

# IDENTITY, HERITAGE AND TRADITION

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## HERITAGE AND TRADITION REVISITED: TOWARDS THE EUROPEAN ETHNOLOGY FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

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### ABSTRACT

The debate about the public role of ethnology and folklore has been ongoing for some time, and has its parallel in the current debate about an 'applied anthropology'. In Great Britain folklore and ethnology are, at least in institutional terms, virtually absent from higher education institutions. An author set pointers for the future – concentrating on the need for the study of culture to focus on lived experience as well as, and perhaps before, text; the need to revisit the political roots of the discipline in a critical but constructive spirit; and, the need to reconceptualise the region as the theatre of ethnological fieldwork – with a view to developing an ethically aware, evidence-based, policy-oriented and culture-critical European ethnology. Within this broad framework, we need to explore further the issues surrounding cultural mediation as a process for applying, but also generating, cultural knowledge and understanding, and the role(s) that ethnologists do, could, should, and perhaps should not play in that process.

KEY WORDS: socio-cultural anthropology, applied anthropology, European ethnology, folklore, heritage, tradition, the 21st Century.

### ANOTACIJA

Diskusijos apie etnologijos ir folkloro visuomeninį vaidmenį trunka jau gana ilgai ir turi atitikmenis dabartinėse diskusijose „taikomosios antropologijos“ tema. Remdamasis literatūra, praktine patirtimi ir debatais Jungtinės Karalystės europinėje etnologinių tyrimų asociacijoje, straipsnio autorius atskleidžia minėtos disciplinos vystymosi XXI amžiuje problemas ir perspektyvas. Straipsnyje analizuojama daugybė kontekstų, pradedant muzikinėmis tradicijomis ir muzikiniu paveldu, kurie labai veiksmingai pritraukia turistus. Paveldo vertimas preke reikšmingas kultūros sistemai kaip bet kokios naujovės fonui, nes potencialiai gali atvesti prie vietinių gyventojų atitolimo nuo savojo paveldo. Autorius siūlo ateities gaires: akcentuojant kultūros studijų poreikį, skirti tokį pat dėmesį praktikai, išgyventai patirčiai, kaip ir tokios patirties aprašymų tekstui. Jis ragina iš naujo kritiškai, tačiau konstruktyviai aptarti politines disciplinos prielaidas; peržiūrėti regiono, kaip etnologinių ekspedicijų veiklos teatro, sąvoką. Taip, jo nuomone, dera kurti etišką, tyrimus grindžiančią įrodymais, politiškai orientuotą ir kritiškai kultūrą suvokiančią europinę etnologiją.

PAGRINDINIAI ŽODŽIAI: sociokultūrinė antropologija, taikomoji antropologija, europinė etnologija, folkloras, paveldas, tradicija, XXI amžius.

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The debate about the public role of ethnology and folklore has been ongoing for some time, and has its parallel in the current debate about an 'applied anthropology'. Some traditions in European ethnology, in particular the German *Volkskunde*, have a long history during which they suffered ideological instrumentalisation, while others, such as American Folkloristics, have a much shorter history as an established discipline, and have been able to retain a more cheerful optimism with regard to their potential for a critical practice that will serve social progress (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2000).

In Great Britain, where I have been studying and working for over twenty years, folklore and ethnology are, at least in institutional terms, virtually absent from higher education institutions.

Apart from the occasional module taught by an enthusiast in the context of another degree course, the field is represented mainly on the so-called ‘Celtic Fringe’ – Ireland, Scotland and Wales – while in England only the University of Sheffield and the University of the West of England (UWE) in Bristol have dedicated clusters covering a broad spectrum of research areas.<sup>1</sup> There are dedicated chairs in Scotland at Aberdeen and Edinburgh; in Wales, Cardiff has a dedicated cluster, linked with the Museum of Welsh Life. In the Republic of Ireland, there is a large department of Folklore with several professors at University College Dublin and a second, smaller unit at University College Cork, while in Northern Ireland the University of Ulster has created an Academy for Irish Cultural Heritages in 2001. On March 4th, 2005, that Academy hosted the 9th seminar of the United Kingdom’s European Ethnological Research Association, a network established in 2000. With support from the Economic and Social Research Council, the network launched its research seminar series in 2001. The first seven meetings considered the location of European ethnology within the United Kingdom academic context, working towards a developmental framework for ethnology and folklore. At the eighth meeting in November 2004, which explored disciplinary and other research frontiers in European ethnology, a new format was introduced, transforming the seminars into interactive think-tanks rather than the more conventional platform for the presentation of papers to a more or less passive audience. The ninth seminar explored the public role(s) of ethnology and folklore. A key objective of these seminars is to develop perspectives for a discipline which, in the specific context of United Kingdom higher education, is a relatively novel and, as yet, marginal pursuit.

But even in its ‘core’ areas – the German-speaking countries, Central and Northern Europe – European ethnology has been engaged in what can only be characterised as an existential debate since the late 1960s. This debate, which exploded in 1969/1970 at conferences of the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Volkskunde*, is often referred to as the *Namensdebatte* – an accurate enough label for the original debate about an appropriate name for the discipline, which remains unresolved – but this fails to capture the range of issues, nor does it reflect the vigour of the debate, much of which revolves around the vexed question of what, under whatever label, the discipline’s key concerns should be, and how it may ensure relevance for the future. Some have suggested a critical political role for the discipline in the context of European integration, with a view to examining empirically both the ‘unity’ and the ‘diversity’ element of EU rhetoric (cf. Jöhler 1999, Kockel 2002).

