is helpful to be aware of a number of things:

1. Most regulars at union meetings are the activists. If you can convince them of the merits of your proposal, they will help you with the others and with the union officials.

2. Most local union officials are elected and they will not do anything to jeopardize their positions. They do not take chances.

3. Your main selling point to union members and officials is public relations; increased awareness about their occupation(s) through publication.

4. Education of the public about the union is almost non-existent, and education about the occupation(s) is even less prevalent. You will continually come under pressure to collect occupational and union *history*. It just comes with the territory.

One of the Smithsonian fieldworkers once addressed a local union meeting of the Cement, Lime and Gypsum Workers at Cementon in the Lehigh Valley of Pennsylvania, at which I was present. There were thirty bemused faces staring up at him, and as he started talking to them about craftsmanship, occupational stories, and learning the trade from old timers, one of those old timers stood up and started giving an oral history of the industry complete with an in-depth discussion about how computerization had destroyed ninety-nine percent of the trade's techniques—a fact we substantiated in the empty, cavernous, computerized plants we visited later. After that a lively discussion followed with the lab workers debating the relative complexity of their jobs with the quarry and kiln workers. What is important here is that they took us at our word and were willing to open up at our first meeting. It also points out how easy it is to collect narrative, which should help you to remember that much of the oral material collected this way has little meaning unless it is interpreted within a framework of the techniques and customs of which it is an integral part.

In the Field

The best approach to any occupation is to begin very broadly. As McCarl has stated (see this issue, p. 7), each occupation has a shaping principle characterized primarily by the flow of technique through the work place. To use other examples than McCarl's: the shaping principle of aircraft overhaul is the tearing-down-cleaning-building-up of aircraft in a gigantic pit crew arrangement. The shaping principle of sewing in a dress factory is one continuous and economic feed of material in a smooth foot and hand rhythm—the more rhythmic the movements and the softer the whir of the machines the better the operators. Begin very generally and let the patterns of movement, contact, smells, noises and colors *suggest their own structure* to you. When one of our fieldworkers was doing fieldwork with tow boat crews on the Mississippi, he (direct from a "wired" urban environment) was initially frustrated by and consequently misinterpreted what seemed to him the langorous and inefficient pace of the work. His more experienced eye, however, began to perceive that the slowness and sluggishness of the captains and the deckhands was synchronized with the necessarily slow and deceptively graceful movement of thousands of tons across the surface of the river. Quick movement accomplished nothing. Perceiving this, he was then able to see and correctly interpret highly complex techniques that had been slowed down and stretched out to match the work flow.

In order to develop an impression of these "shaping principles" it is necessary to have a overview of the entire process of activity and production in whatever context you are investigating. This is best (and normally) achieved by a preliminary tour of the operational area. The union will arrange this for you if you request it, and since a taxonomy and understanding of space and place are exceedingly important in interpreting occupational folklife, it should be the first order of business. Normally, a union or appropriate company representative (that is, satisfactory to the union) will take you around at whatever pace you set, answer any questions, and introduce you to people you may wish to observe and interview later. Use the opportunity of the tour to get a clear picture of the sizes and kinds of spaces, the activities to which they are devoted, their functional relationship in sequence, and the

probable effect upon the workers of doing what they do in those kinds of spaces arranged in such a sequence. The first tour should be followed by a second pass, this time unaccompanied, if possible, and devoted to familiarizing yourself with the spectrum of individual techniques in each discrete space, and talking to the workers. Only after doing this will you be able to decide which techniques seem most important in the work flow, and who among the workers you have met seem the most promising informants.

At this juncture the identification and cultivation of a "key informant" can be crucial. In this kind of fieldwork "facilitator" might be a better term, because I am referring not so much to the worker with the greatest skill, most extensive repertory, and most highly developed verbal artistry; but rather that worker who is most highly regarded by fellow workers, and whose endorsement and cooperation can open many doors that would otherwise remain closed. Not uncommonly, of course, these two categories of "key informant" and "facilitator" will coincide in the same individual. He or she will tend to be experienced, activistic (particularly in union matters), widely known, hence easily identified. Our experience has indicated that such individuals are intelligent, outgoing, assured without being arrogant, hence natural leaders whose assistance can make the difference between success and near failure. Remember that what you are seeking chiefly to document is the "working knowledge"[4] of the workers; i.e., the informal work culture, the work rhythms, short-cuts, and problem solving skills acquired through experience, rather than through formal education or apprenticeship training. As often as not, these skills are unreflective, the worker does not "know" he has them, and his knowledge of them can be raised to full consciousness only by skillful questioning in an atmosphere of trust. When his conscious knowledge exists, it may be considered highly personal, often covert, and the persuasion of the "facilitator" may be the only factor that will induce a worker to reveal his special knowledge and techniques to you.

And you will need all the cooperation you can elicit to document "the pattern of manipulation, actions and rhythms which are the result of the interaction between an individual and his or her work environment" (see McCarl, p. 7). Since folklorists have concen-

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4. Ken Kusterer, "Knowledge on the Job: Workers' Know-How and Everyday Survival in the Workplace" (Ph.D. diss. Washington University, 1976), 281–296.

trated for so long on the results of behavior, not the behavior itself (particularly non-verbal behavior in an occupational context), we do not as yet have an adequate methodology for dealing with it. But until such a methodology, with commensurate training, is available, folklorists will still view work cultures more accurately if they recognize that these cultures are shaped by work technique that is expressed through non-verbal as well as verbal modes. This includes the recognition that what workers do (e.g., pulling in a rope) is not so important as *how* they do it (hand over hand, both hands at once and lashing it), and *why* they do it that way. In firefighting, for example, knowing *how* to ventilate (when, where, with what procedure), and why it is done *that* way is more important than the knowledge that it has to be done.

How to document this behavior then? Our experience indicates that the most effective basic equipment is a functioning sensory system and a pad for notes, descriptions, and diagrams. Careful observation of the behavior, notations of any instructions or commentary provided by workers, and precise written descriptions of the movements and language used by the workers will provide you with as accurate and comprehensive an ethnographic record as you need. A tape recorder on the job site is usually just excess baggage (except for the purpose of recording narratives at breaks or lunchtime), and a camera—still, movie, or videotape—is inhibiting and can actually cause accidents. Later, after trust and rapport have been well established, supplementary photographic or VTR documentation can be used sparingly. But you should pick a day when everyone knows about it, has given permission, and expects it; or teach widely trusted and interested people in the shop to use the equipment and let them do the shooting.

It is important to try your own hand at as many techniques as the group will allow (safety is usually the principal criterion of permissability here). It is very informative (doing is better than watching), and the workers involved appreciate your attempt. It is also an opportunity for them to make you a victim of initiation rituals, which you might not otherwise learn. Through these and any other methods develop a personal relationship with the group. They demand it. Bring your lunch, join coffee or soda rounds, have drinks with them after work. Be known but without being too inquisitive or pushy.

It should be apparent at this point that the ethnographer's normal ethical responsibility for the welfare of his informants is significantly heightened by the fact that when he is doing research into occupational folklife he is studying how informants make their living and put bread on their tables. It is data affecting their economic existence, the very core of their lives in modern industrial/post-industrial society. The data is also highly esoteric, and quite possibly proscribed by one or another of the structures in which they work and upon whose approval their livelihood depends. This means that the ethnographer must make very clear to his informants at the outset (preferably work out *with* them) what is to be done with the data collected, so that their approval may be obtained. The ethnographer has an obligation to point out to the workers all the consequences, negative and positive, that can be foreseen as possibly attending the use of the data. Only when their clear understanding and full consent have been thus obtained can the data be ethically released. It is perhaps the most important obligation that the ethnographer of urban/industrial occupational folklife must keep in mind.

Almost all of the preceding has been based upon the assumption that you have managed to achieve the optimum situation of relatively unfettered access to and movement within the chosen work site. Obviously that will not always be the case, for a number of reasons. It may be that the time available to you for research into a given occupation coincides with a period of negotiations between union and management, when they are temporarily "out of synch" and their relationship too unstable to permit the presence of such a factor as an unknown ethnographer. At such times they are usually too busy to want to bother with you, anyway. This means that union endorsement and cooperation will be unavailable to you and the work site will be, for your purposes, impenetrable. You have little choice but to wait for a more propitious time or select another occupation for investigation.

If, for this or other reasons, you are unable to document technique and other occupational behavior *in situ* because conditions on the job prevent an active role on your part, it should still be possible to interest and properly orient an insider to collect otherwise unavailable data for you. Such interest can be generated and orientation provided, we have learned, through the collection and

interpretation of occupational narratives, a process by no means as difficult as the documentation of technique, with which it is nonetheless closely associated.

The performance of occupational narrative on the job usually occurs during "creases" in the work day (or night): scheduled or unscheduled periods of inaction which provide opportunity for leisure and group interaction at the same time. Airline flight crews tell stories during preflight checks (see Santino, p. 59), factory workers during lunch, cab drivers while waiting in the dispatcher's office for customers' calls, trainmen while awaiting new assignments in the classification yard, and so on. Whatever the content and function of these narratives (stories and jokes, principally), they are performed, almost necessarily, in circumstances of relaxation and cameraderie, and, with a few notable exceptions, are told primarily to entertain. This means, of course, that, unlike technique and other occupational behavior, the work site is not an indispensable context for their performance. They can be and are performed whenever and wherever workers in a given occupation gather in an unconstrained atmosphere to relax. Such social occasions are sometimes formally scheduled, like the periodic meetings of the Central Office Club, a club of workers for the Chesapeake and Potomac Telephone Company (see Santino, pp. 57–60), or occur regularly but informally after work at "our" table in a bar across the street from a mill. In either case, given the appropriate sponsorship (such as that of a "facilitator"), they are easily joined or, for that matter, arranged. Narrative is, therefore, the most accessible genre of urban/industrial occupational folklife. Whatever its functions other than entertainment, it can provide indirect glimpses of work technique and environment which might not otherwise be observable. It follows, that the very difficulty of documenting occupational behavior, particularly technique, in a modern industrial context (as distinct from the behavior of a potter or a drum maker in a much simpler individual or community context) significantly increases the value of the narrative (as a verbal recapitulation of part of the work situation) to the ethnographer. What are needed are approaches to the narratives, methods of analysis, that bring to light as many of the realities of the work situation as possible. Once brought to light, they are not only available for your interpretation but can also serve as focal points to which an inside

collaborator's attention can be directed for fuller documentation.

To do fieldwork in the contexts of contemporary, urban/industrial, occupational folklife requires of the folklorist a unique set of adjustments to a unique set of problems, and I have attempted to suggest at least some of them. Until it is collected, the data of occupational folklife cannot be analyzed to find out what is being stated and why it is there. Until we have those answers, neither folklorist nor worker can effectively and ethically apply what has been learned to the advantage of either; and until this is accomplished we will not realize our full potential as a discipline.

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Characteristics of
Occupational Narratives

JACK SANTINO

December 13, 1976: The grade school auditorium was filled with the sizzle and smell of deep fried foods, which hinted at the delights of the feast that would be enjoyed that night. I was there visiting the monthly meeting of the Central Office Club, a social organization of telephone company workers in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. About sixty men, all of them white, sat in groups playing cards, laughing, talking, and joking.

