



Three Selected Papers on Catalan Folklore

Josep M. Pujol



JOSEP MARIA PUJOL (Barcelona, 1947–2012) studied Hispanic Philology at the University of Barcelona. In 1982 he was awarded his bachelor's degree with an essay on the study and cataloguing of Catalan folktales, and in 1991 he gained his doctorate in Catalan Philology with a thesis on the *Llibre del rei En Jaume*. In 1979 he started lecturing at the Faculty of Arts in Tarragona where he taught medieval Catalan literature, romance literature, theory and history of typography, and folk narrative.

Directly connected to his teaching, his main lines of research were medieval Catalan literature, typography and folklore. Among his publications on medieval literature, of particular note are two editions of the *Llibre del rei En Jaume*: the anthology *Jaume I, llibre dels fets* (1991), and the complete edition in modern Catalan *El llibre dels fets de Jaume el Conqueridor* (2008) drawn up in conjunction with Agnès & Robert Vinas. In the field of typography, the essential titles are *Tractat de puntuació* (1989) and *Ortotipografia* (1995), written in collaboration with Joan Solà.

In the field of folklore his interests focused on the theory of interactive artistic communication in small groups – which is how he preferred to refer to old popular literature –, the history of studies on folklore and popular literature, and folk narrative, particularly legends and folk tales. Of particular interest are his works the *Índex tipològic de la rondalla catalana* (2003) and the *Index of Catalan Folktales* (2008), both published with Carme Oriol, and the book “*Benvingut/da al club de la sida*” i altres rumors d'actualitat (2002), which he wrote in conjunction with the Grup de Recerca Folklorica d'Osona (Osona Folklore Research Group).

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Traditional Literature and Ethnopoetics
Introduction to a History of Folklores
Extraordinary Stories, Urban Legends

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Introduction by
Carme Oriol



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Introduction

Josep Maria Pujol introduced the study of folklore as a university discipline to Tarragona in the academic year 1979-80, when at the request of Dr Jaume Vidal Alcover he took over the teaching of Traditional Catalan Literature for the degree in Catalan Philology. This marked the beginning of a process that he would successfully develop during his years as a university professor: the revival of folklore as an academic discipline and a field of scientific study.

Both as a lecturer and a researcher, Pujol was firmly of the view that oral literature (or ethnopoetry), despite accounting for at least half of all the literature generated by a particular culture, had not received the acknowledgement it warranted at Catalan universities. Thus, in the article “Literatura tradicional i etnopoètica: balanç d’un folklorista” (Traditional literature and ethnopoetics: The view of a folklorist), published in 1985, he wrote: “Catalan universities remain closed off to ethnopoetics. As such, a good way to approach the future of ethnopoetic studies would be to place them alongside other scientific disciplines in the position they deserve in the country’s education system and cultural institutions.”

In the article, he introduced the term *etnopoètica* – which he had adapted from the English ethnopoetics – into Catalan scientific discourse. Ten years earlier, the Israeli folklorist Heda Jason, in his book *Ethnopoetics. A multilingual terminology* (1975), had defined the term as the “science whose object of study is ethnopoetry”, defining, in turn, *ethnopoetry* (Cat. *etnopoesia*) as “works of literature, transmitted by performers in an improvised presentation on the basis of fixed literary canons”. In this sense, ethnopoetics draws our focus to the nature of the (artistic) message and the form in which it is delivered (performance), parameters which Josep Maria considered ideal for framing the object of study.

Some years after the publication of “Literatura tradicional i etnopoètica: Balanç d’un folklorista” (1985), Pujol successfully introduced ethnopoetics into the Catalan Philology curriculum as a compulsory subject. Thus, Traditional Catalan Literature gave way to Ethnopoetics, and a paradigm shift took place: “What makes a particular message folkloric is not its antiquity, nor its anonymity, nor even its orality (though it may very often have these characteristics): it is the fact of being configured artistically and used interactively within a small community”, he explained.

Pujol's research in the field of folklore centred on four major areas: the theory of folklore (or theory of interactive artistic communication, as he termed it), the history of folklore (or, more precisely, "folklores", as he explains in some of his articles), the cataloguing of Catalan folktales (in accordance with the international Aarne/Thompson classification system) and folk narrative (in particular, folktales and legends). As well as studying folktales and legends, he also made occasional forays into other genres of folklore, such as traditional forms of language play (tongue-twister, shibboleth and mimologism) and popular songs, viewed always from the perspective of interactive artistic communication.

In all of these areas Pujol trod new ground. His good command of English, German and French, fundamental languages for the communication of folklore research, allowed him to read the major studies of folklore in their original languages, and his language skills also encompassed many of the Romance languages (Occitan, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, etc.). As a Catalan, he had an in-depth knowledge of the dialectical variants of his mother tongue, in particular Majorcan and Valencian, which he spoke extraordinarily well. This linguistic prowess was accompanied by a fierce scientific curiosity, the spirit of the bibliophile, a self-demanding nature (one might also call it perfectionism) and rigour, an enviable set of skills that he put at the service of research.

In the first of his main areas of research, the theory of folklore, Josep Maria Pujol had two main influences. The first was the work of the North-American folklorists, trained under Richard M. Dorson at Indiana University and who led the revival of folklore as a university discipline from the 1960s onwards. Specifically, Pujol aligned himself with the theoretical arguments of Dan Ben-Amos (now a professor at the University of Pennsylvania, in Philadelphia) built around a contextual approach to the study of folklore. The second influence was the work of the Israeli folklorist Heda Jason on the theory and genres of ethnopoetics.

In his articles "Literatura tradicional i etnopoètica: balanç d'un folklorista" (1985), "La crisi del folklore" (1989), "L'estudi del folklore: del text al context" (1990), "Actes etnopoètics, actes de paraula" (2003) and "Del(s) folklore(s) al folklore de la comunicació interactiva" (2007), Josep Maria Pujol presented and extended on the notion of folklore formulated by Dan Ben-Amos in his paper "Toward a Definition of Folklore in Context", published in the *Journal*

of *American Folklore* (1971), according to which “folklore is a form of artistic communication that takes place within a small group”.