### Europe and Identity

Attempts by the EU to create a common European identity have attracted much cynicism. Corresponding to the increasing politicisation of culture, there is now in European policy an extraordinary range of initiatives promoting the exploitation of cultural resources as a key to enhancing the social and economic conditions of local areas (see Jöhler 2002), from long-term programmes like ‘Culture 2000’ or ‘City of Culture’ to limited-life ones like PACTE (see Kilday 1998) or Pleiades (see Åhlström 1999), and it has been suggested that the ‘objectification of culture at national, regional, and local levels’, while ‘not wholly unprecedented’, has ‘become singularly powerful over the last twenty years’ (Thomas 1997: 336). Markers of local culture include food and crafts, fine art, language, folklore, drama, literature, landscapes, and buildings and sites of historical interest (Ray 1998: 3.).

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<sup>1</sup> Specialised clusters exist elsewhere, including, for example, the ethnomusicology cluster at Newcastle.

Alongside established administrative regions, there is a growing number of cultural regions trying to utilise aspects of their cultural identity for the purpose of developing their socio-economic vitality. There is a certain schizophrenia at play in this process, as regions try to overcome disadvantages like peripherality by integrating into the EU and the wider global economy whilst, at the same time, looking ‘inwards into the cultural system in order to redefine the meaning of development according to values within the local culture’ (Ray 1998: 5).

In the new rhetoric that became fashionable at about the same time as neo-liberalist politicians began to dismantle the welfare state across much of Western Europe, giving a boost to local culture and identity is regarded as providing foundations for social and economic growth. For most – and not only the peripheral – regions across Europe, that has meant promoting local and regional ‘culture’ and ‘heritage’ (whatever that may be in each case) as a resource for tourism development in particular. However, the reappraisal of local and regional resources may also revive an ailing primary sector, in particular agriculture and fishing, which can supply raw materials for the production of ‘cultural’ goods, including culinary specialities. Moreover, a growing emphasis on sustainability has meant that the utilisation of regional culture is increasingly expected to enhance rather than diminish a region’s cultural resource base. As an element of cultural identity typically perceived as threatened by social and economic development, language may be a case in point here. There is an increasing number of local and regional initiatives, such as *Menter A Busnes* in Wales (Price et al. 1997) or *Gaillimh le Gaeilge* in Ireland (Nic Uidhir 1996) that are using language as a resource to generate development which, in turn, enhances the language by spreading its use not just in terms of an increased population of speakers but also to include new areas of application, such as IT and the media industries.

### **Home Identities and Public Identities**

Identity has many facets. For the present purpose I want to distinguish two levels of identity, which I call ‘home identities’ and ‘public identities’. Both are relational (as identities always are, despite what some social theorists may say), but their orientation is different. Whereas home identities are directed ‘inward’, public identities are directed ‘outward’ – the former define the individual vis-à-vis him- or herself, the latter project this individual in relation to the outside world. Each level, again, has an ‘inward’ and an ‘outward’ aspect. Taking the level of home identities first, these aspects can be described as ‘autological’ and ‘xenological’ – conveying knowledge about the ‘Self’ and the ‘Other’, respectively. With regard to public identities, I distinguish between a ‘performance’ aspect and a ‘heritage’ aspect. The distinction could also be cast in terms of a constructivist and an essentialist perspective. Since the objectives of EU policy with regard to heritage and identity are inclusion and cohesion, it may be instructive to consider these different identity aspects in that light. This can be represented as a grid.

Speaking Gaelic in Northern Ireland may illustrate these four fields: Autologically, the performance of Gaelic speech acts affirms one’s identity for oneself, while the same act connects with a specific shared heritage. Xenologically, the performance includes an audience who may not speak the language, but understand its significance to the actor, while excluding all – speakers and non-speakers alike – who do not share that specific heritage or have a different understanding of it.

When the EU promotes culture and identity under the heritage banner, it targets the ‘identity fields’ AH and XP. Identity is performed (constructed) before an audience of Others who are a necessary part of ‘the theatre’, whether as accession countries to be brought under the EU umbrella,

the friendly rival across the Atlantic, or the perceived barbarian threat closer to home. This performance is essentially founded on a common European heritage (whatever that may be), essentially constituted by individuals, groups and regions identifying themselves with certain Others who are also, as it were, part of ‘the cast’.

Illustration 1. **Identity categories**

		Public Identities	
		Performance Identities (P)	Heritage Identities (H)
Home Identities	Autological Identities (A)	AP exclusive (the acting Self excludes any audience – the Others)	AH inclusive (the acting Self identifies with certain Others)
	Xenological Identities (X)	XP inclusive (an audience of Others is needed for the performance of the acting Self)	XH exclusive (the acting Self does not identify with certain Others)

From a public policy perspective, treating identities as merely public identities in this way makes sense, and it works up to a point. However, the ultimate arbiter of identities is the individual, and the decision over whether or not identity politics works is made at home. And here the emphasis tends to be on the reverse constellation – AP and XH – which favours exclusion. This need not be confrontational; it is simply an expression of the prevalent spirit of individualism that stresses distinction over sameness, and therefore focuses more on what differentiates the individual from other individuals (even if postmodernist individuals, in their quest for distinctiveness, tend to become increasingly indifferent in practice).

