

pants. One effect of common participation is that the frequency, duration, and other characteristics of actions such as gazes or smiles, once regarded by many investigators as belonging exclusively to one participant, can be deeply affected in various ways by the actions of the partner.

The notion of common participation emphasizes the deep interconnectedness of things in interaction. The full implications of this basic phenomenon continue to be explored by investigators. On the one hand, common participation appears to complicate some more traditional approaches to interaction research. On the other hand, common participation provides a powerful resource for investigators. By capitalizing on the complex network of relationships among the many different actions by all participants, investigators not only can facilitate research on the process of interaction itself, but also can make more effective use of interaction processes in examining other phenomena of interest, such as individual differences and cognitive processes.

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## FOLKLORE

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Term coined in 1846 by the British antiquarian William John Thoms, apparently a translation of the German term *Volkskunde*, introduced in 1787. Thoms's "good Saxon compound, Folklore" has achieved wide currency in the world's languages (including prominently Romance and Slavic languages), though sometimes in conjunction or competition with more local coinages. Thoms defined folklore essentially by enumerating some of its forms: "The manners, customs, observances, superstitions, ballads, proverbs, etc., of the olden time." Folklore names both the traditional cultural forms and the discipline devoted to their study, though in recent years the term *folkloristics* has gained increasing currency for the latter.

The concept of folklore emerged in the late eighteenth century as part of a unified vision of language, culture, literature, and ideology in the service of romantic nationalism. For Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744-1803), the German philosopher whose romantic conception of *das Volk* and folk tradition informs all subsequent understandings of folklore, the possession of a common language was the touchstone of a people's distinctiveness, the source that gave rise to and sustained their sense of themselves as a separate, unique, social entity; language embodied the character, the inner being, of a Volk.

Moreover, language represented the means of transmitting the distinctive traditions of a *Volk* across the generations, thus representing the instrument for that progressive cultivation of faculties that Herder identified as culture. In Herder's conception, culture and tradition found their highest and truest expression in the poetry of the folk, its folk song and folklore. With the modern fragmentation of humanistic thought and the concomitant quest for disciplinary autonomy, however, that formerly unified vision has largely come undone. Anthropologists, linguists, literary scholars, and folklorists have all continued to maintain an interest in folklore but have defined it from their own disciplinary vantage points, emphasizing certain features or aspects at the expense of or in opposition to others. Instead of proposing a single definition of folklore, it seems most useful to identify those definitional foci that have remained salient (though in various guises and formulations) as guides to the concerns that continue to attract interest and attention to folklore.

### Traditionality

There is no single idea more central to conceptions of folklore than tradition. Tradition has figured prominently in definitions of culture in general, but folklorists tend to place especially great emphasis on traditionality as a criterial attribute of folklore. This emphasis, in its various guises, was a response to the powerful challenge to traditional authority, in Max Weber's classic sense, by the modern ideologies of the Protestant Reformation, the Enlightenment, and industrial capitalism, in which reason, individualism, innovation, and progress were paramount values. The deepening consciousness of the great transition to modernity that stimulated the discovery of folklore rested in part on a perceived contrast between those societies in which traditional authority was dominant and those emergent forms of social organization governed by the rule of practical reason. The

interest in folklore that burgeoned in the nineteenth century was part of the intellectual effort of that watershed era to comprehend the fundamental changes represented by the advent of modernity. The legacy of this effort still colors the popular but distorted conception of folklore as folly, superstition, and falsehood, anachronistic leftovers from an earlier stage in human social development since transcended by the scientific rationalism of modern civilization.

There is, however, a counterimage of folklore that is no less a product of the intellectual currents just mentioned, namely, the view of folklore as attractive, colorful, emotional, natural, and authentic. This may be termed the romantic view of folklore, in contrast to the rational one. Part of the Herderian legacy, this romanticization of folklore stemmed in part from a reaction against the cold rationalism of the Enlightenment, insisting instead that in folklore lay the foundation for an authentic national culture, true to the spiritual and historical integrity of a people. This view provides the source of romantic nationalist glorifications of folklore, the nostalgic quest for cultural roots, folk arts, crafts, and music revivals, the "folklorico" phenomenon, folklife preservation programs, and so on. From either the rationalistic or the romantic perspective, however, folklore is viewed overwhelmingly as declining in the face of modernity, and this consciousness of epochal change provides much of the stimulus for our interest in folk traditions.