In his work on the theory of folklore, Pujol places this academic discipline in the terrain of interactive artistic communication. Thus, he tells us, folklore is not the text itself but the single and unrepeatable act of communication that occurs in the interaction that takes place between people in daily life. In the article “La crisi del folklore” (1989), he interprets and expands on the concept of folklore defined by Dan Ben-Amos and gives a series of examples of its function. He writes:

Folklore is nothing other than a special type of communication that is used in particular difficult, delicate or potentially conflictive situations that arise between people who are in direct contact. In some cases the other person may be a little far away and unable to hear everything clearly, or inaccessible due to social reasons, or too young to understand us if we speak as if we were addressing an adult; or we may be afraid that by remaining silent we will create an uncomfortable situation, or that our opinions, if expressed openly, will seem too aggressive, verbose or socially unacceptable... In all of these cases we can turn to folklore to overcome the communication barrier: the town-crier modulated his voice to increase its power and project it further; the motorist, inaudible above the noise of the vehicle, responds to the irritating blow of a horn by raising two fingers; young suitors wend serenading young ladies of marriageable age and, concealed in doorways or behind shutters, used song and verse to reveal certain secrets that might have been of interest to them; mothers told the tale of the vain little mouse to keep their children quiet and get them to eat their meals; and we all tell jokes when a silence could become uncomfortable if it is not broken by laughter.

Folklore, as we have seen, consists in saying things differently to the way in which we would utter them in normal circumstances. It consists in saying them in a way that we could term ‘artistic’: in song, in verse, with the use of metaphor, or by replacing logical arguments with narrative.

This function of folklore – frequently a therapeutic one – is illustrated by Pujol in his article “La rondalla (o com voldriem que fos la vida)” (2009) with an expression taken from a famous *corranda* (a type of folksong): “Qui canta els seus mals espanta i qui plora, més els augmenta” (literally, “he who sings scares off his misfortunes; he who cries increases them”), employing a didactic device characteristic of his ability to illustrate complex ideas and concepts in a straightforward manner.

From the perspective of conversation analysis, following the methodological approach proposed by the linguist William Labov for the autobiographical oral narrative (*Language in the inner city*, 1972), the study “El rei En Jaume i Maria F.: la construcció artística del relat oral interactiu”, published in 2010 in the book *El rei Jaume I en l’imaginari popular i en la literatura*, is an indispensable work of reference. It explains the organisation of interactive oral communication of autobiographical experiences, based on the analysis of extracts from a recorded conversation with a consummate story-teller and personal friend of the author, and of an extract from the *Llibre dels fets* of King Jaume I.

The second major influence on Pujol’s studies of the theory of folklore was the body of work by Heda Jason, particularly the ideas laid down in the books *Ethnopoetics. A multilingual terminology* (1975) and *Ethnopoetry: Form, content, function* (1977), in which the Israeli folklorist sets out a theory and system of genres based on the notion of the “ethnopoetic mode”.

Josep Maria Pujol made important additions to the modal system proposed by Heda Jason and explained his contributions in folklore classes at Rovira i Virgili University. Unfortunately, however, this work was never published, and the only written testimony of his reformulation of Jason’s model is outlined in one of the chapters of my own degree dissertation, “Aproximació a la rondallística de Joan Amades: catalogació i fonts” (1984), which was meticulously directed by Josep Maria.

His periodic forays into the study of other genres of folklore including traditional forms of language play (tongue-twister, shibboleth and mimologism) and songs are reflected in the articles “El català, mare de totes les llengües: notes per a la història d’un joc lingüístic” (1987) and “Les cançons populars” (2005).

In his studies on the theory of folklore, Josep Maria maintained a consistent position. From his earliest papers to the most recent, though, we can chart a progression in the small details, in the exemplification of concepts, and in the organisation of an increasingly sophisticated discourse, all of which reflect the evolution from folklore in the classical sense to the folklore of interpersonal communication, which is constructed around the dynamics of our modern era.

In the second major area of Pujol’s research, the history of folklore (or “folklores”, as he would have put it), particular importance should be attached to the essay “Introducció a una història dels folklores”, published in *La cultura* (1999). In this study, he presents an historical analysis of the concept of folklore and discusses the existence of two principal folklores: “folklore in the strict

sense”, which comprises “verbal art, also called folk literature”, and “folklore in the broad sense”, which also deals with other forms of cultural production “that range from immaterial elements (such as customs and beliefs) to the ‘popular’ arts, the definition of which can be extended as far as to include architecture”. Appropriating the words written by Vladimir Propp in his book *Theory and History of Folklore* (1949), Josep Maria Pujol recognises that: “The methods and aims [of folklore] are determined by and reflect the perspective of the era. When this perspective disappears, so too do the theoretical and methodological principles that it has created”.

Continuing his work on the history of folklore, in his final paper “«L'arca santa de nostres riques tradicions»: Poesia popular i rondallística a Catalunya (1841–1866)” published in 2012, Pujol presents a detailed and extensively documented reflection on what is the founding era of folklore in Catalonia.

Outside these more thematic works, however, Pujol produced important studies on the life and work of some of the most prominent folklorists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, such as Manuel Milà i Fontanals, Francesc de Sales Maspons i Labrós, Pau Bertran i Bros, and Josep Romeu i Figueras.

On Milà i Fontanals, the article “Un episodi preliminar de la història de la rondallística catalana: Milà i Fontanals, 1853”, published in the book *Literatura i identitats* (2004), is required reading. In this study, as well as bringing researchers closer to what was the first collection of folktales to be published in Catalonia, and documenting and annotating each of the texts, he explains the factors that led Milà i Fontanals to publish the folktales and the sources he was influenced by.

On Maspons i Labrós, of particular note is the monographic study “Maspons i Labrós, F.”, which Josep Maria Pujol published in the *Enzyklopädie des Märchens* (vol. 9, 1999), not included in this book as it is an encyclopaedic work, and the excellent study “Francesc de S. Maspons i Labrós en la rondallística del seu temps”, which is the introduction to the volume *Lo rondallaire*, published in 2010, and focuses on the most prolific folklorist of the nineteenth century. The book, which contains the first and second of the three series the make up *Lo rondallaire* (1871–74), must be followed by the publication of a second volume containing the third series of folktales, as well as the tables and annexes that Josep Maria left in preparation.

On the folklorist Pau Bertran i Bros, one important paper is “Pau Bertan i Bros (1853–91), una cruïlla del folklore català”, a magnificent study dedicated to the life and work of the renowned folklorist, which, together with the index

of types and genres of the materials collected by Bertran i Bros, form Josep Maria Pujol's contribution to the 1989 revised edition of a true bibliographical treasure: *El rondallari català* (originally published in 1909).