A note of caution may be in order here. Although ‘performance’ has been a fashionable concept in ethnology and other social science disciplines for some time, one needs to be careful in applying it in this context. It carries with it an implication of virtuality: In a performance of ‘Macbeth’, we do not see the Scottish king and political reformer, but someone who is pretending to be him, playing out a rather propagandistic horror story. If we consider identity as performance, are we thereby attributing it a similar ‘as if’ quality – identity as something that we do not really have, but merely pretend to have? The answer will depend on how we regard historicity, heritage and tradition in this context.

## Musical Traditions and Heritage

Attracting tourism has been widely perceived as a remedy for the problems of peripheral regions. The overseas market in particular has been targeted as a growth sector in the development strategies of many such regions. Treating heritage – widely regarded as an essential aspect of identity – as a commodity has implications for the cultural framework that forms the backdrop for any development, leading potentially to the alienation of local people from their (supposed) heritage. Musical heritage has been used in many different regional contexts to attract tourism, and thus provides a good starting point for a broader exploration.

The tourist season in Ireland is relatively short by international standards. There has been a significant shift in the nature of Irish tourism, from a North American market primarily in search of ‘Irish roots’ towards European markets where family links with Ireland are only of minor relevance. Although continuing migration to European destinations may in time create a ‘roots-seeking’ market there, the current shift has obvious implications for the tourism product. According to *Bord Fáilte* (‘Welcome Board’), the Irish tourist authority, the key characteristics of Ireland are scenic landscapes, a quiet and relaxed pace of life, a distinctive heritage and culture, and the absence of mass tourism.

In the 1970s and 1980s, and supported by an international folk music revival, the Republic of Ireland also utilised its musical heritage as a resource for tourism, extending the season and attracting large numbers of visitors to ecologically vulnerable areas by staging a range of international folk festivals, mainly along its western coast.<sup>2</sup> Music has played a crucial role in the development of Ireland as a tourist destination beyond this, not least through the country’s success in the Eurovision song contest, which incidentally produced one of the most fascinating examples of ‘glocalised’ musical heritage – the dance show ‘Riverdance’ and its various imitations. An extended version of this interlude to a Eurovision song contest went on to tour the globe, becoming Ireland’s key cultural export in the 1990s, but it also had a significant impact back home, radically changing the styles of performance in ‘traditional’ Irish dancing and, consequently, raising issues of authenticity.

The importance of musical heritage for regional identity has been asserted since the 1990s in new ways and from an unexpected direction, which, like the popular impact of the dance show ‘Riverdance’, has brought issues of authenticity and legitimacy to the fore. In Northern Ireland, there has been a growing movement demanding the recognition of an ‘Ulster-Scots’ heritage, involving language, literature and music. This heritage is seen by its protagonists as in contrast to, but not necessarily in conflict with, the Irish-Gaelic heritage perceived as the dominant, if not hegemonic heritage discourse in the region. At the same time, this newly discovered heritage also is in contrast with the more ‘traditional’ emphasis on a British heritage linked to the Union with Great Britain as a whole, aligning itself more with a devolved – and perhaps aspiring to be independent – Scotland than with the United Kingdom of the past three centuries. The growth of this movement has been augmented to a degree by the ‘Good Friday Agreement’ of 1998 with its provision for parity of esteem between the different cultures in Northern Ireland (Nic Craith 2002). This has enabled an Ulster-Scots non-material heritage to be performed publicly and with government

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<sup>2</sup> The International Musical Eisteddfod, held annually at Llangollen in North Wales for more than half a century now, while much smaller in scale, is another example of how a particular tradition associated with the identity of a region, as choir music is with Wales, may be utilised as a resource for attracting thousands of tourists each year.

support – a level of support that, in the face of tight budgets, has been a major bone of contention (Vallely 2004). In 2004, the Ulster-Scots epic musical, ‘On Eagle’s Wing’, intended to match the cultural impact and international success of ‘Riverdance’ and its various spin-offs, was launched, targeted primarily at the North American heritage tourist market. The television screening of extracts during Burns Night celebrations on BBC Northern Ireland raised the temperature of the political debate in the region for a while, although it appears that the United States launch of the musical has proved a commercial failure.