The term tradition is conventionally used in a dual sense, to name both the process of transmission of an isolable cultural element through time and also the elements themselves that are transmitted in this process. To view an item of folklore as traditional is to see it as having temporal continuity, rooted in the past but persisting into the present in the manner of a natural object. There is, however, an emergent reorientation taking place among students of tradition, away from this naturalistic view of tradition as a cultural inheritance rooted in the past and toward an understanding of tradition as symbolically constituted in the present. Tradition, so reconceptualized, is

seen as a selective, interpretive construction, the social and symbolic creation of a connection between aspects of the present and an interpretation of the past. This view of tradition as an interpretively assigned meaning not only provides an illuminating basis for the critical understanding of the idea of folklore itself as a symbolic construct, but also opens the way for investigations of folklore-based cultural revival movements, the use of tradition as a mechanism of social control, the modern construction of invented traditions (such as Royal Jubilees or May Day rallies) as ways of giving symbolic resonance and authority to modern social formations, and the very need for traditionalization itself—the social need to give meaning to our present lives by linking ourselves to a meaningful past. Such lines of investigation may seem to challenge the insistence of more conservative folklorists on distinguishing between folklore and folklorism, the genuine and the spurious, the authentic and the concocted, but they need not diminish our interest in demonstrably old forms. Rather, they provide an integrative critical perspective that comprehends both the materials and processes of folklore and the discipline devoted to their study in terms of the continuous social process of traditionalization.

A further implication of the centrality of tradition to conceptions of folklore has been the tendency to emphasize the collective, ready-made, stereotyped nature of folklore forms. Traditionality implies supraindividuality, insofar as it involves intergenerational transmission, continuity, and customary authority within a social group. In addition, prevailing models of the nature of folk society tend to view it as essentially homogeneous; in the words of U.S. anthropologist Robert Redfield, "in the ideal folk society, what one man knows and believes is the same as what all men know and believe." Linguistic theory has also been influential in this regard, as scholars have extended Ferdinand de Saussure's linguistic distinction between *langue* and *parole* to the contrast between folklore and written literature, seeing folklore as *langue*, collectivized, socialized, persistent traditional form, the creation and possession of the

community at large. While folkloric variation has long been of real interest to folklorists and much scholarly effort has been devoted to the comparative analysis of versions and variants of particular items of folklore, the standard of reference has been the idealized, generalized folk tradition, seen as a communal product. Hence, too, the imputed anonymity of folklore; individuality of expression is seen as totally subsumed by the homogeneity of the collective.

In recent years, however, largely under the influence of performance-centered approaches, greater emphasis has been placed on individuality and creativity in folklore. Examination of the PERFORMANCE of folklore in concrete situations of use has provided a productive framework within which to study the interplay of tradition and innovation in the actual conduct of social life. Folklore texts have come to be seen not simply as realizations of a normative standard, but as emergent, the product of the complex interplay of communicative resources, social goals, individual competence, community ground rules for performance, and culturally defined event structures. Tradition, the collective, the communal, the conventional, are not forsaken here; rather, the individual and the creative are brought up to parity with tradition in a dialectic that is played out within the context of situated action, viewed as a kind of practice.

### Social Base

The prefix "folk" in folklore suggests that part of the essence of folklore resides in its social base. The question "Who are the folk?" looms large in any consideration of the nature of folklore and the history of the discipline devoted to its study. Conceptions of the social base of folklore may be summarized in terms of three broad perspectives, with the understanding that each perspective involves nuances and further distinctions.

The term folk was first introduced into social theory in late eighteenth-century Germany and became one of the formative

concepts in the development of nineteenth-century sociology as part of the great evolutionary and typological tradition represented by the work of Wilhelm Wundt (1832–1920), William Graham Sumner (1840–1910), Ferdinand Tönnies (1855–1936), Émile Durkheim (1855–1917), and others. The features attributed to the ideal folk society are most concisely summarized in the abstract of Redfield's synthetic essay, "The Folk Society," published in 1947: "Understanding of society may be gained through construction of an ideal type of primitive or folk society as contrasted with modern urbanized society. Such a society is small, isolated, nonliterate, and homogeneous, with a strong sense of group solidarity. . . . Behavior is traditional, spontaneous, uncritical, and personal. . . ."

Redfield, like the great majority of his predecessors, constructed his model of the folk society as an ideal type, acknowledging that "No known society precisely corresponds with it." In Redfield's schema, folk stands in opposition to urban society, which he leaves for his readers to define by assembling the logically opposite characteristics of folk society. The polar types in these constructions represent the opposite ends of a continuum, along which all empirically occurring societies may be expected to fall. In historical terms, though, the continuum is seen as a directional one: it represents the great evolutionary progression from premodern to modern society. The effect of such theoretical constructs is to reinforce the point that folk society is steadily giving way to progress and that folklore is increasingly incompatible with modern life. Thus, many folklorists orient their work toward rural peoples; members of ethnic groups less far removed from their agrarian past than those who are full participants in modern, urban, technological, mass society; and occupational groups like cowboys, loggers, seamen, or miners, whose work keeps them in close contact with the natural environment.