I did my best to explain to the men that I wanted to hear the stories that they tell to each other on the job and on occasions such as these. I told them that I was especially interested in stories about characters, and otherwise outstanding individuals. At the request of one of the men, Joey Hall,[1] I sat down at his table, turned on the recorder, opened a beer, leaned back and enjoyed myself. Soon the men were eagerly swapping stories with each other.

Joey turned out to be an excellent storyteller. Bill Farrier was at the table, telling a lot of stories, mostly on himself. Bobby King, a young man who had been with the company for eight years, divided his attention between my microphone and his card game; while Bob Jones, who was sitting at the other end of the long table, occasionally contributed a story and an idea.

1. All names used in this article are pseudonyms.

Bill Farrier: I was with Dusty one time over IBM, and John Vee came looking for us, remember? They have these doors that are locked. Vee comes up there looking for us, and Dusty sees him coming. So when Vee starts knocking at the door, Dusty was standing on the inside of the door and he wouldn't let Vee in. He stood there, Vee was taking his fists and crashing against that door, and Dusty wouldn't open it for nothing. I was standing back there, sweat running away from me, cause I figured Vee was going to bust the door in. You know, its a secure door, its got to be opened from the inside, you've got to push a button to open it.

Santino: So just for the hell of it he wouldn't let him in?

Farrier: He wouldn't let him in because he was the boss.

Santino: What is Dusty's job?

Farrier: Dusty is Private Branch Exchange. He works outside. Oh man, if I could tell a story. . . .

Bobby King: You're going to give this man the wrong idea!

Farrier: Remember when Dusty and those guys chipped in and bought the pie for that guy so the guy could dump the pie on Ralph Abrams' face?

King: I heard about it, yeah.

Hall: I heard about it.

Jones: Who was the guy?

Farrier: I don't know. Some crazy guy. He was a guy who had been retired from the D.C. police force for disability, for nervousness. And they all sat down, at the navy hospital, and Pete came in there with Niles, and they were sitting there—you never heard that story?

Hall: I heard it, yeah.

Farrier: And some guy says "Man, I'd give ten dollars, I'd give anything if somebody'd hit that son of a bitch in the face with a pie." And this guy says, "Well, I'll do it for ten dollars." You see this money right out on the table. And the guy went up there and took enough slices of pie to make a big round pie. And he walked right like that, carrying the pie. I wasn't there, but there must've been a lot of guys there, cause I've talked to guys that—Dusty was there— and he walked right up to Ralph and then he made out like he tripped and hit Ralph right in the face with the pie. You know, knocked the glasses off his face . . . the guy wound up he had to pay the cleaning bill for Ralph's clothes.

Santino: Was Ralph a boss?

Farrier: Yes sir! He was the *big* boss!

Santino: And the other guy, what was *his* job?

Farrier: Just an installer.

Hall: Times are different. These things generally happened some years back.

Farrier: But there are so many funny things that you probably couldn't see the humor in them. Like the time the guy spent two hours teaching me how to put the steady ringing on a number. Out at the hospital where what's her name works, you know, the operator? So for two hours he's got me in the office, with all these layouts, and all these prints and diagrams. . . .
"All you have to do is just blow a fuse and that'll do it!" somebody said. "It's simpler than *that*!" someone else said. [The story at this point had become general conversation among all the men.]
Farrier: And he says "Get up there and work overtime if you have to." I said, "Right!"
Jones: You don't need no two hours to do that!
Farrier: Yeah right! I went down and pulled out the card, changed the option, and stayed up there till nine o'clock!
King: They were up there for two hours in the morning, drawing up relays. Bill sat there for two hours."
Hall: And you knew it all the time, didn't you?
Farrier: Sure I did!

The above transcript is typical of the way workingmen tell stories, of the times and places where they tell them, and the kinds of stories that are told. Moreover, this transcript introduces one of the most pervasive themes in occupational narrative: hostility toward authority as realized by a prank a subordinate worker plays on a superordinate.

I hope that at least some of the spontaneity and enthusiasm of this story swapping event is suggested by the brief transcript. The scene must be experienced first hand, of course, in order to be fully appreciated. You had to be there: to hear the hullaballoo, the jingle jangle of money won and lost in the poker games, the staccato punctuation of beer cans regularly being opened, the vigorous voices resounding with the pleasures of cameraderie, of good times remembered and recreated.

If workers tell stories to each other on the job, it will be during a break, a slack period, or before and after the day's duties. Airline flight crews, for instance, often tell stories during the preflight instrument check. Usually, however, people on the job are too busy working to tell stories. Although they certainly engage in folkloric and communicative activities (see McCarl), narratives which are a comments about the work and the job, are usually told during non-work periods. When workers come together for more or less

purely social reasons—after work in a bar, or at a meeting of a club, for example—they engage in the more expressive verbal aspects of their work culture.

As one would expect in these situations, there are both active and passive bearers of tradition;[2] people who tell stories and people who do not, even though they have heard them and know them. And while there are always certain workers who are known for their ability and willingness to tell a story at the kind of social event that I have been describing, the concept of a star performer is not that relevant. Usually, the spotlight is traded from raconteur to raconteur, each story triggering a memory and a corresponding story from someone else. There is a certain freedom to interrupt, which allows group correction as well as group reinforcement of both the details of the stories and of the sentiments expressed.[3]

It is useful to mention and describe the most common subjects of occupational narratives, without suggesting that these are classificatory categorizations. These thematic groupings will be suggested by any survey of a large body of occupational narrative, but they are by no means intended as mutually exclusive categories. They are intended to serve as a descriptive introduction to the kinds of stories that are told in the contemporary occupational context.

Although major disasters are of course always talked about, such unusual, extreme accidents tend to dominate conversation for only a few days and then fade from the forefront of group awareness. There is a kind of accident story, however, that is persistent over time and consistent across occupations. I call these kinds of stories *cautionary tales.* These stories are found in every occupation that I have worked with, and they enjoy an importance corresponding to their persistence in time. They are very similar to many occupational ballads in structure, while their function is similar to the parable—they teach. They do not simply document the unusual

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2. See C. W. von Sydow, *Selected Papers on Folklore,* ed. Laurits Bødker (Copenhagen, 1948), 11–43; also Kenneth S. Goldstein, "On the Application of the Concepts of Active and Inactive Traditions on the Study of Repertory," in *Toward New Perspectives in Folklore,* eds. America Paredes and Richard Bauman (Austin and London, 1972), 62–67.

3. In regard to this idea of group correction, see Walter Anderson, *Kaiser und Abt, dies Geschichte eines Schwanks,* (Helsinki, 1923), 397–403. Also see Dan Ben-Amos, "Toward a Definition of Folklore in Context," in *Toward New Perspectives in Folklore,* eds. Americo Paredes and Richard Bauman (Austin and London, 1972), 3–15.

accident; but they suggest a system wherein the reason for the accident can be determined, and, if the lesson is properly learned, similar accidents can be avoided in the future.

As an example, we can return to the Central Office club meeting, where Manny Fenstermacher, a thirty-five year veteran with the company, told me this story triggered by a question from Bill Farrier:

> *Farrier*: Remember when that guy stepped in a pot of hot lead?
> *Fenstermacher*: Oh yes. Ed. I had just started with the company. He went up the pole, and it was out in the bushes just off the East-West Highway. And at that time . . . it's all built up now, but it was nothing but bushes. And he wanted to hurry up and finish his job, so he left a pot of solder down on the hand line, and then he says, "I've got the tent ready, set the pot of solder down."
> *Farrier*: It was molten lead.
> *Fenstermacher*: Yeah. And he came down the pole and jumped into the pot of lead.
> *Santino*: What happened to him?
> *Fenstermacher*: Well, he hurt his ankle, bad. They took him to the hospital. He got all right.

Notice that in this story, Ed was in a hurry to finish his job, did not take the proper precautions, was careless and so caused an accident. This narrative sequence can be compared to the stories told in a great number of occupational ballads, in which a taboo is broken and an accident results. Sometimes the taboo is supernatural, as is the case in "The Jam On Jerry's Rocks," which documents the destruction of "six brave youths and their foreman, young Monroe" because they went out to break up a log jam on a Sunday.[4] Other times the taboo, or interdiction, is not to work double shifts, as did Casey Jones; not to try to do too much work, as did John Henry; or not to be "wild and reckless," as was Johnny Stiles in the ballad of the same name. These interdictions are often implicit. We interpolate them because the consequences—accidents —are graphically made known to us in the narratives. Thus the stories teach that it is dangerous to try to do too much work, to be reckless, or to be careless.

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4. This is essentially the pattern of interdiction, violation, and consequence, described by Alan Dundes in his examination of American Indian material, "Structural Typology in North American Indian Folktales," in *The Study of Folklore,* ed. Alan Dundes (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1965), 206–215.

Whether spoken or sung, these cautionary tales share a certain didacticism, despite their differences. They remind workers to be careful and to avoid unneccessary risks. Improper placement of one's tools is an unnecessary risk, as is rushing through a job, and these stories teach the workers that violation of simple safety rules can and does result in accidents.

Another very common subject of narratives is *the first day on the job*. I am including here such related themes as "how I got started" and stories about initiation pranks that were played on newcomers. Another related subject are reminiscenes and stories about the old days, or *the good old days*. Every industry's workers seem to have a conception of a golden age, a time before the present when things were different and somehow better; e.g., the days of steam in the railroad industry, or the days of propellor aircraft in the airline industry. There is a hint of this in the introductory transcript when Joey says "Times are different. These things generally happened some years back." In fact, telephone company workers also look back to the old days, when there was much less supervision and much more individuality.

Pranks are the subject of a great many stories. More often than not, pranks are played on newcomers as initiation rituals, and overlap with the above category. Not all stories about pranks are stories about the first time on the job, however. Many stories are about pranks and tricks played on bosses, management, and co-workers.

Although there is great overlap in these categories, some stories are clearly focused on the prank, while others may focus on the fact that he or she was a novice when the trick was played. A third focus may be on the person who pulls the prank, and this brings us to another grouping—*characters and heroes*.

Stories about tricksters and practical jokers abound among workers. It is not uncommon for a notorious practical joker to become the subject of a number of stories which have wide circulation within the limits of the occupational setting. Very occasionally, such characters become well known throughout the entire industry, but usually the circulation of their stories is restricted to a particular job site, home base, or group of workers.

People such as these, whose adventures and activities become the subjects of a number of narratives, are contemporary occupational folk heroes. They are real people, often retired or dead, whose stories are told and repeated and found meaningful.

Richard Dorson has described a folk hero as "a local character, a wag, an eccentric, talked about in close-knit circles for feats of strength or of eating or drinking, or for knavish tricks and clever sayings."[5] The contemporary heroes of occupational narratives are exactly that: local characters, certainly, often known by the people who tell their stories. It is common for workers to tell stories on themselves (witness Bill Farrier in the introductory transcript) and, in fact, when there are legends and stories about a particular individual, these individuals often tell their own stories best.

While "feats of strength" are certainly the stuff of hero tales, the needs and occasions for strength or derring-do have diminished in most contemporary industrial and white collar occupations. Where working conditions are not too dangerous or physically demanding, strong man heroes are not too common.

Stories of "knavish tricks" and of knaves and tricksters, however, flourish. Behavior such as throwing a pie in a boss's face may seem like slapstick comedy, but given the facts of status differentiation and authoritarianism in a job, such an act is heroic, and such behavior, framed in narrative, is prized. It seems that the dangerous physical conditions that gave rise to tales of daring physical feats have been superceded by uncomfortable social conditions that give rise to tales of tricks and practical jokes, which are, in their own way, socially daring.