At the aforementioned seminar, Adam Kaul (University of Durham) examined the notion of ‘tradition’ in the context of globalization. He noted that for practitioners of expressive folk culture (and indeed for those who study them), globalization can cause considerable anxiety with regard to ‘tradition’. Using traditional music as an example, he asked whether such cultural expressions are viable in a world of increasing consumption and cultural disjuncture. Globalization makes it ever more difficult to draw stable lines around people, places, and cultural traditions. At the same time, ideas of stability, continuity and rooted-ness persist. Kaul argued that there are two connected yet contradictory discourses at work in the notion of ‘tradition’. Firstly, there is the naturalistic postulate of tradition as rooted in a landscape, a people, or a cultural milieu. Secondly, there is a discourse that transcends the boundaries of this rooted-ness towards the global. Drawing on his own fieldwork in a small village on the west coast of Ireland, Kaul showed how such apparent contradictions might indeed coexist. His case study highlighted an irony of the global dimension: in the village a local style of traditional music is nowadays played almost entirely by ‘blow-ins’. In communities like this, incomers have married into local families, set up businesses, and are key players in local politics. This absorption into the local traditional music scene has been noticeably free of tension. Kaul discussed several interrelated reasons why that might be so, including the importance of a musician’s ability to play the music and interact with other players according to the aesthetic and social ethos of traditional Irish music, which far outweighed one’s genetic or geographic origins as an index of belonging. Moreover, whereas economic and political resources, such as land, are often jealously guarded, the successful adoption of a local style of traditional music can be seen as adding to the community’s cultural capital. Kaul suggested a third reason, namely that there are two related discourses about traditional Irish music operating simultaneously in this case. A discourse of rooted-ness asserts that ‘the local energy of the music emerges from the rolling green hills of County Clare, the black cliffs at the seaside, and the relentless roll of the sea.’ These ideas indicate a strong emotional web of notions of locality, including accents, landscapes, and traditions such as music. While incomers can never become ‘true’ locals, those who are able to adopt the subtle nuances of local musical style are often seen as understanding these deeper ecological connections. On the other hand, given Ireland’s long history of emigration, traditional Irish music has been thriving outside of Ireland. Thus a second discourse conceives of this music as mobile, and therefore transportable and multinational. This is a discourse of inclusion, rather than one that centres exclusively on a notion of locality. In practice, these two discourses flow readily into one another, because, for some at least, the rooted-ness of local music feeds a larger, global ‘Tradition’. It is by quasi travelling backwards from that Tradition, and into the local, that incomers may enter the local traditional music scene. There are two different ‘imagined communities’ here – a local one, rooted in time, space, and local social relations, and a ‘public’ one of like-minded individuals who may not necessarily ever have met, which dislodges the music from spatio-temporal attachment. The boundaries between the two communities are porous and movement between them is fluid. Kaul

used the metaphor of the global Tradition as an ocean of music fed by a multitude of local rivers of sound. He argued that incomers may 'travel via the Tradition, upriver as it were, into a local style or music scene.' Similarly, a local musician may traverse the Tradition to arrive in a different local tradition. Based on this analysis, Kaul concluded that the notion of 'tradition' is entirely compatible with modernity, arguing that the rooted-ness and the globalization of 'traditions' are not opposites, but that global expressions of 'tradition' are built on local ones, and that individuals may be able to move freely between the two spheres. This has obvious implications for the role(s) of ethnologists and folklorists interested primarily in cultural 'preservation'.

### **Heritage Centres**

While musical heritage has been an important element in the Irish case, heritage tourism here is linked to broader historical themes presented with a long time horizon. Local people commenting on new heritage projects often express the hope that they would 'bring tourists in', and this is generally looked upon as a good thing, almost as if the tourists' readiness to travel huge distances to a remote corner of the world is regarded as vindicating the region's way of life. Historically, tourism has tended to create mainly poorly paid jobs for local women (Breathnach 1994). During the 1990s, the heritage centre, a postmodern version of the local museum, displaying some aspects of local, regional or even national archaeology, history and culture, was seen as offering better quality jobs with higher pay. From a planner's perspective, heritage centres have several advantages. 'Heritage' is an omnipresent resource, in the sense that anyone anywhere, regardless of social, political or economic position, can claim some kind of cultural heritage. As a postmodern product, heritage is highly flexible and can be readily adapted to changing market requirements. If it then appears that a heritage centre is not viable in the long term, the building usually looks better, less depressing, than an empty factory. This rather cynical attitude is even found among people involved in the promotion of tourism.<sup>3</sup>

From an ethnological perspective, the economic benefits of such developments are only one part of a wider context. At the applied level, community involvement is a far more important concern, as it indicates the degree to which the version of heritage represented at a particular heritage centre is actually grounded in everyday cultural experience. Heritage centres offer perhaps more dynamic forms of display than orthodox museums, but the danger of 'musealisation' – meaning the detachment of material objects and everyday experiences from their real-life context – remains. In the conventional local museum the focus has been on actual cultural objects of the past, whereas in the heritage centre the dynamics of the display, facilitated by modern technology and know-how, play the key role. When tourists remember the stunning special effects rather than the story line, the success of a heritage centre becomes questionable. Heritage as entertainment does not require any basis in historical facts or a real-life geographical frame of reference. Moreover, just like conventional museums, heritage centres by their very nature tend to accelerate the process of cultural fixation.

Although history and folk culture hold significant potential as resources for development, the fixation of some aspects of cultural heritage for purposes outside the sphere of everyday life, for example through EU-funded regional development projects promoting cultural tourism, may ulti-

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<sup>3</sup> In the early years of the twenty-first century, many heritage centres – including some like the Ulster History Park or Navan Fort, representing major investment – have had to close down due to a drop in visitor numbers, adding more than a grain of salt to the cynical view, referred to here, that was voiced by a tourism planner interviewed in the 1990s.