The body of monographic studies on Catalan folklorists also includes the prologue to the book *Materials i estudis de folklore* (1993), by Josep Romeu i Figueras, in which Pujol highlights the importance of the work carried by this author, to whom we are indebted for the most complete study published to date on the legend of Comte Arnau and its place in literature and the folklore.

These studies on the history of folklore and popular oral literature, all of them exhaustively detailed and unquestionably erudite, provided a platform for subsequent studies on the history of Catalan folklore. They set out the central argument that allows us to better understand the evolution of Catalan folklore from the Romantic approach of nineteenth-century folklorists to the present-day.

The third area on which Josep Maria Pujol focused his research was the cataloguing of Catalan folktales. His "mythical" thesis-catalogue, "Contribució a l'índex de tipus de la rondalla catalana" (1982), became the definitive reference work for scholars of Catalan folktales. In the "Presentation" to the catalogue, he set out the criteria and references that formed the basis of the cataloguing process, which was carried out in accordance with the international Aarne/Thompson classification system (*The Types of the Folktale*, 1961). The object of study was the collection of folktales compiled from the entire Catalan-speaking area by 25 folklorists, among whom only Joan Amades and Antoni M. Alcover had edited previous catalogues: Amades compiled the corpus catalogued by Walter Anderson ("Eine katalanische Märchensammlung", *Schweizerisches Archiv für Volkskunde* 50, 1954), and Alcover compiled the corpus catalogued by Josep A. Grimalt in "La catalogació de les rondalles de Mn. Alcover com a introducció a llur estudi" (1975).

The dissertation that Josep Maria wrote at the end of his degree was a fundamental work for other scholars as it identified the many different versions that belonged to each folktale type and gave the bibliographical details with which to locate them; it also highlighted the important work done to collect folktales across Catalonia since Manuel Milà i Fontanals had published the first collection in 1853. The Josep Maria's dissertation represents the most comprehensive effort to date to catalogue the corpus of Catalan folktales, which explains why it was so well received and so widely acknowledged in academic circles. The personal copy that he sent to the German folklorist Kurt Ranke,

director at that time of the *Enzyklopädie des Märchens*, is now kept in the library of this important European research institution, and with its publication the study of the Catalan folktales gained an international reputation that has been maintained over the years. The dissertation, for example, is cited in the book *Motif, Type and Genre. A Manual for Compilation of Indices & A Bibliography of Indices and Indexing*, published by the folklorist Heda Jason in 2000.

The early catalographic works on which Josep Maria Pujol embarked were taken up again several years later with the project to catalogue Catalan folktales, which we worked on together in 2000–2002 and 2005–2008. The most tangible results were the *Índex tipològic de la rondalla catalana* (2003), the *Index of Catalan Folktales* (2008) and the online database “RondCat: cercador de la rondalla catalana”, which can be consulted in Catalan, English, Spanish and French. The latter two are particularly significant, as they have given greater international prominence to the study of Catalan folktales. Indeed, the introduction to the *Index of Catalan Folktales* doubles as an effective presentation of wider Catalan culture and bears the unmistakable hallmark of Josep Maria.

Studies of folk narrative form the fourth major area of Josep Maria Pujol’s research. The focus of these studies is predominantly the examination of folktales and legends, genres in which he was particularly well versed, having read the most influential work on the subject published around the world. He was familiar with the various approaches to the study of folktales: the comparativism of the Grimm brothers, the historical-geographical model of the Finnish school, the Russian formalism of Vladimir Propp and Roman Jakobson, the structuralism of Claude Lévi-Straus and Claude Bremond, and the interpretive theories of the Danish folklorist Bengt Holbek. Pujol also had a first-hand understanding of the work of the Swedish folklorist Carl Wilhelm von Sydow, who made a sizeable contribution to the study of narrative folklore with his definition of *memorate* and *fabulate*, concepts that are expanded on in *Selected papers on folklore* (von Sydow 1948).

On the specific subject of legends, Pujol studied the work of Reidar Th. Christiansen on migratory legends and the work of the German researcher William Rolf Brednich and the North-American scholar Jan Harold Brunvand on urban legends.

Pujol turned his attention to discussing the differences between the folktale and the legend. The first example is the talk “Folklore narratiu: la rondalla i la legenda”, given at the seminar “El gust per la lectura” (“The taste for reading”)

in the academic year 1991-92. The study, together with the rest of the talks given during the seminar, was published by the General Directorate for Educational Organization and Innovation, an office of the Catalan Ministry of Education, in a dossier entitled *De la literatura popular a la literatura culta* (1991-92). It was intended for educators and expresses a clear desire to clarify and inform. Thus, following an opening discussion of the characteristics of folk narratives, it moves on to the uses of folklore and relates them to the notion of “post-folklore”. Pujol writes: “In defining folklore as a special type of communication in a small group, we have shifted the emphasis from the text to the context. This has an important effect; what is folkloric is now the event, not the text”. He then makes a specific recommendation to teachers: “Folktales published in books are not, therefore, folklore [they would be post-folklore]. Their consumption is not distinguishable in any way from that of literary tales... unless an intelligent teacher knows how to apply them wisely.”

He goes on to establish a general distinction between folktales (“adorned, literary story”) and legends (“informative report, stylistically bare”), before giving a more detailed description of these two major genres in folk narrative. Here, then, is the starting point. Josep Maria Pujol, taking up a position in the territory of literary theory, and considering the notions of fiction and diction described by Gérard Genette (*Fiction et diction*, 1991), distinguishes between *story* and *report*, concepts that provide the frameworks for the folktale and the legend, respectively.

In two subsequent articles, “Ogres: quan el folklore ens dóna la mà” and “La rondalla (o com voldríem que fos la vida)”, published in the journal *Escola Catalana* in 1994 and 2009, respectively, he returns to the folktale and the legend in more specific detail and with supporting examples, bringing to bear a weight of intellect which he transmitted with extraordinary clarity and concision in everyday conversation. Using an eminently popular expression, which he put in Spanish to give it the rhetorical character that he was so fond of, Pujol explained: “It all comes down to the question «¿Me lo dices o me lo cuentas?»”. “Me lo dices” corresponds to the legend, the report; and “me lo cuentas” to the folktale, the story. A mnemotechnic form that was particularly helpful for remembering the essential distinction that exists between these two great genres of narrative folklore.