Every industry and every job will have its own set of challenges, duties, skills, working conditions, and its own social milieu, and all of these will affect the narratives of that job. For that reason it is difficult to isolate the folklore of one industry to serve as a model for occupational narrative in general. Nevertheless, examples must be chosen, and I have chosen to present here stories from workers on the railroad.

> I fired for another engineer, up on the hump one time, and this is at the time that they first started the environmental thing. Even before that—they used to get us for smoke violations. They had a smoke inspector, and he'd stand there with a chart. And if the smoke was dense, they would charge you with number three smoke and so forth. Well, anyway, the smoke inspector came all the way from downtown. He saw the smoke up in the sky. He came out to see who was doing it, and this particular engineer had turned the

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5. Richard M. Dorson, *America in Legend* (New York, 1973), 170.

stoke on; he was feeding coal into the fire and he caused this smoke.

Well, anyway, one day when I was firing for him, he told me to get the engine hot, which meant to get the steam pressure up. So I said, "Well, what for? We don't need it." He said, "Well, I'll let you know." So when we backed down over the hump, the pop valve went up. That meant the steam pressure got what was safe in the boilers, and all this water went over on the office. I said, "Steve what was that for?" He said, "Well, I want to wash that place off. I've got to go up there and talk to them about a smoke violation. I wanted to clean it up for them a little bit."

This was about 1947, 1948. Steve Andover. There are other stories about him, but they are a little rough sometimes.

In the above story, the engineer is battling against the bureaucracy's restraints and infringements upon his job. The story turns on a reversal: they are forcing him to "clean up" against his will; he forces them to "clean up" against their will. They obtrude in areas in which he feels they do not belong, so he obtrudes in an area in which they obviously feel he does not belong. The hero who reverses his situation and/or role is a recurring motif in occupational narrative.

Unlike stories in which the protagonist is anonymous, which tend to feature types or characterizations (often either positive or negative role models), stories circulating about a specific individual understandably delineate a more fully realized character. It is in cases when there is more than one story about a specific individual that we begin to approach the concept of hero as symbolically significant person rather than simply as the protagonist of narrative. When there are several stories about a individual, this person is not being remembered because of a single, isolated event. When there are a number of stories about a person, the indication is that it is the idiosyncratic personality of the individual, rather than chance events, that are responsible for the adventures that are being recounted. The details of this idiosyncratic personality become important.

The Steve Andover story was collected from former engineer, Mr. Edwards. At the Potomac yard in Alexandria, Virginia, there are other stories of Steve Andover, and they are told by more than one narrator. We will continue to employ Mr. Edward's versions, however, because they are the fullest.

In the following narrative, aspects of Steve's personality are delineated quite clearly. Not only is the "ladies man" aspect essential to the story, but also the lack of concern about his predicament and his apparent disdain for the authorities. Although he is the mistaken target of government officials chasing down corruption, he remains aloof. Although his personality gets him into trouble, since he is innocent of any wrongdoing, he can extricate himself from the problem with a quip:

> One time he was over at the Hamilton Hotel and in the cocktail lounge. He used to go over and he was quite a woman's man. If anybody was looking to be picked up, why, he would buy them a drink and so forth. Well, on this particular occasion, the Federal Communication Commission was investigating somebody who was involved in politics and this woman was giving them information. And when Steve Andover started flirting with her, she thought it was somebody contacting her to pay off. And Steve got into the headlines in the paper because the Attorney General thought it was a contact with some people that were contacting her.
>
> So anyway, the inspector went down to his house to talk to him. So, they came on in and said, "Steve, you hit everything on the head talking to this woman." See, when he was talking to her, buying her a drink, he'd say, "You're in town on a big money deal." He was trying to find out if she had any money. So she said, "Yeah," so she would go back and tell the federal people [and] say, "They made a contact with me; they're talking about money now." So that was the reason the inspectors went down to his house.
>
> So they said, "Steve, where in the hell did you get this information?" And he said, "My crystal ball." They said 'What do you mean' crystal ball?' He said, 'You want to see it?' They said, "Yeah."
>
> He took them to the closet, and you know these big silver balls that people decorate the yard with? He had it in the closet for the winter. He said, "That's where I get my information from!" They finally dropped him as a witness.

The final Andover story brings him into conflict with and victory over a yardmaster, by means of his ability to think fast:

> I have one about the engineer and the fireman. This happened on the twelve to eight [midnight to eight a.m. shift]. The yard engine goes all the way to the rear end of the train and comes in

behind it and shoves it to the hump. Well, on this particular night, the hump engine went all the way around the train and the engineer and the fireman went to sleep. And they used to have a whistle before radio time to blow that whistle for them to shove that train out. Well, they couldn't get them shouted out, so the yardmaster walked down there. About the time that he got close to the engine, the engineer happened to wake up and see his light. So in order to get water into the boiler, they used to have a thing they called the injector. He pulled that injector open and it started squirting steam all around. He hollered to him "Don't come close! I can't get water in, it's liable to blow up. I've been after it ever since I got around the train!" He thought real fast and didn't get caught at being asleep.

Steve Andover's diffidence to the Federal Communication Commission, his hostility toward the interfering, meddling, bureaucracy and misguided outside agencies is also a generalized aggression directed at that great, amorphous, non-railroading, non-understanding outgroup, the public. Lawyers, judges, bureaucrats, these are roles of public representation, and they, like the yardmaster, are figures of authority. People in these roles are targets of the aggression of the independent, irascible, heroic engineer.

At least, that is how engineers are portrayed in the stories they tell about themselves. It is interesting to compare their portrayal of trainment (flagmen, brakemen, switchmen, etc.) who work on the railroad in subordinate positions. Perhaps the most clearly heroic tales are those of Skippy LeFleur. Engineer Mickey Kent tells them in a story swapping session with a group of trainmen:

Skippy liked to tell jokes all the time. He was really comical. He'd stop in the middle of anything and tell a joke to somebody. Well, he got his leg cut off at Hancock at a switching accident. And his leg was laying over somewhere. And they picked him up and put him in a pick-up truck, I believe it was, to take him to the hospital. And he was still alert. He said, "Hey fellas, don't forget my leg!"

Well, talking about Skippy, I worked a job at Hancock with him. I'm glad I wasn't there the day he got hurt, or maybe if I had been, he wouldn't have been, but I wasn't there. But we worked that job a few times, and down there you really do. You handle forty-five, fifty loads of sand with no air and you're kicking them in against the train. I mean it's rough. You're on that engine and it shakes everything loose. Of course, that's the way the opera-

tion has to be you know. With the regular crew down there you could always figure, you can't see them for maybe ten, fifteen car lengths, but you have a pretty fair idea of what you're doing. Course, the rules always say if you can't see them, you stop. Well, if you did that you'd be sitting there all night. You'd accomplish nothing. Course, I could see Skippy real well and I thought Skippy seen what was going on, and I was shoving back and shoving back at Hancock. I thought, "My God, they didn't extend these tracks, did they?" About that time, POW! Water cooler come down, everything come down! We hit everything. I says to Skippy, I says, "My God, Skippy, what are you looking at?" He liked to eat a lot. He was standing there chewing on a piece of candy. He says, "Did you see those green and red lights on that airplane going by?" There he was, laying on the floor. But that *was* Skippy.

Well, Skippy, Skippy got injured one time. He got off too fast. They were on the fly, and he got off too fast. When he got off, he tripped and rolled. He rolled down there a long ways and he was wounded. And so when he recuperated enough to come back to work, he met with a claim agent to make a settlement for his injury. So the claim agent wanted to go down to see where he got hurt at. He went down along the track and he said, "Skippy, just where did you get off at?" And he said, "All along here!"

The Skippy stories are typical of the stories about trainmen. They more closely resemble jokes than do the engineer stories. They have punch lines ("Hey fellas, don't forget my leg" and "All along here"). The accident story shows that Skippy is capable of truly heroic courage, but it is the courage of sustaining great pain and great loss. The story does not explain how he lost his leg, nor does it suggest that he lost it as a result of an act of heroism. Skippy finds himself in situations, and the stories document how he rises to the occasions. Things happen to him, and he deals with them. In railroad narrative generally, trainmen are somewhat more passive than engineers. Engineers are active; they create situations. Trainmen are passive; they react to situations.

Which is not to suggest that trainmen are any less intelligent than engineers; it is simply that their job duties place them in a subordinate position. The dealing with status and authority superordinates by subordinates is a major theme in occupational narrative. This next story almost caricatures the relationship.

When I first started on the railroad, it was a pretty common occurrence to be fired. If you were really railroad, you'd get fired once

a week, at least. And for just about any reason. What happened when you got fired, the straw boss, which he hated to be called and which we called him so he *would* fire us, was, ah, well, tempermental I guess you could say. At every least minor infraction that occurred and he thought he could blame you for it, he'd send you to see the general foreman. Well, the general foreman never got to work before nine o'clock, and we all started at seven, so if you hurried up and got in trouble around five or ten after seven, you could sit in the boss's office for two hours and didn't have to do a thing. Well, I happened to like it up in the boss's office. It was air conditioned and had nice leather seats that you could sit in, and the coffee machine was right there.

After a while, the boss kept seeing me up there and he told me, "Look, if you don't stop getting fired, and wasting all this time up in my office, I am really going to fire you." And that was the last time he saw me. But that was two hours a week for a period of maybe two or three months, and he just got tired of it and let me know, if I didn't stop getting fired, that he was really going to fire me. That put an end to that, but I did have a good time while I was doing it.

We come across the reversal motif in this story of a trick a yardmaster pulled on a new switchman:

Years ago the train came in and on the rear end was a load of sheep. And this old fella called the switchman about that and said, "Listen, we're having some trouble about the number of sheep that's in the car. How about going out there and counting them for us." So he went out there; he was new. He'd just been hired. He was trying to count the sheep in the car. Well if you've ever seen sheep in a car, they keep moving around. Well, anyway, a train was coming in the yard, and the yardmaster couldn't get the man. So he was out there about two hours. So when he finally came back he said "Where you been?" He said, "I've been out there counting those damn sheep that you told me to count."

The story is one of poetic justice. The switchman reverses, perhaps unknowingly, the very attempt to make him the fool. He uses the joke played on him to get out of working for a couple of hours and he turns the perpetrator of the joke into the butt of the joke.

The elements of the story are by now familiar: the conflict arising out of the status differentiation, and the trickster strategy of reversal common to railroad narrative generally. The more passive

quality of the switchman is an element commonly found in stories told by or about trainmen.

The fact is that engineers, when they tell stories about trainmen, tell the same stories and the same *kinds* of stories as the trainmen tell about themselves. The converse, however, is not exactly true. Trainmen display an ambivalence toward engineers in their stories. Sometimes a particular engineer is admired; more often, the engineer is ridiculed.

Railroad narrative arises out of and deals with each of the relationships and interactions that are part of the occupation. Engineers portray themselves as being in a highly individualistic, devil-may-care position vis-à-vis the company and the world; while trainmen portray themselves as coping with problematic situations that arise during the daily execution of their work. The engineer-trainmen relationship is one of mutual interdependence; but there is an explicit hierarchy of responsibility and status. With subordination comes resentment and hostility; with superordination comes perhaps a degree of arrogance and condescension.