mately have alienating effects, and the exploitation of heritage therefore only makes sense if grounded in the everyday concerns of contemporary people who continue to engage with it. In a Europe that is becoming increasingly polycultural – both through immigration and through the indigenous cultural differentiation celebrated by the EU’s ‘unity in diversity’ rhetoric – Ireland not only demonstrates the need to devise complex narratives of culture and history that remain, in spite of their complexity, widely intelligible across different groups in society. It also illustrates rich examples of how this task may be attempted, thus affording opportunities to analyse why and under what conditions such narratives may work or fail. One of these is the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum on the outskirts of Belfast. It recently received the Irish Museum of the Year Award for ‘inventive interpretation and sustained development of the interpretation of the way of life and traditions of the people of the north of Ireland.’ This echoes the legislation that first established the Ulster Folk Museum, as it was called then, in 1958 to preserve, illustrate, and study ‘the way of life, past and present, and the traditions of the people of Northern Ireland.’ A Committee on Ulster Folklife and Traditions had been established some years before 1958, and in 1955 the first issue of the journal ‘Ulster Folklife’ had been published. The key role of the folklorist was described in this context as studying the complex of relationships implied by ‘the way of life, past and present, and the traditions of the people.’ Speaking at the seminar mentioned earlier, Linda Ballard, a curator at the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, quoted from an unattributed paper whose author argued that ‘[t]here are some who may regard the collection of information about our ancestors as an amiable and harmless fad. Yet there is no period in the history of a country, of a people, which can be properly understood without at least some knowledge of the ordinary people, and it is a knowledge of just such people, our forebearers, that we seek.’ Ballard argued that this emphasis on ordinary people, combined with a clear understanding of the responsibilities of and demands on the researcher, is crucial to the contribution that folklorists and ethnologists may bring to museums development in the twenty-first century. While the relationships between the museum and the public are worth exploring in their own right, Ballard suggested that ethnologists can make a useful contribution to building confidence in museum professionals as they address ways of making information available. In this spirit, the first director of the Ulster Folk Museum, G. B. Thompson, wrote in 1969 of the need for a folk museum to ‘embrace both the academic and the popular.’ The point is even more relevant today, with advances in information technology changing the role and practice of museums. Ballard quoted Thompson’s concern, expressed in the context of the outbreak of the Northern Ireland ‘Troubles’, that ethnographic museums needed to define ‘the future of the past.’ The skills of the ethnographer, Ballard argued, are critical to fulfilling the demands of interpreting the results of research in the context of contemporary museums, be this in folk museums or museums of any other type. However, ethnographers must not lose sight of the responsibilities contained in the capacity of folk culture as an articulator of identity.

### **Authenticity, Globalised Heritage and the Destruction of Traditions**

When we are dealing with culture, identity and heritage, the question frequently arises and is hotly debated, ‘on the ground’ as much as in academic discourse (e.g., Bendix 1997) – is it authentic? The Frankfurt School (Adorno 1973) initiated a critique of ‘the jargon of authenticity’ especially with regard to culture, contesting the implication that there is ‘something immanent in local culture systems’, on the grounds that the assumption of such immanence would ‘deny any agency of human subjectivity’ (Ray 1998:15). Rather than being an expression of the ‘false’ or ‘distorted’

consciousness of people who do not quite know how to live their lives unless instructed by a social theorist, the recent resurgence of popular concern with cultural identity and the authenticity of cultural products can be interpreted in several ways. Nowadays, 'few cultural regions in Europe can claim to be homogenous entities,' and in each locality there are people from whose individual personal perspective what is called 'indigenous culture' may appear quite 'alien' (Ray 1998: 16).

If we acknowledge that 'authenticity' is less a matter of true or false consciousness than of the historical legitimacy of any associated identity claim, we can revisit the 'invention of tradition' debate and recognise 'heritage' as a fixation of a particular stage in the process of 'tradition'. This enables us to recognise that it is not so much tradition that has been invented, but rather heritage. Tradition as a process involving cultural actors always includes the possibility of modifying what is being handed down through time and across space in order to appropriate it to a changed historical context. Only if it becomes fixated as heritage does tradition cease to imply process and change. From this perspective, the use of the label 'traditional' no longer implies something immutable and eternal, but refers to legitimacy derived from everyday historicity. The alternative would be the postmodern view of identity in the age of globalisation. Following that view, doing anything at all becomes hard identity graft, as culture and identity are no longer self-evidently grounded in the everyday. Identity becomes mimesis (Kockel 1999: 68), and peer group pressure to conform to the mass-produced individualism of the identity warehouse replaces old-style paternalism and imperialism as the forces colonising our life-worlds.

Since the flowering of postmodernism and its distinctly anti-historical attitude, the original interior of many historical local pubs was ripped out and replaced by off-the-peg 'heritage pub' designs. A similar fate afflicted many other aspects of both material and non-material culture. Could the postmodern disdain for history (and tradition), with its concomitant 'knock down/build new' attitude, be a reflection of the globally dominant culture in the second half of the twentieth century, 'white' US-America, industrially creating surrogate heritage to compensate for its often alleged shortage of history? If Ernest Gellner (1983: 34) is right in arguing that '[t]he monopoly of legitimate education is now more important ... than the monopoly of legitimate violence', then what are the implications of progressive privatisation and commercialisation of education, as envisaged in the proposals for a General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), driven by the United States world trade agenda and fended off provisionally by the EU? The GATS vision implies a transfer of power over the social order from political (state) to economic (business) interests. Cultural traditions are endangered through a commercial take-over by the economically most powerful player – and even after its eastward expansion in 2004, the EU, while more populous, has a smaller economy than the US.

The heritage boom of recent decades may have camouflaged an erosion of European cultural traditions, hiding it behind the smoke screen of 'culture as a resource', a strategy that uses cultural fixation to commodify identity as heritage. In my work on *Regional Culture and Economic Development* (2002) I proposed to conceptualise 'tradition' as a process that is at its heart about sustainability – about the 'handing on' of knowledge and practices for appropriate future use – and of 'heritage' as objects and practices that have become fixated and have thereby quasi fallen (or have been deliberately taken) out of this process. The distinction is important. If the two are confused, tradition can be represented as static, and branded 'bad for progress' – as it has been for some time. This raises the question of in whose interest the maligning of tradition – especially European traditions – might have been.