Another significant aspect of Redfield's formulation is his inclusion under the rubric *folk* of both "tribal and peasant groups." This inclusive scope, however, has been the subject of exten-

sive debate. Many folk theorists, including most folklorists, have reserved the designation folk for peasant peoples, village artisans, and other occupational groups that constitute the lower, less advanced stratum of a complex society. Tribal societies have been seen as qualitatively different social forms, whole—not part—societies in which the primitive modes of existence have retained their full functional integrity. Others, like Redfield, have emphasized the continuities between tribal and peasant societies and have brought these societies within a more unified frame of reference. The issues continue to be debated, often as the basis for the disciplinary differentiation of folklore from anthropology.

Notwithstanding the continuing influence of the traditional conception of folk society, recent thinking about the social base of folklore has begun to depart from the classic view in significant ways. One influential formulation has been advanced by U.S. folklorist Alan Dundes: "The term 'folk' can refer to any group of people *whatsoever* who share at least one common factor. It does not matter what the linking factor is . . . but what is important is that a group formed for whatever reason will have some traditions which it calls its own." Here the notion of the folk has been detached from the evolutionist and typological assumptions of much classic folk theory, but certain key features are retained. Shared tradition remains the essential criterion attribute of the folk group, grounded in shared identity. Crucially, however, this is a limited homogeneity; in place of the essentially complete homogeneity of ideal folk society, Dundes falls back on any single feature of shared identity that can constitute the basis for the formation of a social group. Any such group, as it persists through time and accumulates a body of experience in common, will have its own core of traditions, hence its own folklore. Thus we can find jokes (*see HUMOR*) shared by astronauts, proverbs (*see PROVERB*) current among computer programmers ("Garbage in, garbage out"), and so on. In these terms "Every group has its own folklore" and will continue to do so as long as people continue to come together

in groups. The nature and extent of the folkloric repertoire in these various groups remains to be discovered.

Still another substantial departure from classic folk theory is represented by recent social-interactive and performance-centered approaches to folklore that focus on the structures of social relations that organize the actual use of folklore forms in the conduct of social life. To be sure, certain of the older formulations accord a central place to the kinds of social relations that constitute the essence of folk society, but the new approaches go further yet in their investigations of the social base of folkloric expression by treating it as an empirical problem, examining the structure and dynamics of identity and role relationships in situations of use. Such investigations reveal that folklore may be an expression of differential as well as shared identity, relationships of conflict as well as group unity, social diversity as well as homogeneity. Most important, it appears, the empirical investigation of the social base of folklore in use highlights the ways in which folkloric expression may be constitutive of social relationships, not merely reflections, projections, or correlates of them.

Finally, in Redfield's enumeration of the attributes of the ideal folk society is the criterion of nonliteracy (*see* ORAL CULTURE). As elaborated later in his essay, "The folk communicate only by word of mouth; therefore the communication upon which understanding is built is only that which takes place among neighbors, within the little society itself." The prominence of the verbal channel and oral, face-to-face communication has been a feature of folklore since its inception. Folklorists ever since the late eighteenth century have continued to give pride of place to oral folklore; indeed, some would define folklore itself as "oral literature" or "verbal art" or "literature orally transmitted," though others would insist on the inclusion of customary behaviors and beliefs, material folk culture, and the like. As a rule, modern anthropological folklorists tend to concentrate their efforts on oral genres of folklore, in large part because they

have other theoretical frameworks for the comprehension of other aspects of culture. *See also* ORAL HISTORY.

Another correlate of the emphasis on orality is a widespread emphasis on oral transmission as a criterial attribute of folklore. This has dual implications, highlighting both the medium of transmission and the social configuration of the learning situation. As for the medium of communication, the focus on the oral channel has traditionally been invoked to distinguish folklore from written—especially print—communication. Perhaps the major difference between oral and written language, in the eyes of folklorists, has been the relatively greater capacity of writing to fix a verbal text, inhibiting the kind of flexibility and variability that reliance on oral transmission alone will allow. Such variability, of course, will be conditioned by a range of social and generic factors; forms of oral folklore run the gamut in performance from word-for-word fidelity to a fixed textual standard, as in a curing chant or a PROVERB, to great textual flexibility, as in the telling of a legend (*see* FOLKTALE). Nevertheless, print and literacy do make a difference, and folklorists tend largely to draw the boundaries of the field to exclude forms that depend on the written word, with the exception of a few genres, such as graffiti and autograph verse, which share with the spoken genres the qualities of traditionality, anonymity, and variability.

Also conventionally excluded from the domain of folklore are the modern mass media, such as commercial recordings, radio, film, or television, that use oral language but in ways that contrast significantly with face-to-face spoken interaction. The mass media are disqualified on three counts: (1) they are not rooted in community life but commodified and imposed from without, (2) they are not participatory but are meant to be consumed by a mass audience, and (3) as with print, they are not variable but fixed by the media in which they are communicated.