Trainmen express a dual response to the engineer's authority. Certain specific engineers are admired, simply because they are very good at what they do. Nevertheless, being on the wrong end of a status hierarchy leads to some very real resentment. This resentment is expressed symbolically in trainmen's narrative.

As trainmen seek vicarious release for their resentment of subordination in narrative, the engineer likewise expresses his anger at the system and the world that puts him under great pressure and expects so much from him. In the stories, engineers create situations of conflict. They pretty much do as they please—company bosses and the world be damned. Trainmen are much more cautious. Although in the stories they are tricksters, they are not practical jokers. Engineer Steve Andover controls the steam engine, so he sprays the business office. Skippy LeFleur has no such control. Typically, his heroism is one of passivity and endurance. He deals with the immediate problems in which he finds himself, and typically, he is triumphant. Nevertheless, nothing changes. There is an element of fatalism in the trainmen's stories. One after another, stories about engineers tell about how the engineer *does* something: picks up women, defies the government, sprays steam on a building, outwits the yardmaster. And one after another, stories about trainmen tell

about how something *is done to* them: he is left off the train, a trick is played on him, he is crushed in an accident.

The pattern of hostility as manifested by subordinate workers applies to the narratives of the telephone company that began this article (e.g. the pie throwing incident). The same pattern is consistent with regard to airline narrative: superordinates (pilots) picture themselves as highly individualistic, and many pilots are practical jokers. The narratives of subordinates (flight attendants) correspond to trainmen's narratives, picturing the flight attendant as put upon by arrogant pilots or inconsiderate passengers. The heroic flight attendant has to deal with the situations she finds herself in, and she usually does so by means of her wit.

Occupational narratives provide insight into and an index of the specific challenges and problems that arise in a job. Two kinds of problems are indicated: (1) the kind of physical challenges requiring the skills a worker in that job would be expected to have, and (2) the sociological problems of responsibility, status, and authority. The volume of stories in which hostility is demonstrated toward one's superiors, outsiders, or the general populace indicates that these problems are quite real and extensive.

The network of relationships a worker has is complex: he must relate to and work with subordinates, peers, bosses, management, outside agencies, and the general public. Narratives arise along each of these relationships, and allow aggressive feelings fictive release. People working with each other will conflict. Nevertheless, in order for an overall operation to be productive, the individual workers must function well together. They are each moving parts of a larger machine, and they must avoid friction with each other or the machine will break down. Occupational narrative, by allowing the fictive expression of negative emotions, is a kind of lubricant that reduces the friction between the parts and allows the operation to function more smoothly.

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Industrial Lore: A Bibliographic-Semantic Query

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Folklore became a discrete university-centered calling only after gentlemen antiquarians or philologists in nineteenth-century Europe had collected and classified the living stories, songs, and speech of peasants and crofters. The journey from the drawing room to the village common held an Alice-in-Wonderland ambience, for it was as much a vertical descent down a social scale as it was a lateral visit to the countryside. To this day, folklorists go to "the field"—the meadows and woods in their silence—where they engage in "fieldwork." Obviously, we do not chop cotton, nor do we grub potatoes; yet we invest the word *fieldwork* with talismanic meaning, as if corn tassels decorated our tape recorders. Not only does a neophyte complete his education by field research, but, in seeking employment, he defines his special area of competence as a "field." In this sense, balladry is but one disciplinary field while the Ozark region is yet another fieldwork site. By extension, the folklorist within the factory is also in a verdant field.

In our universities where folklore is taught at a graduate level, there is no special course-sequence or sub-field for industry. The term *industrial folklore* is hardly used in the United States, nor is a large body of writing subsumed under its rubric. Neither labor union nor corporation personnel unit has seen fit to employ a professionally qualified folklorist. Despite this general inattention, some recent students have been drawn to work-generated expressive

[71]

culture, and something of what they have found is available in print, sound recording, and film.

Folklorists in the decade ahead will continue both to redefine their aims and to seek fresh preservational/presentational formats. I am concerned that industrial work not be overlooked as we probe for change. Because industry is still bizarre or mysterious to many American folklorists, I ask these questions: Are workers to be seen as members of folk society? How is work activity as well as the work site structured so that expressive culture emerges? How does work lore simultaneously reflect the stability within a bonded community and the trauma of social conflict? What tools, bibliographic and semantic, are useful as we enter the industrial arena? In response, I shall avoid numerous examples of data in favor of queries about the factory as a field and about those aspects of workers' lives which bring lore to the surface. Specifically, I shall note various usages of the combination *industrial folklore,* with attention to it as a term of categorization.

When the American Folklore Society was formed in 1888, most founding members, taking cues from editor William Wells Newell in the *Journal of American Folklore,* understood their subject to be popular tradition (or vestigial items of literary, musical, and cognitive culture) belonging mainly to four sets of people: Native Americans, Anglo-Americans, Afro-Americans, Americans who retained non-English languages. Within these four sets many individuals were workers of strength or skill. But early folklorists were not particularly drawn to on-the-job behavior, unless the job consisted of tasks such as crafting arrowheads or moccasins.

Those students of Francis James Child attracted to cowboy, sailor, and lumberjack ballads first dealt with occupational folklore in a significant manner. One could not hear a wrangler's lament without being curious about a trail drive, without seeking insight into a life style. Nevertheless, no splendid mansion named OCCU-PATIONAL LORE was built in a day. Instead, American work songs were first printed in general folksong collections, and contextual features were first handled in standard headnotes. But in 1910, *Cowboy Songs* by John Avery Lomax was published; it combined field collecting and Harvard scholarship; it appealed simultaneously to learned and popular audiences. Lomax, in his *Adventures of a Ballad Hunter,* depicts his journey, a sheaf of cowboy songs in

hand, from Bosque County, Texas to the state university at Austin, to Harvard, and eventually to the Library of Congress on Capitol Hill.

It was not until the mid-1920s that the lore of a major industrial group was seriously explored, and then by one at that time outside of academic circles, George Korson. As a young well-read newspaperman, he held in mind a conscious model of an occupational ballad, like "The Jam on Gerry's Rocks" which had been collected from woodsmen and published. Initially, Korson sought coal mining songs alone, but as he matured he came to see the coal camp or mine patch as an enclaved (Redfieldian) society with a rich and varied subculture, of which song was but a single aspect. An appreciation is found in Angus Gillespie's thesis at the University of Pennsylvania, "The Contribution of George Korson to American Intellectual Life" (1975).

Because I have partly expanded Korson's inquiry, I have tried to make explicit my large debt to him as well as to puzzle through our connection. In the very years when he undertook to collect anthracite songs in Pennsylvania, I first became conscious of cowboy songs broadcast on California radio stations. To this day I cannot explain in rational terms Harry ("Haywire Mac") McClintock's hold on my childhood imagination, but I still recall with pleasure his repertoire and manner. From him and his fellow entertainers, I learned that cowboys also liked railroad and hobo songs, and that tending cattle was work. "Mac's" tongue-in-cheek, unornamented delivery prepared me for an eventual recognition (three long decades in shaping) that *folk style* was a term of special intensity. Initially, I understood this term to refer only to a cowboy's song delivery—drawl, inflection, word choice—but in time, after reflecting on personal waterfront experience, I sensed that my fellow shipwrights also used particular verbal patter in anecdotal talk to describe their scenes, and, further, that they were actually governed by stylistic codes of behavior in their work.

My own path from "Haywire Mac's" radio ballads to ballad study with MacEdward Leach can be told elsewhere. Here, I shall note only that Professor Leach urged me, for a thesis at the University of Pennsylvania, to build upon trade union association as well as upon fascination with occupational music. He did not live to read *Only a Miner* but he was excited by its potential.

My book, a series of case studies about recorded coal songs, helped bound the area of industrial folklore in the United States. I wrote:

> There is an observable blurring and overlap in the terms *industrial, occupational, labor,* or *worker* when combined with folklore. Examples of industrial lore are found at one end of the spectrum in manual crafts, usually studied by folklife specialists. At the other end, examples are found in trade unionism and organized political movements which range from social democracy to nihilism. Hence, *industrial lore* may be an umbrella term broad enough to cover all job processes as well as urban living, unionism, radicalism, social reform, civil disobedience, and political action. However, I have found it useful to restrict the term to modern industry.

This definition was geared deliberately to site and setting. It inferred an old notion of lore, such as a song or a prank, but a new place for enactment. Essentially, an industrial edifice became a field, but one no longer occupied solely by rustic sowers or reapers. This shift in locale from the soil or hearth to a physical structure such as a mine tipple, textile mill, or, more recently, a computer room, is part of an ongoing, world-wide revolution in technology and is, of course, a central force in modern life. Accordingly, we need not be surprised that some folklorists have followed the folk into the factory, no matter how daring these scholars themselves have perceived their personal roles to be.

Another folklorist who has grappled with standards of definition for occupational lore is Tristram Potter Coffin. In 1973 he published an anthology *Folklore from the Working Folk of America,* jointly edited with Hennig Cohen. Their useful conceptualization for occupational folklore was "the traditional artistic expression of those who find their identity (at least to a large degree) in the way they earn their living, rather than in where they live or their racial background." Further, they asserted that vocation functions to set life style, to affect world view, and to permeate other aspects of personal existence. To mark the shift from handicraft production to industry, Coffin and Cohen contrasted "folk occupation" (cowboy) with "semifolk occupation" (auto worker). This distinction between full and partial folk status is provocative and calls for future elaboration.

To link cowboys and auto workers under one label requires disciplinary breadth. To link the customs of chimney sweeps with those of key punch operators requires vivid imagination as well as considerable reading. It is not my suggestion that a full understanding of the transition in folkloric attention from occupation to industry can be found in but a few books. Nor is this exploratory article intended as a substitute for an extensive bibliography treating all aspects of the folklore of work. However, a voyage can begin in any port, and even the smallest library includes a few landmark books in our area; four which treat work are cited at this point as examples for readers who wish to begin their own bibliographies.

· The first major collection of Afro-American lore, *Slave Songs in the United States* by Allen, Ware, and Garrison (1867), included work in its most literal sense—songs to ease the burden of work, songs to pace work itself. The first book by an American folklorist set occupationally was Fletcher S. Bassett's *Legends and Superstitions of the Sea and of Sailors* (1885). American loggers early attracted a handful of imaginative collectors: Phillips Barry, Fannie Eckstorm, Mary Smyth, Roland Gray, Franz Rickaby. The latter's *Ballads and Songs of the Shanty-Boy* (1926) took a scholar into the woods. His book is as useful today as when it appeared a half-century ago. The most recent full study by a scholar in the United States centered on occupational tradition is Horace Beck's *Folklore and the Sea* (1973).

Before dealing with the limitations built into my usage, *industrial folklore* (old lore/new locale), I shall note briefly a few markers on "the road to work" within the *Journal of American Folklore*. During its two initial years, 1888–89, the editorial standards were set: considerable attention to Indian material, lesser attention to English-language as well as French, German, and Spanish lore. From the beginning, some contributors were involved in philology, dialectology, etymology, and studies of proverbial speech, submitting items to editor Newell for the feature, "Waste Basket of Words." Credit for the first extended *JAF* contribution on any occupational expression goes to Major William Wilde of New Orleans who contributed two early articles, "Some Words on Thief Talk" and "Notes on Thief Talk." Obviously, thievery preceded factory life; historically we must credit those scholars who were pulled to the language of deviants with the establishment of occu-

pation as one of the defining elements in the discipline folklore.