The examples cited here fit with the identity fields promoted by the EU, where individuals define themselves via the constructive performance of essentialised heritages, the latter forming a basis for the regional identity that the former present to an audience of Others. Both identity fields are selectively inclusive in their own way – autological heritage identities define the ‘in-group’, as it were, while xenological performance identities need an audience of Others before whom they are played out. In some cases, these practices go back a long time.

The case of Ulster-Scots is interesting for its ‘split’ perspective in this context. With regard to both music and language, protagonists have been charged with inventing a tradition. All tradition has been initiated by someone somewhere, and therefore is invented. Thus the charge of invention points to something else – the question of legitimacy. If we accept that all tradition is invented, then legitimacy cannot be derived from any primordially-grounded authenticity. As a musician in Galway once said to me, a tradition is authentic if it works. A working tradition, literally, is one that is ‘handed on’ *continuously*, both across space and through time. In this regard, the jury is still out on Ulster-Scots.

However, this ‘tradition’ highlights one critical aspect of public identities. At the level of home identities, autological performance identity is directed at defining the Self to the exclusion of Others, as is the xenological heritage identity. This is inherent and, in itself, not necessarily problematic. All identity is about affirming what we are and, thereby, what we are not. This is often seen as the crucial issue for multiculturalism, and some analysts seem to regard a specifically European discourse of diversity as the root of all evil (e.g., Day 2000) – as if only Europeans knew how to construct Others. Conversely, the construction of and emphasis on differences has been proposed as ‘the only way to oppose the hegemony of Euro-American thought’ (Schiffauer 1996: 62). That other cultures may have other ways of doing this is an issue that cannot be followed up here. The important issue is the use to which such differentiation is put. In the 1970s, the right to difference was heralded as part of an emancipatory agenda. Emancipation is, not least, an autological performance rejecting heterostereotypes in favour of autostereotypes, thereby denying ascribed inferiority, and thus breaking down hierarchies. However, when differences are used to assert essential superiority over ‘Others’, the ethos of diversity becomes a major political and ethical problem.

The challenge for ethnologists in the context of asserted cultural diversity – regardless of any implication of superiority – is one of translation. Considering brokering, mediation, interpretation and authentication as models for public ethnology in a British and European context, Teri Brewer (University of Glamorgan) asked at the aforementioned seminar how the public role of ethnology should develop. Was the practice of exploring from bases at museums or universities in conjunction with outside agencies the right way to go, or were there more appropriate pathways? Raising the question of what we actually mean by ‘public’, Brewer indicated a key difference in approach between American and, for example, German approaches, where the former understand public folklore in terms of ‘their own mediations of folklore for the public’, while the latter think of it more in terms of ‘what others do with folkloristic knowledge’ (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2000). Is public folklore merely ethnological work pursued largely outside the university world, including pedagogical activities outside the classroom? Arguing that the North American model, having evolved in very different historical contexts in Canada, Mexico and the USA, may not be easily transferable, Brewer outlined some fundamental distinctions between these countries and the United Kingdom. Across the Atlantic, the principles of cultural preservation, involving customs, traditional knowledge, and group identity within the wider society, have long provided a basis for

legislation with a much broader focus than the protection of archaeological sites, landscapes and historical locations. Furthermore, the role of ethnology and associated fields in universities and museums is quite different. In Europe, including the United Kingdom, 'public ethnology' has been largely about ethnologists as public intellectuals participating in debates on, for example, identity and nationalism, while in North America it has been more about mediating the internal dialogues of cultural democracy. Brewer pondered whether changes in perception in the United Kingdom and Europe might bring about a convergence with the North American model, or whether a developing public practice in ethnology here might take a different route. She suggested focusing on the role rather than the location of the ethnologist, and to compare products rather than the basis of funding. Looking at roles, Brewer observed that in teaching in higher education, ethnologists usually emphasize ethnographic, theoretical and methodological *knowledge*, and adequate performance in the classroom is seen as key to successful engagement with ethnological 'Others.' Much of this engagement is then done via readings and audio-visual materials, rather than by physical encounter with people, ideas or artefacts, that would develop a deeper understanding. Ethnologists already have strong links with museums; should they perhaps pursue increasing opportunities for collaboration more actively, as part of their public role(s)? And are there perhaps other locations that ethnologists could usefully develop a presence in? Brewer suggested that basic role modelling in public ethnology should include an emphasis on the current skills base, including in particular cultural mediation and brokerage. She cautioned, however, against the tendency for brokering and mediation to become a form of cultural capitalism, which turns ethnologists into exclusionary gatekeepers. This is an issue not just in countries with a significant, socially and/or otherwise isolated indigenous population or minority ethnic group, but also in European countries where migration and/or post-colonial concerns about power and representation are relevant.