Modes and styles of learning are implicated by the insistence on orality. Literacy is acquired by formal, institutionalized

teaching and learning, largely foreign to classic folk culture, where informal learning—personalistic, context-linked, and traditional—predominates. To be sure, not all informal learning relies on spoken interaction; folklorists or folklife scholars whose interests extend beyond the verbal forms to include customary behaviors and material folk culture add to the criterion of orality the mechanism of transmission by imitation or customary example. The American Folklife Preservation Act of 1976, for example, stipulates that the forms of expression that constitute folklife "are mainly learned orally, by imitation, or in performance, and are generally maintained without benefit of formal instruction or institutional direction," taking account of both the media of transmission and the social configuration of the learning situation.

#### Aesthetics

Clearly, orality is only one element in each of such labels as "verbal art," "oral literature," and "literature orally transmitted" that designates what is for some folklorists the essential core of folklore; the other is artfulness. Indeed, it was the aesthetic appeal of certain folklore forms that first excited attention in the eighteenth century, well before the coining of the terms *Volkskunde* or folklore or the emergence of a sociology of folk society. The source of one major impulse that led to the discovery and study of folklore was the romantic movement, especially in its more nationalistic guises. In the ideology of romantic nationalism, a distinctive language and literature are the principal vehicles for the expression of national identity, pride, and spirit. Thus a quest for the roots of an authentic, indigenous national literature in folklore began in the eighteenth century with such powerfully influential compilations as Thomas Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1756) and Herder's *Volkslieder* (1778–1779) and reached an apogee, perhaps, in Elias Lönnrot's *Kalevala* (1835), the rallying symbol for Finnish na-

tional culture. The romantic aesthetic glorified folk songs, ballads, fairy tales, legends—the folk genres (*see* GENRE) of poetry and prose—for their vigor, spontaneity, naturalness, emotional impact, and lack of contrivance, and the celebration of folk art has continued to be sustained by such aesthetic standards ever since. *See also* FOLKTALE; ORAL POETRY; SONG.

Interest in verbal art and folk aesthetics has become one of the most vigorous sectors of contemporary development in folklore theory. An especially influential definition of folklore that highlights interest in the aesthetic dimension has been put forward by Dan Ben-Amos: "folklore is artistic communication in small groups," that is, groups "in which people confront each other face to face and relate to each other directly." *See* INTERACTION, FACE-TO-FACE.

One line of analysis, now becoming increasingly influential, centers on the nature and conduct of performance, influenced by the insights of literary theory and symbolic anthropology. Here, the principal interest lies in what constitutes artfulness in speech and action, not only in the formalized genres of verbal art and the symbolic enactments of RITUAL and FESTIVAL but also in the less marked ways of speaking and acting. Those who explore folklore as performance also study the functional role of artfulness in the conduct of social life: to enhance rhetorical efficacy, to elicit the participative energies of an audience, as a medium of reflexivity or self-aggrandizement, as entertainment, and so on. Related to such performance-centered perspectives is ETHNOPOETICS, centrally concerned with the aesthetic patterning of oral literary forms and the problems of translating and rendering them in print in such a way that the artfulness of their oral performance is not lost. A still broader enterprise is ethnoaesthetics, the ethnographic investigation of native systems of aesthetics in their own terms, as these condition the making, consumption, and interpretation of aesthetic productions.

All of these efforts are integrative, in the great intellectual tradition of folklore, resistant to intellectual or disciplinary

compartmentalization as folklore has always been since the first emergence of the concept more than two centuries ago. While the forms of folk expression and the discipline devoted to their study are continuously transformed, the symbolic construction of folklore remains a significant social force, energized by the dynamic processes of traditionalization, ideology, social thought, and the artfulness of everyday life.

■ See also ETHNOMUSICOLOGY; MUSIC, FOLK AND TRADITIONAL.

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# PERFORMANCE

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A mode of communicative behavior and a type of communicative event. While the term may be employed in an aesthetically neutral sense to designate the actual conduct of communication (as opposed to the potential for communicative action), performance usually suggests an aesthetically marked and heightened mode of communication, framed in a special way and put on display for an audience. The analysis of performance—indeed, the very conduct of performance—highlights the social, cultural, and aesthetic dimensions of the communicative process.

### Conceptions of Performance

In one common usage performance is the actual execution of an action as opposed to capacities, models, or other factors that represent the potential for such action or an abstraction from it. In the performing arts this distinction can be seen in the contrast between composed guidelines or models for artistic presentations, such as playscripts or musical scores, and the presentational rendition of those works before an audience. A form of intersemiotic translation is involved here, a shift from