The first "children" of the Industrial Revolution appeared in the *JAF*'s fourth volume, when a letter by Walter Learned was used for an extended note, "The Dialect of Railway Employees." The tone was humorous but the correspondent had listened closely to Connecticut brakemen and knew that they were set apart not only by special vocabulary but also by rhetorical style. Learned suggested "that the philologist who would take a position as a trainboy, for the purpose of acquiring and elucidating the dialect, would be of essential service to the cause of science." One can only trumpet "Amen" to this message.

It is unnecessary to list all the *JAF* articles on workers' culture to display how tentative professional folklorists have been over the years in their reach for industrial tradition. Some, like Mody C. Boatright, who pioneered in the folklore of oil with several fine books, never published this kind of data in the *JAF*. Alan Lomax spread his bountiful occupational material in popular anthologies rather than in learned journals. A trio of *JAF* articles which elaborate academic attention to industry are: Wayland D. Hand, "Folklore from Utah's Silver Mining Camps" (1941); Lawrence Thompson, "The Customs of the Chapel" (1947); Archie Green, "John Neuhaus, Wobbly Folklorist" (1960). Hand's superb article, based on considerable fieldwork, brought together formal folkloric scholarship and a conviction that work placed men into a folk community. Thompson used rich library resources to cover four centuries of typographical tradition and to imply that modern workers were linked to a past both rich and powerful. In my tribute to a member of the Industrial Workers of the World (an anarcho-syndicalist union), I sought to treat Neuhaus' complexity—his role in a basic industry, steel, and his radical ideology. Additionally, I suggested that folklore functioned conservatively within revolutionary movements.

The work site and the folklorist's perception of place are equally important in understanding our disciplinary development during this century. When cowboy songs first appeared in collections, they were judged as they derived from, or were compared to, older British ballads. Folklorists drifted slowly into the matter of cowboy subculture: ranch life, a bunkhouse crew as a traditionalizing circle, occupation functioning to form an enclave. This progression from

the ballad to the circumstance of its enactment can be seen by placing George Korson's books in order of publication from 1927 to 1960. Accepting his lead, other scholars came to see coal miners as members of folk society because they worked in isolation away from urban centers, were set apart by the constant threat of danger, and were bonded in common purpose by a notion of labor solidarity.

Essentially, a coal mine is an underground factory, but it has not been easy for folklorists to go beyond Korson to enter regular factories. One can almost see the mesh or barbed wire fence which surrounds the factory as a barrier to folklorists. In reality, this fence is in our perception of who is folk and where lore is generated.

A comment on the actual inclusion of a single factory piece in academic collections is useful. As early as the 1830s, broadsides by and about New England cotton mill hands began to appear, some in periodicals by and for workers. "The Lowell Factory Girl" under various titles is America's oldest industrial folksong; in isolating four of its appearances we literally feel an expansion of folkloric consciousness.

In 1913, president John Avery Lomax of the American Folklore Society selected for his outgoing address "Some Types of American Folk-Song." Asserting that native ballads resembled English and Scottish sources, he also developed a rough typology for new material: Negro, occupation, songs of the down-and-out classes (outcast girl, dope fiend, jail bird, tramp). To illustrate his talk Lomax read or sang a number of items including an untitled "song of the girl factory worker," which he had collected previously in Texas. This Lomax address, including song texts, was printed in the *JAF* for January, 1915. Next, in 1931, Phillips Barry added music to his printing of "The Factory Girl's Come-All-Ye," from Maine, in the *Bulletin of the Folk-Song Society of the Northeast*. Beyond transcribing a tune, Barry also added a fine contextual note on textile mill overseers and operatives. During 1962, I collected "The Factory Girl" from Nancy Dixon at East Rockingham, North Carolina and issued it on an LP album, *Babies in the Mill* (Testament 3301). In 1974, Frances Tamburro published a detailed study of this ballad, combining literary explication and social history. In her account we see the normal accumulation of folkloric data, but we see, as well, a fascination with industrial experience beyond that of her predecessors.

Complementing this song chronology, folklorists also have found other material within factory walls. Fresh from college studies, William Hugh Jansen worked briefly during 1942 for the Graver Tank Company in East Chicago, Indiana. There he encountered the anecdotal and narrative lore of inside shopmen (metal fabricators, boilermakers, riveters, caulkers, welders) and outside erectors (millwrights, ironworkers, boilermakers). Jansen's all-too-brief "Lore of the Tankbuilders" was printed in the *Hoosier Folklore Bulletin*. It was not until the 1970s that a folklore student again drew upon metal working experience within "his" General Electric machine shop in Massachusetts. Bruce Nickerson's "Is There a Folk in the Factory?" (*JAF*, 1974) reported conventional lore in a new setting.

Key articles on industry, descriptive and conceptual alike, have appeared in most folklore journals in the United States. Previously, I focused on the *Journal of American Folklore* because it is our major serial. Not to be overlooked is its sister journal *Western Folklore*, originally titled *California Folklore Quarterly*. From its inception in 1942, the *CFQ* offered many fine articles on hard-rock mining (non-ferrous metals) by Wayland D. Hand, Caroline Bancroft, Duncan Emrich, Hyman Palais, and others. Their separate works richly deserve gathering into book form. One of Hand's students, Harvey Weiner, was responsible for "Folklore in the Los Angeles Garment Industry," another shift away from mountain or desert mining camp to urban factory. Within recent years Peter Tamony has graced the pages of *Western Folklore*, bringing his pleasure-in-language to bear on many unusual colloquialisms, including "Wobblies," the nickname for the Industrial Workers of the World.

Two useful survey articles, one from a European book and one from an "outside" publication, are: Wayland D. Hand's "American Occupational and Industrial Folklore: The Miner" in *Kontakte und Grenzen* (1969), essays honoring Gerhard Heilfurth; Archie Green's "American Labor Lore: Its Meanings and Uses," *Industrial Relations* (1965). Hopefully, this latter reference to a non-folklore journal will affirm that studies of occupational culture are found in numerous publications and at various levels of sophistication.

For other sources, I would stress linguistics and its many subspecialties. The American Dialect Society was formed parallel to

the American Folklore Society, out of similar impulses, and with many of the same scholars active in both. To view workers in distinct garb, or to unravel the performance of their intricate tasks, is also to hear their particular talk. A half-dozen titles, cited without comment, from *American Speech* reveal a *terra lingua* central to folkloric investigation of work: James Stevens, "Logger Talk" (1925); Frederick Pond, "Language of the California Oil Fields" (1932); V. E. Leichty, "Some Composing Room Terms" (1938); David Maurer, "The Argot of Confidence Men" (1940); Marshall Frazier, "Truck Drivers' Language" (1955); Philip Kolin, "The Language of Nursing" (1973).

To return to the *Journal of American Folklore,* its industrial thread from brakeman (1891) to metal fabricator (1974) is conservative and continuous in terms of governing models. Neither set of workers was rustic; each—early and late—produced clear genre-identifiable lore. It is only in the past decade that some American folklorists have turned away from folk groups seen in static terms, as well as from counting and classifying items of lore, and have asserted that folklore should become ethnographic description of the communicative process and expressive behavior. This position is advanced in "Toward New Perspectives in Folklore," an entire *JAF* issue (1971) edited by Richard Bauman and Américo Paredes.

Whether or not we identify with conventional or behavioral disciplinary camps, we sense that it is no longer novel to collect blue collar lore; it is now imperative to see machine tenders as creative performers in an interactive ballet. More important than establishing a time-tested pedigree for an isolated jest or rhyme is the assertion that factory behavior is itself folklife. If thatching a cottage roof has been a proper subject in past study, and the skyscraper's topping out ritual an accepted part of recent study, then will the formation of a face-to-face circle in an airport's control tower become a unit of future study?

Because some folklorists have entered the work arena in a period when it has been exciting to expand formal boundaries, we have the opportunity not only to encompass new fields but, concomitantly, to break limiting models. For example, Richard Bauman has suggested to me that my formula (old lore/new locale) be broadened to include old folk in new locations and old relationships in new situations. Further, he has stressed that it is not useful to compress factory behavior into Redfieldian categories of folk society,

but rather it is more productive to study work itself as an activity or process which generates lore. Work is systematized differently in a potter's shed than in a nuclear-energy plant; therefore, we must be alert to the organizing patterns in occupational relationships and expect the potter and the physicist to have varying kinds and degrees of lore. Bauman's attention to social structure and identity formation integral to the work process as well as to contrasts between shared and differential lore, helps overcome the handicap inherent in the quest for familiar items of folklore in brave-new-world factories.

George Korson was a folklore pioneer mainly by virtue of stating that the mine patch was a folk society. Some contemporary students, I believe, will also become pioneers as they test fresh standards in industrial settings. The first published article (1974) on American workers employing "new perspectives" is Robert S. McCarl's "The Production Welder: Product, Process, and the Industrial Craftsman." McCarl's article is strong both because he worked in an Oregon sheet-metal shop for a year, and because he reached out willingly to provocative concepts of sign and symbol.

Essentially, McCarl asserts that the communicative process, which he studied, includes physical as well as oral components. The metal door frame, the actual weld that joins its part, the welder's skill (such as "eyeballing" close tolerances), and the workers' horror stories used to externalize anxiety about dangerous conditions are all joined together as communicative aspects of culture. Not only does McCarl describe his shop as a technological and social configuration, but he also touches on the aesthetic code which governs welder and weld alike. Finally, he sees industrial folklife as a resource which should be examined not only by scholars, but by its own creators and carriers—workers on the shop floor.

Hopefully, other job-centered folklorists will challenge or extend McCarl's assertions and observations by asking: does theory drawn from sociolinguistic or semiotic analysis "fit" a welded door frame? In their own work (welded, soldered, brazed), metalsmiths see pits and peaks where we—untrained and uninitiated—see level plains, or we are even unconscious that separate units have been joined. While folklorists learn to fasten fresh conceptualization to lore in new settings, they must be alert to incongruity in idea and infelicity in style—to see the pits and peaks in their own "welding." Finally,

we must ask whether or not McCarl had to cling to any governing folkloristic notion to develop his particular analysis.

Following his sheet-metal article, McCarl completed one on Forest Service smoke-jumpers (*JAF*, 1975). In this issue he presents a theoretical and definitional paper based on his fieldwork at the Smithsonian's Festival of American Folklife. It sums up his view that occupational folklife consists of a triad of linked forms: skills and techniques, workers' narratives, customary behavior on the job. It is the intricate relationships within this triadic network that folklorists ought to study. Because work is a pervasive cultural influence in our lives, it is intrinsically compelling, and needs no special justification for folkloric attention. McCarl also concludes that within this study scholars can share ethical concerns with workers who perpetuate types of information to which folklorists are drawn.

At this juncture I shall mention a few concerns of folklorists who approach industrial life from the academy. Whether or not one is touched by Walter Scott's romantic minstrelsy or by Ferdinand de Saussure's austere semiotics, there is still trepidation upon first sensing the cluttered shop floor, the vertical thrust of a skyscraper under construction, or the pulsating assembly line. Why does "the line" always evoke for intellectuals the alienating vision of "Modern Times," as Charles Chaplin felt the factory to be?