### **A Role for European Ethnology in the 21st Century**

At the same time as culture became a political issue, the study of culture in the social sciences and humanities ironically turned its attention to textual analysis. Contemporary theories of modernity overstate the 'reflexive and subject-oriented nature' of culture and identity, and, consequently, cultural analysis 'has found it difficult to incorporate the perspective of action' (Frykman 1999: 22). Focusing on action 'gives room for curiosity about the many re-workings that take place locally, their conditions and constantly occurring transcendences', and after a period when the desk, the library and the internet seemed to become the primary tools of studying culture, we may now find it appropriate to make 'the local' once again a crucial element in our ethnological fieldwork. Such fieldwork can demonstrate the progressiveness of many cultural traditions and challenge the interests behind the fixation of certain heritages – not least those interests who would like to write off 'Old Europe' politically, turning it into a heritage theme park for roots-searching global tourists. Whether or not this fieldwork would affirm any 'unity in diversity' from below is quite another matter. Either way, we should not allow an irrational 'fear of difference' (cf. Schiffauer 1996) – however politically correct it might be – to determine our research agendas.

Analogies with concepts from physical science have enjoyed occasional popularity among social scientists and even historians since the 1970s. One should not take these analogies too far, but it may be illuminating to consider the entropy law in the present context. In a nutshell, this law states that any system tends towards a state where atomised amounts of matter are distributed evenly and equidistantly, in other words: difference and change are reduced to zero. Such a system

is described as entropic, or, in plain English: dead. Nothing moves any more; all elements in the system are totally indifferent. There are no structures and attachments. In order for the system to move again, an input of energy is necessary, which will create a degree of order, however fluctuating. The denial of cultural differences ultimately leads to cultural entropy, a state where nobody recognises familiar structures and attachments. Cultural entropy therefore creates alienation, making us all into aliens. Everyone becomes A. N. Other, caught in a state of complete entropic individualism. Structures and attachments, however fleeting and controversial, provide the *negentropy* that allows the system to function. This raises a critical issue: a working system may be sustained by its own dynamic with a relatively modest amount of steering; to revive a system that has reached entropy, however, requires a deliberate input, which in turn requires power and interest. In other words, an autonomous system left to fall into cultural entropy invariably loses its autonomy, becoming a pawn in a game of power and vested interests. Perhaps this is why certain political interests are pushing the ideal of cultural indifference, frequently disguised as the postmodern identity warehouse?

However, the contrary emphasis on cultural diversity, structures and attachments has its problems, too. The discussion at the seminar mentioned earlier in this essay ranged over a wide spectrum of issues but concentrated on a number of key points. A particularly salient one was the bigoted way in which keywords of ethnology and folklore have been and are still being widely used in political discourse, to peddle ethnicism and racism under the guise of cultural diversity. Secondly, whereas public folklorists in the United States tend to be cultural workers, their counterparts in the United Kingdom, as elsewhere in Europe, tend to be more cultural commentators, often somewhat detached from the everyday actuality they are commenting on. But of course, until the recent advent of so-called ‘third-stream’ funding for higher education in the United Kingdom – most of which is targeted to improve university-business links, but some is available for community projects – there was very little incentive for the academic trying to get on with his/her career, to become involved in more practically-oriented work, which earned one little if any ‘peer’ approval. Remaining detached from the world one studied has become a matter of professional survival. With a degree of inevitability, this leads to a third point. Caught up in these academic processes of knowledge production, ethnologists and folklorists tend to produce rather outmoded knowledge that is then ‘recycled in the heritage and culture industries’ (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2000). Thus we become complicit – if perhaps involuntarily – in the production of ‘fakelore’. It may be time to explore and practice what Konrad Köstlin once described as *Rücklauf* – the ‘giving back’ of tradition and folklore to the actual folk – as a way of counteracting this tendency. A practical example of is the work of Joan Beal from the University of Sheffield, whose work in northeast England uses an approach, pioneered by the sociolinguistics Walt Wolfram, which involves the local community as stakeholders in preserving records of dialect and other non-tangible heritage.

Elsewhere (Kockel 2002), I have set pointers for the future – concentrating on the need for the study of culture to focus on lived experience as well as, and perhaps before, text; the need to revisit the political roots of the discipline in a critical but constructive spirit; and, the need to reconceptualise the region as the theatre of ethnological fieldwork – with a view to developing an ethically aware, evidence-based, policy-oriented and culture-critical European ethnology. Within this broad framework, we need to explore further the issues surrounding cultural mediation as a process for applying, but also generating, cultural knowledge and understanding, and the role(s) that ethnologists do, could, should, and perhaps should not play in that process.

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## NAUJAS ŽVILGSNIS Į PAVELDĄ IR TRADICIJĄ: EUROPIETIŠKOJI ETNOLOGIJA XXI AMŽIUJE

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**S a n t r a u k a**

Diskusijos apie etnologijos ir folkloro visuomeninį vaidmenį trunka jau gana ilgai ir turi atitikmenis dabartinėse diskusijose „taikomosios antropologijos“ tema. Remdamasis literatūra, praktine patirtimi ir debatais Jungtinės Karalystės europinėje etnologinių tyrimų asociacijoje, straipsnio autorius atskleidžia minėtos disciplinos vystymosi XXI amžiuje problemas ir perspektyvas. Esama autorių, kurie priskiria etnologijai lemiamą politinį vaidmenį Europos integracijos kontekste, atsižvelgdami į Europos Sąjungos siekį sukurti bendrą europinį identitetą. Vis daugiau kultūrinių regionų stengiasi išnaudoti kultūrinio identiteto aspektus tam, kad sustiprintų savo socialinį-ekonominių gyvybingumą. Vietinės kultūros puoselėjimas laikomas būtina socialinio ir ekonominio augimo sąlyga. Daugelyje regionų vietinės ir regioninės kultūros bei paveldo reklamavimas skatina turizmo verslo vystymąsi.