On folktales, Pujol is the author of two significant papers written from a comparatist perspective but with a desire to explore the interpretive approach:

“Variacions sobre un tema narratiu: El llop cerca esmorzar (AaTh 122A) a les terres catalanes” (1999) and “«Locellet es fa fer un vestit nou» (ATU 235C*) en la tradició oral i en la literatura” (2006). Finally, the study “El mite de l’heroi a la casa de Barcelona: Guifred I i Jaume I” (2002) is a clear example of how, through contributions to the science of folklore (in this case, description of the archetypal figure of the hero), we can obtain new interpretive information on medieval Catalan literature.

His work on legends saw Pujol publish the first study in Catalonia and the rest of Spain on the subject of urban legends. The study, entitled “Històries extraordinàries, llegendes urbanes”, was published in 1986 and was a pioneering work both in terms of its subject matter and for its original approach. Discussing the constant recycling and renewal of folklore, Pujol wrote:

Folklore is a special type of communicative act in which the materia is neither created nor destroyed, merely transformed, so we need not fear for its survival as long as there are two people on the face of the earth who are able to talk to one another.

A direct consequence of this Copernican Revolution in the science of folklore was that increasing attention was paid to “conversational genres”, among the most prominent of which are ghost stories, horror stories and the extraordinary stories that everyone has heard, referred to by Anglo-Saxon folklorists as *urban legends* or *urban belief tales* (although I prefer to call them *extraordinary stories*).

These stories are recounted as if they were true stories, particularly (though not exclusively) among teenagers, and, like the ancient legends, have an implicit psychological function: to administer a healthy dose of preventive fear of particular dangers in modern life.

The article then presents five stories recorded by Pujol himself in Barcelona. Each transcription is accompanied by extensive commentary and information on variants published in the written press. This is an example of one of the lesser known aspects of Josep Maria Pujol’s work: his contribution to research through “field work”, which proved highly successful thanks largely to his skills as a conversationalist and his magnificent powers of observation.

Some years later, he directed an ambitious project on Catalan urban legends in collaboration with the Grup de Recerca Folklorica d’Osona, the results of which formed the basis of the book “*Benvingut/da al club de la sida i altres rumors d’actualitat*” (2002). The book contains 73 stories, each classified and with accompanying commentary. It also includes comparative notes on the existence of variants collected in other parts of the world and additional

information taken from the interviews carried out during the research, which relate to aspects such as the popularity of plausibility of the rumour in question. There is also an extensive, 50-page introductory study written by Josep Maria Pujol with the help of Ignasi Roviró, entitled “Reflexions sobre el folklore a propòsit dels rumors”, which analyses the legend as a genre of conversational folklore and helps us to understand why such stories are believed, how they are transmitted, what they mean and what impact they have on our lives. The introduction includes the transcription of a live radio broadcast of a conversation from which an urban legend emerged. It is a fine example of how conversation theory can be used to interpret a spontaneously produced folkloric tale.

Another article devoted to the study of legends, in this case featuring the Devil, is “Variacions sobre el diable” (1994). The article takes as a theoretical framework the theories on psychology of religion that Rudolf Otto expressed in the book *Das Heilige* (1917), which was published in Spanish under the title *Lo santo: lo racional i lo irracional en la idea de Dios* (1925). This article, for example, is crucial for understanding the concept of *numinous* associated with the legend.

The contribution made by Josep Maria Pujol to the study of folklore has been a singular one; as such, bringing these three articles together in English is a small example of his mastery of the subject and helps to disseminate his work. Reading Pujol is an intellectual undertaking of the highest order; it must be done with care and with the necessary time. His writing, so dense in content, is often punctuated by flashes of ironic humour and illustrated with entertaining and informative examples, dressed in elegant, literary prose. It only remains, then, for me to wish you an enriching and pleasurable read.

CARME ORIOL

Note about the Edition

This volume contains a selection of three translations of articles by Josep M. Pujol, one in each of the three areas that he defined to characterise his work in the field of folklore: the theory of interactive artistic communication; the history of folklore studies and folk literature; and folk narrative. An article has been selected to represent each area both in terms of content and the moment it was published.

The article in the first section – Theory of interactive artistic communication – is “Traditional Literature and Ethnopoetics: a Folklorist’s Perspective”, published in 1985. It is Josep M. Pujol’s first publication in this area and in it he lays the theoretical base that he was to go on to develop. For the second section – History of folklore studies and folk literature – the article chosen is “Introduction to a History of Folklores” published in 1999, in which the author provides a theoretical historical synthesis of the discipline in Catalonia. Finally, the article chosen for the last section (Folk narrative) is “Extraordinary Stories, Urban Legends” published in 1986 and which signified the early introduction into Catalan (and Spanish) culture of the study of this genre.

The three articles give a taste of the important contributions made by Josep M. Pujol to the study of folklore, and which have been studied and contextualised by Carme Oriol in the introduction that precedes the three texts. The articles have been chosen from Pujol’s complete folkloric works published in Catalan, a total of 25 articles that can be found in the volume *Això era i no era. Obra folklòrica de Josep M. Pujol*. This edition in English also includes the complete folkloric bibliography in chronological order, with all the references.

EMILI SAMPER

Traditional Literature and Ethnopoetics: The View of a Folklorist

My contribution to this seminar is a response to two questions that I put to myself as a scholar of traditional literature:¹

- 1) How has the contemporary analytical approach to traditional literature developed as a scientific practice?
- 2) What, today, is the collection of verbal practices that we term “traditional literature”?

In light of the organisers’ comments, I shall not begin – as tradition (and the canons of classical rhetoric) dictates – by appealing to the audience’s benevolence given the difficulty of the subject matter, but I would like to say that my field of expertise is traditional literature and that, as such, my position is on the very margins of anthropology. I make the point because my anthropologist colleagues who were unaware of this might feel that the first part of my talk is somewhat out of place, as it deals precisely with why I find myself here as a guest of the Catalan Institute of Anthropology.

In search of ethnopoetics

If we accept that academic (in the modern sense of the word) interest in traditional literature arose around the time the Grimm brothers published the first edition of their collection of folktales taken from oral tradition (1812), we will see that there are some one-and-three-quarter centuries of folkloric activity already behind us. What have folklorists done during these 175 years?²

* This text was published in 1985 in Dolors Llopart; Joan Prat; Llorenç Prats (eds.): *La cultura popular a debat*. Barcelona: Fundació Serveis de Cultura Popular / Editorial Alta Fulla, p. 158–167.

1. I do not share the curiosity of some enlightened scholars for ballads, which are an earlier phenomenon but would fall within the scope of a general reflection on the art and aesthetics of literature.