Despite the fact that tens of millions of Americans are highly visible in their daily work, it is still tempting for folklorists to avoid industrial contact. It does seem easier after graduate school to ask a Blue Ridge fiddler on his cabin porch for "Sourwood Mountain" than it is to ask a Bell telephone splicer in his manhole for a linguistic symbol or construct. Obviously, we are taught to identify the fiddler as folk, but are still uncertain about the splicer's status.

Hence, we return to troublesome questions: Even if we grant that the factory is a field, what are proper standards for inclusion, both for worker and lore? Is the well-paid, highly-educated sophisicated airline pilot a member of folk society and a carrier of folk tradition? Does he perceive himself as a wearer of a blue or white collar? Commercial pilots and municipal bus drivers are both service tradesmen in their shared function of public transportation. Are bus drivers more "folk" than pilots? What do pilots, bus drivers, bracero farm laborers, or miners toiling in danger hold in common, if anything? When we turn away from the nature of folk society to

the work sequence and structure in which cultural data surfaces, we must reformulate these questions. Do bus drivers have more or less lore than pilots? Should our main concern be measurement or explication? What job patterns—social as well as technical—precipitate certain types of expression? How can we prepare ourselves to accommodate wide cultural differences in the very nature and meaning of work? How do we explore the relationship between workers' job experiences and their full expressive lives?

It was with some reluctance that ballad scholars trained in the nineteenth century came to accept cowboy compositions as folksongs, and it is with similar reluctance today that scholars view as folklore the expressions of assembly line and service workers. Yet it is far easier to tag the word *folk* onto the wearer of a blue collar than to do so for his white collar brother or sister. The factory hand is still "low" or "isolated," not unlike the peasant, formerly favored by gentlemen scholars.

Clearly, Wilhelm and Jacob Grimm were not members of folk society, yet their present-day followers—ethnographic folklorists who are reaching into industrial tradition—are themselves professional or white collar workers, frequently sheltered in university communities. It was easy for the Grimms to gather tales from nursemaids or shepherds who were distant, seemingly unrelated by economic function. I have worked on a campus and, therefore, see myself as closely related to window washers and air-conditioning mechanics who come into my office. To what degree can any worker see with detachment other workers in his own "factory"? Is not the campus as much a workplace as the insurance trust, the telephone exchange, or the governmental bureau?

We know that many professional employees frequently complain about their comfortable offices as "factories." Are these gripes based in concrete reality? To a degree, the distinction between white and blue collar work has been erased by automation, as well as by the desires of some young people from both "sides of the track" to share similar styles. Are we to seek industrial folklore in the steno pool of the bank, hospital, school, or museum? Folklorists who approach work from the "outside" see it initially as a monolith; in time, the blue and white collars are seen as emblems for a bewildering variety of persons and states of being. Magically, *blue* and *white* converge as defining terms.

One learns about the diversity of America's labor force only in three ways: by working at a variety of jobs, by talking to workers, or by reading. The labor literature (history, industrial relations, sociology and psychology of work) is immense. We have yet to pull out of this huge "parent body" a respectable handful of items on industrial folklore, either in the form of a bibliography or a critical anthology. Such compilations drawn from non-folkloric sources would be especially valuable to those within the discipline who are unaware of the high quality of labor study parallel to ours.

In preparation for *Only a Miner* and correlative articles, I combined library research, field collecting, and work experience. Given this mix over the years, I have concentrated narrowly on modern blue-collar culture to the exclusion of white-collar material. Also, my studies have de-emphasized both the lore of handicrafts and the lore of radical organization. This personal "centerfield" distinction, of course, is highly arbitrary: my description and analysis of industrial folklore is limited on the one side by crafts and on the other by political movements.

Over time, craft lore itself has not remained a static body of tradition, but has moved from hand workers to new factory hands or contemporary building tradesmen as the Industrial Revolution came to dominate life. To illustrate, for thousands of years, using simple tools, men have cut and joined stone. Their customary behavior and lore predates formal history. Modern "hard hats" on city skyscrapers also carve and place stone, often with complex machines as aids. Although many techniques have changed with the introduction of pneumatic tools and electrically-powered cranes, a residue of behavioral and verbal lore has remained. Stonecutters continue to admonish their apprentices, "Treat the 'rock' with respect for it will outlast you." A precise overview of "Folk Crafts" by Warren E. Roberts, in Richard M. Dorson's *Folklore and Folklife,* delineates "craft" from "art" and "occupation," and points up the folklorist's concern with conventional, preindustrial tradition.

Trade unionists create "labor-lore," holding ideological and symbolic content, which complements the functional lore of work. For example, "Solidarity Forever" has been sung on many picket lines but does not belong to any particular trade. Joe Hill worked as a seaman and stevedore, but, to the degree that he is a legendary labor figure, he does not belong to any mechanical craft group. This bard

can be viewed through the lense of his own Wobbly songs, through Wallace Stegner's novel, or through Gibbs Smith's biography. Of course, there is a continuum itself from the lore of job-conscious workers to that of class-conscious radicals, even when their institutional loyalties are in conflict. The best treatment of the movement within which a set of radicals, largely Communists, discovered and extended a body of lore is Richard A. Reuss's "American Folklore and Left-Wing Politics: 1927–1957" (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1971). A contrastive statement is made by Richard M. Dorson in *America in Legend* (1973) on individualistic workers, loyal to bosses, who "buy the American dream."

Some observers, who are dualists, see craftsmen in establishment terms and factory hands in class conscious terms. Others lump all workers into monistic categories, either conservative or radical. Still others, including myself, judge workers by their plural and complex ideological values—right, center, left, up, between, down. However, in settings beyond the academic research design and beyond the scholarly monograph, polarities and oppositions converge and interact. One need but dip into *Rebel Voices,* Joyce Kornbluh's fine anthology of Wobbly expression, to find radical rhetoric and job wisdom deeply intertwined. Although editor Kornbluh did not perceive herself as a folklorist, her compilation is indispensable to any scholar wishing to grasp industrial culture. Complementary to *Rebel Voices,* in the sense of revealing mutuality of craft pride and social protest, is Philip Foner's *American Labor Songs of the Nineteenth Century.*

Even with a common-sense formula for separating industrial folklore from either craft or radical tradition, one must tread carefully in identifying the work force and workplace, and in selecting a subfield for study. How many job situations can an individual folklorist encompass with a reasonable chance at depth? George Korson collected coal mining material for four full decades and was deeply distressed at the end that so much was left undone. Whole occupations in the United States have vanished before any ethnographers prepared documentary sound recordings or films of any sort. Whole occupations are newly created with their own esoteric languages and special codes while we undertake trial lists of the old.

Where does a folklorist start? Are farm hands to be included in our surveys? For decades folklorists were drawn to rural culture,

and it was relatively easy, for example, to collect field hollers in the Mississippi Delta or planting customs on the prairie. Nevertheless, no folklorists have begun study in new factories-in-the-fields—great food processing plants owned by financial conglomerates. In reality, many of us know far more about the lettuce boycott than the lettuce-packing shed.

A second troublesome area in identifying all the creators of work tradition is that of marginal people in socially ostracized callings— prostitutes, thieves, confidence men, hustlers in every walk of life. We know that scholars in dialectology have long been attracted to the cant and argot of the underworld. Similarly, modern sociological journals are rich in case studies of deviant life style. Ideally, folklorists in new industrial areas armed with fresh perspectives will build on former studies of the special speech and styles of criminal and near-criminal elements.

Does a notion of the marginal worker also extend to the unemployed? Labor statisticians have great trouble in counting all the unemployed, including persons too discouraged to continue to seek work and persons too young or too old to be counted. Yet these "in-and-out" workers also carry considerable lore. Who has collected the anecdotes swapped in unemployment lines around the country? How many folklorists know the colloquial phrase "rocking-chair money"? A single song title illuminates a problem in classification. In 1940 Champion Jack Dupree recorded "Warehouse Man Blues" (Okeh 05656), a musical complaint not about a warehouseman, but rather about the recipient at a relief warehouse who has been issued canned grapefruit juice instead of solid food.

In defining and counting, how do we treat borderline workers such as members of the armed forces, professional athletes, or hobbyists of deep commitment? In a former age, unionists often viewed soldiers or guardsmen as bitter enemies, while recently labor unions of federal employees have called for the organization of servicemen and women into their ranks. Clearly soldiers share an ancient body of tradition—is it to be categorized as occupational? Many athletes now figure among the highest paid employees in the United States. Is a football star less a worker than a pilot, a television anchor woman, or a Broadway actor?

It is axiomatic that leisure is a governing force in modern life. Leisure "work" also complicates the task of charting the labor force.

The museum art curator enters his place of work every morning as does the janitor or sanitation engineer. At times the curator is joined by a wealthy collector or patron who works with him on a special project. Does this shared activity of curator and patron link them as workers? A similar problem in perception of role is illustrated as we distinguish two workers in leather: the drop-out who crafts sandals, often working long hours at low pay; the shoe-factory tender in a semi-automated industry. Perhaps the best statement of differential work identity is the musician's equip, "Don't let your day job interfere with your night time music-making." To reiterate, curator and patron, sandal maker and machine tender, or amateur and professional musician all have lore. How folklorists analyze this status and lore is a serious disciplinary concern.

Finally, an industrial folklorist in the United States must question the relationship of the work force to discrete immigrant and racial groups. When are "labor" and "ethnic" parallel words; when are they polar words? Folklorist Linda Dégh, born in Hungary, visited the Illinois-Indiana "Ruhr" (East Chicago, Calumet City, Hammond, Whiting, Gary) during 1964 to study the acculturation process which, in half-a-century, transformed Hungarian peasants into American steelworkers. Within the total body of ethnic studies, her field trip was modest, but within folklore it was significant in that it accepted workers in heavy industry as members of folk society. Previously, Jacob A. Evanson had collected and published many excellent steelworkers' songs from Pittsburgh, and was the first in this rich field. Without diminishing his contribution, we can state that he focused on songs, and not on the kinds of questions—ethnological or sociological—which interested Professor Dégh. Richard M. Dorson and his Indiana University students have continued Linda Dégh's work; some of their findings are available in *Indiana Folklore* (1977).

It goes without saying, that the lore found in Gary was widely generated: the plant gate, union hall, boarding house table, church social. Hungarian immigrants and their descendants are not alone in the Calumet region, which includes a veritable "league of nations," all making steel. Lore is also presented to workers by artists who do not make steel. Bill Monroe as a young man came from Kentucky to Whiting, where he worked in an oil refinery, and also performed old-time music for fellow workers. In time, he and

brother Charlie widened their audience through a Gary radio program. We know much about Monroe's greatness as the "father of bluegrass music," but no one who has written about him has explored his special roles, either as an articulator or as a reflector of blue collar energy in Gary.

One can draw a parallel illustration. To know the life of Mississippi bluesman Muddy Waters is to hear slow cotton-chopping rhythms transformed into powerful urban blues compositions—soul music now played in Gary's steel mill neighborhoods. What "foreign" musicians complement the positions of Monroe and Waters? Can one folklorist study all of this music? Does a new field-worker station himself at the furnace hearth, the personnel office, or the juke joint? Are our commitments strong enough to push us to steel not only where it is shaped physically, but also where the expressive life of its workers is shaped? It is entirely possible that future research in industrial culture will belong more to labor historians, industrial sociologists, or ethnic studies specialists than to folklorists, unless we magnify our efforts in countless mill towns— in all the American Garys.