Identitetas yra daugiaplanė sąvoka. Straipsnyje skiriami du lygmenys: „naminis“ ir „viešasis“ identitetas. Naminis identitetas nukreiptas „į vidų“, viešasis – „į išorę“. Kadangi Europos Sąjungos paveldo ir identiteto politikos tikslai yra integracija ir sanglauda, skirtingas identitetas suvokiamas

būtent tokiaame kontekste. Europos Sąjunga siekia identiteto, kuris taptų priešprieša „kitiems“ ir kurio samprata iš esmės remtųsi bendru Europos paveldu. Iš viešosios politikos perspektyvos *viešojo* identiteto suvokimas yra prasmingas ir veikia iki tam tikros ribos. Tačiau esminis teisėjas identiteto klausimais yra pats individas, ir sprendimai, leidžiantys spręsti, ar tokia identiteto politika efektyvi, ar ne, daromi namuose. O čia atsiranda tendencija akcentuoti integraciją / atskirtį.

Straipsnyje analizuojama daugybė kontekstų, pradedant muzikinėmis tradicijomis ir muzikiniu paveldu, kurie labai veiksmingai pritraukia turistus. Paveldo vertimas preke reikšmingas kultūros sistemai kaip bet kokios naujovės fonui, nes potencialiai gali atvesti prie vietinių gyventojų atitolimo nuo savojo paveldo. Globalizacijos ir identiteto politikos šviesoje detaliam aptariamam Airijos pavyzdys, jos festivaliai ir vietiniai „susibūrimai“. Aptariama ir dar viena turistų atrakcija – paveldo centrai, iškeliant ekonomikos ir reprezentacijos klausimus, įskaitant kultūrinį identitetą, bei kritikuojamas etnologų vaidmuo paveldo viešo utilizavimo procese. Keliamos identiteto ir galimo tradicijų sunaikinimo jų pripažinimo paveldu procese problemos. Tradicija kaip procesas, kuriame dalyvauja kultūros veikėjai, visuomet implikuoja galimybę modifikuoti tai, kas buvo perduota per laiką ir erdvę. Tik tuomet, kai reiškinys fiksuojamas kaip paveldas, tradicija nustoja būti siejama su jos kitimo procesu. Žvelgiant iš šios perspektyvos, „tradicinis“ nebereiškia kažko nekintamo ir amžino, o reiškia įteisintą dalyką, kilusį iš istorinės kasdienybės. Paveldo bumas galbūt maskavo Europos kultūrinių tradicijų eroziją, kai identitetas buvo paverstas preke. Galima būtų užduoti klausimą, – kieno interesais taip galėjo būti kenkiama būtent europinėms tradicijoms. Autorius pasisako prieš „baime būti kitokiais“, akivaizdžią dabartiniuose debatuose, kadangi skirtingumas buvo ir gali būti susijęs su emancipacija. Vartojant kultūrinės entropijos sąvoką, atskleidžiamas kultūrinio abejingumo konstatavimo pavojus. Pripažįstama, kad skirtingumo akcentavimas turi savų problemų. Ypač ryški problema yra fanatiškumas, kai pagrindiniai etnologijos terminai vartojami nacionalizmo ir rasizmo propagandai, maskuojamai kultūrinio skirtingumo kategorijomis.

Kategoriško kultūrinio skirtingumo teigimo kontekste nauju iššūkiu etnologams tampa vertimai iš vienos kalbos (kultūros) į kitą. Teksto analizė tapo madingu kultūros studijų būdu tuo pat metu, kai vienokios ar kitokios kultūros formacijos virto politiniu klausimu. Vis dėlto autorius siūlo grįžti prie etnografijos praktikos, akcentuojančios jau išgyventą patirtį. Kultūros tyrinėtojų atsiribojimas nuo kasdienos aktualijų, apie kurias jie patys yra linkę kalbėti, reiškia stimulų stoką mokslininkams, siekiantiems daryti akademinę karjerą ir įsitraukiantiems į su praktika susijusią veiklą, tačiau retai susilaukiantiems kolegų pritarimo. Įsukti į akademinę žinių gaminimo procesą, etnologai tiekia pasenusią informaciją ir prisideda prie „folklorinių klastočių“ kūrimo. Autorius siūlo ateities gaires: akcentuojant kultūros studijų poreikį, skirti tokį pat dėmesį praktikai, išgyventai patirčiai, kaip ir tokios patirties aprašymų tekstui (o gal net ir didesnę dėmesį negu tokiems tekstams). Jis ragina iš naujo kritiškai, tačiau konstruktyviai aptarti politines disciplinos prielaidas; peržiūrėti regiono kaip etnologinių ekspedicijų veiklos teatro sąvoką. Taip, jo nuomone, dera kurti etišką, tyrimus grindžiančią įrodymais, politiškai orientuotą ir kritiškai kultūrą suvokiančią europinę etnologiją. Šiame plačiame kontekste būtina toliau plėtoti klausimus, susijusius su kultūriniu tarpininkavimu kultūros žinių ir kultūros supratimo vartojimo bei generavimo procese, taip pat ir su funkcijomis, kurias etnologai čia atlieka. Dera skirti, ką jie galėtų, privalėtų, o galbūt ir neturėtų veikti šiaime procese.

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