2. I use the term *folklore* and its variants in the North-American sense; that is, with the meaning of ‘traditional literature’, and not in the broader sense reflected by the German *Volkskunde*, which we are more accustomed to using here. This enables me to use the term *folklorist*, which is far more convenient than the unwieldy expression “scholar of traditional literature”. Cf. Lutz (1958) and Dundes (1966).

The Grimm brothers were linguists and spent their whole lives working as librarians and professors of philology. It is no surprise, then, that the first academic reflections on folkloristics took as a model comparative-historical linguistics, one of the leading theoretical exponents of which was none other than Jakob Grimm.

The historical-comparativist approach and the fetishistic reverence for the document that so characterised positivism were behind both the wave of collectors and collections that appeared in the nineteenth century and the development of the different positions that, towards the end of the nineteenth century, would converge to form the first “theoretical” corpus of what we could call the historical-comparative study of traditional literature. I refer, of course, to the “Finnish” or “historical-geographical” method.³

The historical-geographical method postulates the monogenetic origin of verbal folklore and employs the methodology (and terminology) of another branch of philology, textual criticism, deriving from the approach established by Karl Lachmann. The Finnish method was concerned not with *what* the material was or *how* it worked but with *when* it was originated, *where* this occurred, and the routes by which it spread from what was allegedly its *original form*. All these questions, as you can see, are external to the object of study itself. (I should say, in passing, that textual criticism of written literature – particularly in those cases where a parallel oral tradition had existed, such as troubadour poetry – is now using, without acknowledging that it does so, the concept of *context* to free itself from the very principles that had impeded the development of a science of folkloristics when they had served as a model!).⁴

In fact, while publications of materials, comparativist annotations and seemingly rigorous conclusions proliferated (tale X was originated in Y in the Z century BC or AD), the liveliest minds in folkloristics were beginning to see problems in the theoretical sterility of their discipline. The same concern was arising among their intellectual models: the professors of written literature. It should come as no surprise, then, that the first “internal” theoretical formulation of a genre of verbal folklore emerged from the same place that

3. The best theoretical formulations of this method are, for the study of folktales, those of Aarne (1913), Krohn (1926) and, more generally, the paper by Anderson (1940). Among our group, J. Romeu i Figueras has applied them admirably in his studies of Comte Arnau and the ballad “Els estudiants de Tolosa”.

4. See, for example, the last edition of songs by the troubadour Jaufré Rudèl, published by Pickens (1978).

witnessed the most violent ruptures in the academic tradition of literary study, at the beginning of this century: among the Russian formalist groups formed in 1915 and 1916, with whom Propp and other folklorists of the period (less well known among us today, but hugely interesting) were linked, such as Aleksandr I. Nikiiforov, Roman M. Volkov, Aleksandr Skaftymov and Elena Elconskaja. These scholars gave some consideration to the internal structure (the *what is*) of the traditional poetic text, but their focus remained on the object in its final stage of development: as a text written – whether transcribed or authored – by a collector and folklorist.

This alone was a giant step forward, but the work of the Soviet folklorists did not become widely known among us until after 1958, when the first (and flawed) edition of Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale* was published in English, translated from the original Russian.

In the half century between the height of the Finnish method and the emergence of formalism, folkloristics had been fleshed out by contributions from other fields (among them psychoanalysis, for example), and anthropologists (particularly in the United States) were using oral literary texts as evidence in their anthropological studies. But the academic distance between the two disciplines placed the anthropologist – who used traditional literature merely as a means of understanding a society – on one side and the folklorist – most of whom continued to be men on a mission or literature professors dressed in hiking gear – on the other. For folklorists, then, field work was simply a case of visiting the library or a bookshop: documents were only a little harder to find in their discipline than in others, and once they had been found they needed to be quickly subdued and deprived of their damnable tendency to wander, much like the entomologist who pins the butterfly in a display case in order to examine it comfortably.

I am aware that I have simplified – perhaps excessively – this pattern of evolution and I naturally realise that there are examples of folklorists who examined context before their colleagues as a whole (Mark Asadovskij, for example, in the area of narrative, or Mathilde Hain in her work on paremiology), but text and context continued to be seen as two distinct fields, closely related but only juxtaposed.

The definitive revival of the discipline took place in the 1960s at the University of Pennsylvania and, principally, Indiana University, a traditional fiefdom of the historical-geographical model under the hand of Stith Thompson,

who retired in 1957. His successor, Richard M. Dorson, successfully established in 1963 the first department of folklore in the United States, and a group of young (at that time) folklorists associated with him, particularly Alan Dundes, Dan Ben-Amos and Roger Abrahams,⁵ without forming an organised or entirely coherent body in doctrinal terms – which is always healthy – developed the basic lines for the study of traditional literature.

As long as folklorists remained unable to formulate a precise definition of the concept of folklore, they continued to be at the mercy of their data, condemned to the blind collection of texts and to the classification and the frequently false hopes of the historical-geographical model, but with the path to theorisation blocked by a mass of materials that grew ominously, while the explosion of the mass media and the progressive displacement of many well-known folkloric products towards education and the culture industry – the “second existence” of folklore, as German researchers described it – fuelled concern about the need for a conceptual clarification.

In November 1967, during his talk at the annual session of the American Folklore Society in Toronto, Dan Ben-Amos presented his “contextual” definition of folklore, which freed the century-old discipline from its “family demons”. What makes a particular message folkloric is not its antiquity, nor its anonymity, nor even its orality (though it may very often have these characteristics): it is the fact of being configured artistically⁶ and used interactively within a small community.⁷ Thus, with the support of anthropology (and this is really the point I’ve been getting at), Ben-Amos finally parted with the “folkloric” connotations of the term *folk*, assuring us that *folk* also encompassed the workers on the factory floor, the children in a school classroom, or the travellers who regularly met in the same inn; that folklore could be old and new, anonymous or authored, spoken or written, so long as it was “artistic communication in small groups”. The provocative formula proposed by W. Bascom (1953: 285) (folklore is always traditional, but not all traditions are folkloric) was inverted to even greater

5. Of this extensive bibliography, I highlight three works, which are required reading for any budding folklorist: Dundes (1964), Ben-Amos (1971) and Abrahams (1968).

6. The artistic configuration to which Ben-Amos refers corresponds to the concept of “ethnopoetic canon” as it is used, for example, by Jason (1977: 59-60).