Because few folklorists will master research skills in distinct work areas—multi-ethnic, blue or white collar, craft or political—it will always be necessary to complement field experience with reading. Each new investigator might well begin deliberately by seeking material seldom found on folklore reading lists: a sociological description of an occupational group, a worker's personal memoir, a picture book of a trade, an illustrated catalog of craft objects, a reminiscent oral history, a formal trade union history, a proletarian novel, a technological lexicon. Eventually, any of these varied writings will lead back to formulations and usages within our discipline.

To the best of my knowledge, Benjamin A. Botkin was the first scholar to accept "industrial folklore" as a discrete term of categorization. He approached work and union lore in his association with collectors employed on various New Deal relief projects in the late 1930s. Beginning as a young English professor in Oklahoma, he had been attracted to folklore, regional studies and local color literature. In the Depression decade these concerns were infused with a sense of social ethics and a restless need for the utilization of his formal learning beyond the classroom. As folklore editor for the

Federal Writers' Project (of the Works Progress Administration), he plunged into a world of guidebooks and living theater, as well as massive collecting programs in rural and urban areas. Botkin's autobiographical comment made at the 1967 meeting of the American Folklore Society still speaks to scholars drawn to activism: On the Project "I made the workers' . . . social problems so much mine that 'living lore,' folk-say, myths, and symbols came alive for me in a very personal and practical way and I acquired not only a social point of view but a liberal social education."

In the summer of 1938 Botkin became national editor of the Federal Writers' Project folklore program. Much of the collecting previous to his appointment had focused on local data for the American Guide Series. Botkin now faced the challenge of considerable occupational lore that was not only contemporaneous but too "raw" to fit into conventional niches. At year's end, reporting to his academic colleagues in the Modern Language Association, he noted "the predominance of industrial and occupational interests in the folklore of the metropolis."

An early WPA folklore anthology from New York, "Chase the White Horse" (completed but unpublished), included taxicab dialogue sequences, needle trades' monologues, and various dramatic sketches. Such material, from the Project's Living Lore Unit, was first labeled "folk stuff" or "folksay." Its presentation in imaginative story-telling style differed, for several reasons, in tone and format from previous publications of sea chanties and cowboy ballads. Some of the Writers' Project collectors were involved in the proletarian fiction movement of the decade, and, as Marxist activists, held strong beliefs about the role of art as a social weapon. Also, trained folklorists wanted very much to go beyond providing "make-work" for writers. Alan Lomax, Ben Botkin, Herbert Halpert, Charles Seeger, and others desired to reach great numbers of citizens with their findings. Wide diffusion of knowledge about workers was seen as an imperative by intellectuals during Franklin D. Roosevelt's improvisatory social experiment, The New Deal.

I do not know who first combined the words "industrial" and "folklore" in a generic sense. However, the new term appeared as a descriptive subject title on a WPA fieldworker's mimeographed data sheet by Levi C. Hubert (January 3, 1939). Hubert used it to cover an interview with several officials of the Brotherhood of

Sleeping Car Porters in their Manhattan union hall. I assume that late in 1938, one or several Project writers, in field data reports, moved from subject-head titles for particular groups (such as sandhogs, hackies, ironworkers, plasterers, seamen) to the general term "industrial folklore." If indeed the new combination actually originated in New York, it caught on in Chicago. There, during 1939, "industrial folklore" was widely used by Jack Conroy and Nelson Algren to cover their field collecting. Conroy is best remembered for his early depression novel, *The Disinherited,* and Algren for his many novels of urban life.

The Archive of Folk Song at the Library of Congress is one of the present depositories of WPA folklore material. Among thousands of yellowed mimeographed sheets is a four-page typescript (July 13, 1939) of a "Staff Conference in Industrial Folklore" at which Algren and Conroy both participated. Algren announced a proposed volume of workers' documents similar to *These Are Our Lives,* a series of southern life histories edited by W. T. Couch. Unfortunately, the projected Chicago book, "A Real Chance to Work," was not published before or after the WPA was dismantled. Something of the flavor of the July conference is sensed by noting that Algren read to his peers a then-recently collected garment item "The Pluck-Trimmer."

Conroy's industrial folklore remained unpublished until 1944, when Botkin used seven items in his first popular anthology, *A Treasury of American Folklore.* Conroy's treatment of the material was that of reworking the original interviews into narrative sketches. In 1953 another Conroy selection, more descriptive in nature, appeared: "Freight Car Repair Yard Pranks" from "Chicago Industrial Folklore" in *A Treasury of Railroad Folklore.* In his urban anthology, *Sidewalks of America,* Botkin published a number of excellent bits of building and construction trades lore. Some of these "sidewalk" items came from New York's Marion Charles Hatch, in my judgement, one of the best of the New Deal urban collectors in his fidelity to material and integrity in presentation. The *Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology, and Legend* contained a succinct statement by Botkin on "Industrial Lore," thus giving the new entry a particular identity.

While some WPA collectors absorbed workers' speech and stories, others gathered thousands of examples of occupational folk art.

Without question, the Index of American Design is the single New Deal project of greatest significance to work-oriented folklorists. The Index was organized by Holger Cahill as part of the Federal Arts Project, and its workers prepared 17,000 watercolor renderings of art and craft objects used from colonial times through the end of the nineteenth century. This is not the place to select a particular item (carousel animal, ship's figurehead, weathervane, scrimshaw) for special attention. Rather, new fieldworkers can turn to two fine selections from the Index edited by Erwin Christensen and Clarence Hornung.

I stress attention to folk art, exhibit catalogs, art history, and photo-journalism because industrial folklore will never come alive until we know Lewis Hine, Holger Cahill, or Walker Evans as well as we know Francis James Child, John Avery Lomax, or Benjamin A. Botkin. As important as it is to see and understand craft objects, it is also necessary that we keep abreast of recent studies in New Deal art or documentary photography (for example, books by Francis V. O'Connor or F. Jack Hurley). Many murals installed in public buildings during the Rooseveltian years detailed traditional work processes; some also treated heroic figures of the labor movement. Similarly, Farm Security Administration photographers caught both the texture of work and of workers' lives. It may seem unusual to view a wall mural by Ben Shahn or Reginald Marsh and a portrait by Dorothea Lange or Russell Lee as something documenting industrial folklore. Nevertheless, these individuals and their fellow artists shared many of Botkin's values, and, in a sense, became New Deal ethnographers without formal credentials.

Some folklorists feel content to leave craft objects, postoffice murals, or documentary photographs to art historians. Fortunately, in recent years, dramatic attention has been directed to crafts by students of folklife and material culture committed to new standards in their research. To name but one of them, John M. Vlach, at the University of Texas, completed in the summer of 1977 a major exhibition catalog of Afro-American crafts for the Cleveland Museum of Art. This sophisticated catalog adds perspective to former notions of work lore.

To look back two decades into the history of our discipline, Don Yoder, at the University of Pennsylvania, is largely responsible for

developing American folklife study out of European regional eth-
nology. His thorough approach and his breadth of knowledge, as
well as the wide interests of his peers, is found in a current collec-
tion *American Folklife*. It will be obvious to readers of Yoder's
anthology that the material favored, metaphorically or literally, by
most American folklife specialists is still the boat or the basket,
and that the object itself gets billing over its maker. Notwithstand-
ing this disclaimer, I am optimistic that some students of material
culture will soon be drawn to industry as they follow hand skills
and work habits into the industrial maze.

I have already touched on the early interest in word study by
members of the American Folklore Society, and cited a few articles
from *American Speech*, but have not treated the popularization of
dialectology. During 1910 a young Baltimore newspaperman wrote
a provocative article for the *Evening Sun* on "The Two Englishes,"
noting that a second form, American English, existed side by side
with its mother tongue. Henry L. Mencken's interest in vernacular
speech and linguistic change led in 1919 to his influential book,
The American Language. This study grew through four editions,
many revisions, two major supplements, and an eventual one-vol-
ume redaction in 1963 of the whole by Raven McDavid.

From the beginning, Mencken collected and listed occupational
words as part of his major study. Hence, an execellent starting
point for any contemporary field researcher who treats workers'
speech is the portion of *The American Language* on "American
Slang" in which are found 70 occupational word lists with extensive
supporting bibliographic data. Mencken drew on a New York Fed-
eral Writers' Project unpublished manuscript, "Lexicon of Trade
Jargon," as well as his voluminous personal files and sharp memory
to catch the proverbial tones of men and women at work.

Mencken is well known to modern folklorists in the United
States. Unknown is Charles F. Harding who published "The Social
Anthropology of American Industry" (*American Anthropologist*,
1955). His paper was the very first in this influential journal to deal
with modern industry; however, it is neither a descriptive ethnog-
raphy of any particular scene, nor is it sensitive to the expressive
life generated within a workplace. Rather, it is a survey of previous
studies of social organization in the factory, largely by sociologists

and human-relations-in-industry observers. It seems strange in re-
trospect that after Korson, Botkin, and Mencken had already pub-
lished key works, which were not cited by Harding, he ended his
paper by calling it "a crude chart to the areas where anthropologists
and their allies have not yet penetrated."

The first anthropologist seriously to penetrate American indus-
try was Eliot D. Chapple. Born at Salem, Massachusetts in 1909 he
received his doctorate in anthropology from Harvard in 1933.
Through the New Deal and World War II years he combined re-
search in industrial relations and psychiatric work at the Harvard
Medical School. His paper "Organization Problems in Industry"
appeared in 1941 in the opening number of *Applied Anthropology*.
During the previous year Chapple had read a paper on "Anthropo-
logical Engineering" at the annual meeting of the American An-
thropological Association. The best statement of his contribution,
as well as a survey of the work of his peers, is found in "Applied
Anthropology in Industry," a paper in A. L. Kroeber's *Anthropol-
ogy Today*. Few contemporary folklore students are now interested
in Chapple's close observation and measurement of worker be-
havior, nor in his development of a machine, the Interaction
Chronograph. However, I do feel that Chapple should be remem-
bered as a pioneer who attempted to pull colleagues, in his words,
away from "nostalgia for the vanishing primitive" to the factory
floor.

I call attention to past articles by Chapple and Harding because
I assume that anthropologists and folklorists are allies, and I know
that the former scholars have paid long attention to distant people
within primitive societies. Folklorists can only benefit if their col-
leagues turn disciplinary skills to modern industry. During the
mid-1960s some American anthropologists, especially concerned
with tension in ethnic conflict, initiated courses in urban anthro-
pology. Within these course offerings, a few students came to see
workers and ethnic minorities in parallel terms. A recent journal,
beginning in 1972, which reflects these concerns is *Urban Life and
Culture*.

Another mark of new times occurred at the 1972 meeting of the
American Anthropological Association, when Frederick C. Gamst
read a paper "Toward a Method of Industrial Ethnology." Now
a professor at the University of Massachusetts in Boston, he also had

six years experience as a railroader. This employment led to a series of technical papers on railroading as well as a general formulation on industrial ethnology. In 1977 he edited a special issue on this subject for the *Anthropological Quarterly* and included contributions by five colleagues on lake seamen, a china factory, railroad time, gyppo loggers, and Alaska carpenters. Essentially, Gamst sees continuity in anthropological attention from tribal through industrializing to industrial society. He is guided by a holistic view of culture as behavioral rules, and urges continuous participant observation in industry.