7. My own term, *comunitat reduïda* (“small community”) is a translation of the technical term *small group*. Cf. Goelmbiewski (1962). Ben-Amos adopts the definition of G. C. Homans: “A number of persons who communicate with one another, often over a span of time, and who are few enough so that each person is able to communicate with all the others, not at second-hand through other people, but face-to-face” (Homans 1950: 1).

controversy: “Some traditions are folkloric, but not all folklore is traditional” (Ben-Amos 1971: 13).

Ben-Amos, to my mind, sealed a crucial debate, laying down a response that had been circulating for some years in American folkloristic circles. Now that literary theory and anthropology had been bonded in this way, folkloristics ceased to be “the green grass on the other side of the fence” (Ben-Amos 1971: 3) of the two disciplines and obtained legitimacy in its own right as “theory of traditional literature”.

I have not yet touched on the state of verbal folklore studies in the Catalan-speaking areas.⁸ In fact, even before the Spanish Civil War, while the study of ‘traditional material culture’ and traditional songs had acquired a certain institutional character in Catalonia (I am thinking, of course, of the *Obra del Cançoner Popular de Catalunya*), the general outlook was particularly fragile: nothing, for example, on riddles and other verbal puzzles, hardly anything on paremiology following the publication in 1913 of the first volume of *Assaig* by S. Farnés (who would live until 1934), and in the field of narrative, only the sustained activity of A. M. Alcover, actively ignored in Catalonia after his tempestuous quarrel with the Institute of Catalan Studies in 1918, or the work – outside the university sphere – of V. Serra i Boldú (who died in 1938). And this is to name only the most commonly known genres.

However, it was not just those initiatives outside the universities that struggled to advance; I believe it is significant that efforts to organise the academic study of traditional culture also failed: the Archive of Ethnography and Folklore of Catalonia, founded in 1915, closed its doors in 1923 and its successor, the Catalan Association of Anthropology, Ethnology and Prehistory (the term *folklore* has vanished, you will note) was to disappear even more rapidly, closing in 1926. And, all the while, Catalan folklore studies was heading towards a moment of profound *bathos* ever since the unleashing, in 1918,⁹ of the unparalleled and prodigious loquacity of that titan of the folkloric universe, the inexhaustible J. Amades.

It has not been stressed enough that the proclamation of the Second Republic, which led to the creation or resumption of so many patriotic and

8. I can be excused because of the existence of the book by Prats/Llopart/Prat (1982).

9. The series of first editions of the *Rondaies* ends at vol. VII (1916) in almost all private and public libraries in Barcelona. The Municipal Historical Archive contains vols. VIII (1924) and IX (1926) from the collection of Narcís Oller (*m.* 1930), another of the illustrious figures marginalised by the *aparatchiki* of Noucentisme.

cultural activities that had been suffocated by the first of the twentieth-century dictatorships, was barely perceptible in the field of folkloristics. The *Obra del Cançoner Popular*, of which three volumes of *Materials* had been published between 1926 and 1929, then fell silent until 1936, the year in which the *Diccionari de la dansa* was published, which is in fact a work compiled by Amades and Pujol quite independent of the *Obra del Cançoner*. Work on the *Folklore de la Maresma*, compiled by Sara Llorens, was halted after the first volume, published in 1931.

The Spanish Civil War put an end to the few surviving activities, and during the second dictatorship, as in the earlier period, only the folk songs attracted the attention of a small number of folklorists, who worked independently (Rafael Ginard and Josep Massot, for example) or in occasional collaborations with the CSIC (which was the case of Josep Romeu). The only permanent activity that enjoyed official backing – unless I am mistaken – was the ethno-musicological research directed by M. Palau at the Valencian Institute of Musicology, which was funded by the Provincial Government of Valencia. Of the folklorists active before the Spanish Civil War, only two continued to publish: Capmany, into his seventies and far removed from traditional literature in the strict sense of the expression, focused on dance and customs, while Amades, who was much younger, made himself available to the publishers Selecta and Salvat to compile his own folkloric *summa*, which was rapturously received by a public clinging desperately to any sign of collective identity, and who immediately made Joan Amades the standard-bearer of Catalan folklore.

At the time of writing it is easy to say, with some satisfaction, that over the last eight or ten years we have witnessed a renewed interest in folklore. New studies are constantly being undertaken, and this activity is generating a body of research every year that is by no means negligible. But folklore has still to find its way into the official cultural institutions. Ethnomusicology has enjoyed greater fortune and has been afforded the place it merits in the curricula of the Municipal Conservatory of Barcelona since the academic year 1979-80. The discipline is regularly tended through the Spanish Institute of Musicology at the CSIC's Milá y Fontanals Institution in Barcelona, yet the doors of the Catalan universities remained closed to ethnopoeitics.¹⁰ As such, a good way to approach

10. Although for the last five years, masked by an inoffensively neutral name characteristic of the conservatism of academic bureaucracy, general courses in Traditional Catalan Literature have been taught at one university in the country. See also how a parallel situation was resolved by G. Dumézil in the midst of a crisis over his scientific convictions about the subject he taught: "À vrai

the future of ethnopoetic studies would be to integrate them into other scientific disciplines, giving them the position they deserve in the cultural institutions of our national education system.

Popular culture and literature today

As folklorists we have finally learned that we are not, in fact, dealing with ballads, folktales, lullabies, legends, and so on but with systems of ethnopoetic genres that have a historical validity contemporary to that of the system of cultural values and social relationships with which any given society is organised. The folklorist, therefore, cannot simply analyse those genres that outwardly seem to be folkloric (among other reasons because they have already entered their final stage of obsolescence) and must instead be able at all times to discern what is ethnopoetic from the immense variety of verbal messages that come to his attention every day. He must begin the difficult exercise of reflecting, as a folklorist, on his immediate environment, even on himself (an excess of subjectivism that a positivist would never have been able to forgive!).

Contemporary Catalan society has been so profoundly transformed by industrialisation that most of the social conditions and value systems that originated and sustained the system of genres discovered by the previous generation of folklorists in the 1960s (whose body of work remains the most substantial source of documentation on the subject to which we have access) have disappeared. (It is interesting to note, at least with regard to forms of narrative, that this genre system in pre-industrial society was essentially identical to the system that existed twenty centuries earlier in the heart of the first civilisations of the Middle East that left written documentary evidence of their literature.)¹¹ A basic inventory of these transformations would include the following:

- a) Disappearance of craftsmanship and changing working conditions in the primary sector of the economy (the social foundation for the transmission of much of the folk songs).

dire, il ne s'agissait plus de «mythologie comparée»: c'est vers cette date [1938] que, discrètement, sans avertir personne et sans que personne s'en avisât (autrement, il eût fallu pour le moins une décision ministérielle), j'ai fait disparaître de l'affiche de l'École des Hautes Études, dans l'intitulé de mon enseignement, cette vénérable expression que Sylvain Lévi, en 1935, peu avant sa mort, avait généreusement proposée. On imprima désormais: «Étude comparative des religions des peuples indo-européens.» (Dumézil 1968: 16).