Gamst does not call for changed ethnological methods in new settings; his personal commitment is to empirical rather than impressionistic research. Although he views industrial ethnology as part of the large study of all occupations, old and new, he is alert to problems faced by students who wish to immerse themselves in industry. Does the ethnologist join a trade union and seek out hidden, job-related cliques? Does he publish "secrets" which may threaten the security of his subjects (fellow workers)? Because of the status of workers in modern industry, Gamst cautions his peers: "Pragmatic and educated workingmen will not accept unverifiable artistic conjecture on their alleged 'Apollonian' or 'Dionysian' integrations of culture. . . . We can get by with far less in writing about coal miners than we can in writing about the Siriono."

From the scant list of recent anthropological monographs dealing with American blue collar life, I cite but one in order to inform folklorists of correlative material. *The Portland Longshoremen: A Dispersed Urban Community* by William Pilcher is part of a series of recent studies in cultural anthropology. Its author worked for a decade as an Oregon longshoreman before studying anthropology formally in a university; he returned home to the Willamette docks to complete his thesis. His notion that occupation defines a community as much as does territory does not seem too bold to me. Rather, I am drawn to his description of roughneck norms: the role of the dockers' union in shaping cohesive identity for its members, the use of kinship in recruiting and training, the dependence on ritual, legend, memorate, and argot for status maintenance. Pilcher makes no special concessions to folkloristics. Instead, he writes conversationally about "shape ups," "star gangs," "Chinese lotteries," "tight stows," "goon squads," "fink halls," "Bloody Thursday," "cargo

inspectors," "wooden bolts," "pie cards," "dropping falls," and "weasels." It is our task, I feel, to complement his ethnography by comparative folkloric study (the traditions of east and west coast longshoremen, or longshoremen and oil-field workers, for example), as well as by close analysis of the particular events or enactments noted in his book.

In strong contrast to the paucity of writings by industrial anthropologists is the overwhelming body of occupational and industrial sociology. The formal history of American folklore reveals no dialogue with sociologists comparable to that by us with anthropologists, yet we shall never understand blue collar culture if we neglect the sociology of industry. Suffice it to say, the factory may be a new field to us, but it has been an appropriate sociological field for more than a century. One of the earliest comprehensive accounts of English working class life came from Frederick Engels. Among the founders of modern academic sociology were two pioneers, Emile Durkheim and Max Weber, who made work central to the discipline. In the United States, attention to labor was shared by institutional economists led by John Rogers Commons and empirical sociologists led by Robert Ezra Park. After the first World War, Park encouraged his students at the University of Chicago to investigate marginal workers (such as jack rollers and taxi-dance-hall girls) on the streets and in the slums. All of Park's disciples, delving into social pathology, saw and heard folk expression on the job, and reported some of it in journals and monographs. One example is Nels Anderson's *The Hobo*; in many respects this book anticipated George Korson's initial collection, *Songs and Ballads of the Anthracite Miner*.

During 1924, Elton Mayo, an Australian psychologist and friend of Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown, began to study the connection between illumination, fatigue, and productivity at a Hawthorne Western Electric plant (Chicago). This seminal investigation helped to shift the Parkian experiential focus on workers' lives to the study of patterns of interpersonal and hierarchical relations within a factory setting. Industrial sociology as a scientific subdiscipline was shaped for several decades by these Mayo studies and their resulting controversies. After World War II, Everett C. Hughes, returning to Park's direction, introduced a second generation of young sociologists to janitor and physician, factory hand and union leader.

In 1952 the first textbook to be named *Industrial Sociology* by Delbert Miller and William Form, represented a synthesis of numerous early case studies stemming from Park, and well-developed theoretical positions stemming from Mayo. Folklorists, long conscious of difference between rural and urban life, will only gain strength in the years ahead by arming themselves with the valuable findings of their many predecessors in sociology.

During the 1960s, some folklore teachers and students, influences by dynamic sociological and anthropological models, began to use the phrase "urban folklore." In part, they drew on country lore carried to town, on immigrant or ethnic traditions, and on occupation. A Wayne State University conference on "The Urban Experience and Folk Tradition" (reported in *JAF*, 1972) served to raise issues rather than to resolve ambiguities. The central problem in conceptualizing urban folklore is found in the mix of region and work, for some folklorists tend to see city dwellers as mountaineers or farmers away from former homes and tasks. Our central questions are: what patterns and bonds in city life generate special lore? what sets off work activity from city residence?

Throughout, I have limited my paper to data and investigators within the United States, as if industrial tradition were not studied elsewhere. While a young shipwright, I bought Swedish handsaws, and learned to recognize exotic hardwoods from far realms. As a scholar I do use overseas reports. Here, one must call for a needed guide to studies in industrial folklore around the world.

In bringing this paper to a close, I note a pitfall inherent in bibliographic-semantic queries and surveys. Often the quest for pioneer writings or first usages leads to important findings, but also to material that is dated and desiccated. It would be unfair to readers if I failed to indicate excitement over the years in readings about work—novels, poetry, autobiography, history. A few personal experiences as a waterfront worker and building tradesman remain vivid; these are heightened by memorable readings which helped me to frame these events. No folklore bibliographer should pretend that the color and the pulse of work do not resonate more fully in popular fiction or ephemeral reportage than in our learned journals or technical monographs. If this point needs elaborating, I suggest a few favorites: the novel of a stevedore leader's murder, *A Funeral for Sabella* by Robert John Travers; Joseph Mitchell's *New Yorker* report (September 17, 1949) "The Mohawks in High Steel," also

available in Edmund Wilson's *Apologies to the Iroquois*; and the best industrial ethnography by a participant which I have ever read, Katherine Archibald's *Wartime Shipyard.*

Drawing upon American collectors and interpreters as diverse as Korson, Botkin, Mencken, and Park, I have used their achievement to shore up the notion that the factory, as place, is an appropriate folkloric field, and that industrial work, as process, is a field within which folklore emerges and is altered. This formulation will not seem startling to students who have already rid themselves of the antiquary's mantle. Yet I am conscious of a contradiction within my position, when I progress from the mine shaft and textile mill to the assembly line and computer room. In essence, I want to see all workers' culture studied, but I am not comfortable with enlarging the term "folk."

As a scholar I have long accepted limited views of folk society and traditional behavior. Similarly, I have felt at ease with conventional methods in research. As a citizen I have wanted to see marginal or overlooked persons, including industrial workers, achieve their "place in the sun." I continue to be partial to people labeled "folk" and treasure their lore. In examining the twin roles of study and action, I know also that scholarly conduct does affect the identity and esteem of the subjects of my research. Accordingly, I am not immune from responsibility beyond the academy. Hence, the kinds of questions asked here about bus drivers, boat builders, airline pilots, and television anchor women, are not only conceptual, but are also civic and moral in nature. Scholarly choices of field or method do have consequence in the larger society. It seems to me that our sensitivity is heightened and our reports strengthened if we can articulate and face openly the dilemma posed by the cliche, "scholarship *versus* activism."

This attempt to make palpable a contradiction in my own thought, as well as attention in this paper to past definitions and early writings, springs from a hope that some folklorists in the future will resolve or bypass such ambivalence. Ideally, less torn than their predecessors, they will manage to explicate old lore in new industrial settings as well as seek fresh patterns in work-oriented expression.

Some of this "future" is already past. From 1972 through 1976 the Smithsonian Institution invited many AFL-CIO unionists to present or display their skill and traditions on the National Mall during the annual Festival of American Folklife. As an early consultant I had an opportunity to encourage the Smithsonian's initial interest in "labor-lore." Working with Ralph Rinzler, I also helped young researchers to view today's building site, loading dock, or factory floor as a field—a setting for expressive life.

Good questions were raised in live situations at the Festival. When Pasamaquoddy basket weavers or Kentucky sorghum makers were invited to the Mall, we never questioned their status as folk. When we boldly expanded our sights to include plumbers and electricians in hard hats, we felt some anxiety. When we reached out to theatrical costume designers and airline controllers, we had to ask whether we were dealing narrowly with folklife or broadly with American experience. Obviously, all workers invited to the Festival brought some traditions, but folklorists, caught up in the rush of a very large happening, could not decide on the spot whether to investigate in totality these traditions and their carriers. Perhaps the most difficult question posed by modern workers on the Mall was whether they had been invited to display skill traditions or to make overt political statements about their status as unionists.

In bringing "labor-lore" to the Mall, I attempted to resolve by an activist stance a few of the problems raised throughout this paper In *Only a Miner* I attempted a more formal and academic resolution of these same problems. In summary, I sought in the book to combine historical and functional modes within select ballad case studies. Technically, I detailed the full chronology of and probed for the particular role of many coal songs. Although my goal was not always achieved, I used a set of songs to mark the dialectical interplay between pride-in-skill and social statement. Many American workers live with this dualism all of their lives, buoyed up by productive roles and buffeted by shame in blue collar station. It seems appropriate to me to place a single case study and even a notion of industrial lore between these poles of craft/job pride and political/social position. Ultimately, my queries are also to be seen as balanced between the wisdom born on the job and

the philosophic constructs projected in humanistic studies. This balance may serve to hold a single paper together, but yet fail to resolve the very large contradiction between study and action which envelopes all folklorists.

Students of folklore in recent years have turned widely to new fields, exciting in a period of disciplinary expansion. Three examples are home movies, drug use, van decoration. Hopefully, young folklorists will reach simultaneously in many directions, not only into chic and jejune paths, but also into prosaic fish canneries or garment lofts and impersonal insurance trusts or regulatory bureaus. We already know that Manhattan ironworkers hold a rich folkloric tradition, as do cannery hands and garment cutters. After a skyscraper is erected and partitioned into steno pools and director's lounges, do we also seek the lore of the typist and executive? The ironworker's skill establishes the physical site where white collar lore emerges. But is this the only connection between hard hat and stenographer? This final rhetorical question returns us directly to the deep meaning of governing terms within our discipline —*folk society, folklore, folklife.*

Regardless of the scope of these inquiries and the strength of our nets, conventional distinctions between blue and white collar artisans, or between rural and urban life, will not vanish because folklorists identify factories as fields, or go on to plant arcane concepts in these fields. We are far less likely to influence the large issues in industrial life than to be changed ourselves by new settings and strategies. Perhaps as folklorists we shall enter new fields but still remain unchanged, tied to old formulas and habits. Perhaps we shall change considerably but still be perceived by others as quaint antiquarians. Perhaps we shall have to return, once more, to the many meanings stamped into the very name of our calling, *folklore.* Is this ancient word appropriate for the twenty-first century? Only time and resolution will tell.

Work is but one of many human activities in which traditional symbols and codes are generated, altered, and perpetuated, but the industrial site is a place of such force and magnitude that folklorists overlook it at the expense of disciplinary atrophy. There is risk in entering the modern factory, but the challenge and rewards are great. Folklorists, ethnographers, and literary scholars have no real choice other than to overcome grime and clatter and to follow expressive culture from sylvan glade to factory and counting house,

to shop and mill. For many, the assembly line stretches metaphorically from the neighborhood shopping mall to the outlying airport, from River Rouge to the National Mall. Wherever industrial workers tend this long line, cultural documentarians, under all banners, need to be.

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