11. Cf. Jason/Kempinski (1981). If this were true, the generations that lived through the mass industrialisation of Catalan society would have witnessed the greatest ethnopoetic revolution in the cultural history of the country.

- b) Reduction of the family unit (dislocation of an important nexus for the transmission of ethnopoetic materials).
- c) Generalised schooling and literacy, leading to competition between verbal folklore and other forms of culture.
- d) Secularisation and democratisation of lifestyles.
- e) Increased mobility among the population and of forms of culture through migration and urbanisation.
- f) Integration of leisure into the consumer society, through the mass media (phonography, cinematography, radio broadcasting, television, video), commercial printing (comics, pulp magazines, newsstand publications) or *ad hoc* industries (toys, shows).

Altogether, I would say that the most “artisan” folklore, which was consciously given a literary shape and inserted “parenthetically” into daily life, has definitively fallen into decline. It has given way to the more easily commercialised mass culture, in which there is no direct interaction between producer and receiver. By contrast, conversational folklore, which is not intentionally literary, survives; it is discreetly integrated into daily conversation and cannot be manipulated as a consumer product.¹²

If we now analyse the current status of traditional literature in contemporary popular culture, the following reflections, which are merely a provisional summary, should be borne in mind.

At the heart of what I refer to – for want of a more precise term – as the “phraseology of daily life”, we observe a simplification in the rhetoric of courtesy and a general decline in the use of paremiological expressions, which perhaps reflects the advent of a more permissive society and the crisis of those traditional values characteristically transmitted by proverbs. The various forms of verbal aggression show no signs of weakness, however, ranging from the insult to retorts and automatisms. In this latter area, commercial or political slogans, which the media disseminate at a speed inconceivable in past eras, have acquired enormous influence.

The traditional forms of language play (riddles, mimologism, tongue-twisters) have been impacted differently by the shock of post-industrialisation.

12. It should be examined how the modernisation of Catalan “subaltern” culture has come about, looking at the process of extinction of the material and social sources of pre-industrial popular culture and the advances in the forms of consumption of mass culture and the accompanying technology.

The metaphorical riddle, which conceals objects and elements that have been replaced by the modernisation of daily life, is generally losing influence, whereas two specific forms of riddle are – I would say permanently – here to stay: riddles with two answers, the most obvious of which is obscene, and what American folklorists call “joking questions”, which displace the riddle towards the territory of the joke. The case of the riddle is a paradigmatic illustration of the qualities that seem likely to shape the future of traditional literature: the primacy of concision, the importance of inciting laughter and the shift towards obscenity, the scatological or, as we shall see, terror as a catharsis. Mass culture has also created parallel forms of the riddle in the puzzles sections of newspapers: picture puzzles, crosswords, etc, which someone should think seriously about studying.¹³ Mimologism is also succumbing after a long and uneven struggle for survival. A specific case within this area is the competition of mass culture with a product of para-folklore that I have recently analysed in an unpublished study: the language game known as “El català, mare de totes les llengües” (Catalan, mother of all languages), which was created and distributed by humorous publications across Catalonia in the last century and represents a true metalinguistic mimologism.¹⁴

The tongue-twister, whether intended for childrens’ games, humorous effect or obscenity is founded on attitudes that guarantee its continuing transmission. For example, if you say *punta, punta, punta* quickly, you will soon make the mistake of saying *puta* (whore) instead of *punta* (point).

As far as legends are concerned, I should start by saying that I do not consider historical legends to belong to this category. They are often incorrectly classed as folkloric literature.¹⁵ Needless to say, just as the demonic legends (imps, water nymphs and treasure) were subject to the scrutiny of the *Renaixença* folklorists when they were in a very sorry state, so the traditional legend is now practically extinct. The case of demonic legends, which were stifled by the

13. Oxford University Press has announced the forthcoming publication of *The Oxford Guide to Word Games*, by T. Augarde (1984), which will address the forms and history of spoken and printed word games, from the acrostic and crosswords to tongue-twisters and hieroglyphics.

14. The genre’s creator appears to have been Albert Llanas (under the pseudonym Roch Binobas) in the pages of the almanac of *Xanguet* circa 1865, which must be the first “modern” humorous periodical to be published in Catalan. In any case, “la mare de totes les llengües” (the mother of all languages) comes from a circle of friends headed by Frederic Soler.

Editors’ note.] See “El català, mare de totes les llengües: Notes per a la història d’un joc lingüístic” (1987).

15. On the complex matter of defining the term *legend*, see Röhrich (1971).

ideological pressure of the Church, is particularly illustrative of those genres which die out after vainly attempting to adapt to new ways of thinking: the few legends of this type collected by Maspons i Labrós, Verdaguer or Archduke Ludwig Salvator show signs of a shift toward genres that were in ruder health at the time: the folktale or the satanic legend. But the legend leaves a legacy of omnipotence, reverential terror and fascination to other, newer genres, such as the one that I call the "*història extraordinària*" (extraordinary story), which is partially equivalent to what American folklorists like J. H. Brunvand (1981) refer to – significantly – as "urban legends". Extraordinary stories present the case of a mortal confronting a being from beyond the grave or an unexplainable prodigy, but removed from any ethical or religious interpretive framework. They are stories that describe an ontological terror, the terror felt by a society abandoned by the hand of the demiurge, the terror that we will never be able to escape.

As I have said, the concept of "urban legend" is broader in scope than that of the "extraordinary story". Indeed, for Brunvand, it also encompasses the notion of what I prefer to call the "case". (I confess that I have taken the name from the title of a famous popular magazine.) Through these "cases", society administers terror as a social corrective. What do you mean that those young parents have left their children with strangers so that they can go to the cinema or out to have fun? Well I hope they don't go through the same as that couple who hired a babysitter and...

The forerunner of the "case" was the broadside ballad and its para-folkloric competence in a particular type of sensationalist press. In turn, romances have on occasion provided a home for ballads that recount a sacred legend (a genre on its way out, as we have seen): some versions of the ballad "La dida" (The wet-nurse) recorded in the coursework essays of my students at the Department of Catalan Philology stop at the moment the wet-nurse expresses her anguish at the death of the king's son. A folklorist of the old school would have branded it an "incomplete document"; we would say, "ballad along the lines of a romance", from our understanding of traditional literature as a communicative process.

Although at a slower pace, the folktale is also heading towards a crisis, threatened by the change in family relationships, playschools, the destruction of the extended family, secularisation (which also leads to the gradual loss of magic from the world of children), and competition with the forms in which leisure is administered in the consumer society for children. By contrast, its

prestige as a cultural and literary value may help to save the folktale through decontextualisation (introducing it into schools) or immobilisation, entrusting it to the mass media (children's books, cartoons) and relieving it of any last semblance of folkloric value.

Adults make use of a protean genre which resists all definition because – as B. J. Whiting said of the proverb – everyone knows what it is (?!). Folklorists appear to accept that the joke came about with the emergence of industrial society, that it is a newborn among the genres of verbal folklore, and from what I have been able to observe, it is indeed true that the old peasant class do not have it in them. This may be because the joke operates in a context where it acts as a social shock absorber, scarcely needed in a traditional agrarian society where everyone knows everyone; it may also be due to the fact that the joke serves as an epigrammatic form of social self-reflection, whose content is often highly symbolic, which would distance it from the psychological mechanisms of certain strata of the population. So the joke appears in rude health with respect to the future, as it is, by nature, undecontextualisable (I trust that conversation will never die), concise, and dependent on laughter. The joke is also distributed in parallel in all manner of publications and has even more recently become an area of professional specialisation, in the entertainment industry.

Still to be discussed are the genres of the folksong. The traditional folksong is living on borrowed time: it is now no more than a recollection in the outermost parts of the collective memory, which shrinks by the day.¹⁶ To an even greater extent than the folktale, it has run up against such compact adversities that it stands no chance of survival. The most prestigious of the genres, the ballad, was defined by Aureli Capmany, who allowed it to become part of “highbrow” culture:¹⁷ work songs, serenades and songs that accompany dances have had no contextual support for many years, and have passed into the ethnopoetic

16. When writing these lines for the Seminar I had yet to read Suppan's (1978) excellent introduction to folksong. Referring to the process of extinction of traditional song in Germany (under conditions very like our own), Suppan states categorically: “Ich bin der Meinung, daß dieser Prozeß bei uns in Mitteleuropa [...] bereits abgeschlossen ist; daß technische Entwicklung und Massenmedien keinen Spielraum mehr frei lassen für die Entfaltung vollmenschlicher und zugleich gesellschaftlich engagierter: eben Volksmusik. [...] Die viel zu diskutierende und ohne Ende zu diskutierende Frage, ob Volkslied tot sei, ist –für die hochzivilisierten Staaten Europas– sicher mit ”ja“ zu beantworten” (1978: vii).

17. Hence it no longer behaves as folklore. I quote again from Suppan (1978), who leaves no room for doubt: “Literarisch fixierte ”Ehemalsvolkslieder“ (im ”sekundären Dasein“) sind [...] von den in volkstümlicher, volkstümelnder oder folklorisierender Manier gemachten Liedern nicht mehr zu unterscheiden“ (1978: vi); later making the point more explicitly still: ”Was von der Pädagogik oder von der Amüsier-Industrie an seine [of the traditional song] Stelle gesetzt wird [...] is vom

museum of records and folk dance groups. *Cançons de capta* (songs performed in public on the occasion of a particular festivity for some sort of material gain) may benefit from the revival of popular celebrations and public festivals, but the obsolescence of their religious motivation will complicate matters considerably; and it is particularly in mass culture, in the “songs of consumption”, that they have found their stiffest competition.

There remains to be addressed the difficult subject of traditional children’s literature. To give a very brief summary, I would say that there have been three general types of change to traditional children’s literature in Catalan: the magical register has disappeared, the “phraseology of daily life” – which has been heavily impacted by immigration – has been maintained, and children’s capacity for play has essentially been subsumed within the circuits of the consumer society (the replacement of games by commercial toys, and the advent of games imitating films or sport), leading, in general terms, to a predominance of non-verbal forms of entertainment.

I spoke a few moments ago about the “transcontextualisation” of obsolete verbal folklore: this is also, as you can see, a current phenomenon. However, the chapter on the use of this former folklore is beyond the domain of the folklorist.¹⁸

ursprünglichen Phänomen so verschieden, daß es nicht sinnvoll wäre, dafür den selben Namen: Volkslied, zu gebrauchen” (1978: vii).

18. I have omitted a short section from the original version of this text in which I questioned the folkloricity of “traditional” carols. As this is a topic of considerable importance, I shall address it more thoroughly in a separate work.

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Introduction to a History of Folklores

Preamble

I should make clear from the outset that it is not my intention to add to the conceptual pollution that has muddied the polysemous notion of “popular culture” with a new attempt at theoretical construction or deconstruction, and that I shall simply note the evident terminological friction between the various parties.¹ Without wishing to enter into a serious discussion on the notion of *people* (a mere mention is sufficient here: it is something that must be returned to, without excuses, at a later date) and assimilating it for now into the vague expression “subaltern classes”, with a nod to the Italian communists, the adjective *popular* can in fact be applied to cultural production from essentially two points of view: that of the producer (a product of the people) and that of the recipient (a cultural product created for the people). The matter is complicated by the fact that the concept of “subaltern classes” is diverse and historically changeable; to give two extreme examples, it must be equally applicable to the small, illiterate rural community whose population is largely immobile and only minimally stratified, which forms part of an ethnically homogenous region and exists within the pre-industrial peasantry concerned primarily with self-sufficiency (the favoured social structure of the classical folklorists), and to the working classes of the major cities in the industrialised world, the social stratification of which is complex and may be complicated further still, from a cultural perspective, by multi-ethnic immigration.

In any case, my feeling is that *popular culture*, as a stand-alone expression, is now rarely used, particularly in the academic world. With less than 5% of the population now dedicated to agricultural production, sociologists prefer to discuss levels of culture and to address the subject of mass culture. When used, the expression *popular culture* is almost invariably accompanied by another, equally problematic adjective: *traditional*. Sociologists speak of *traditional popular culture* (and here *traditional* is an adjective with a specificative value, which reduces, and therefore delimits, the value of the expression *popular culture*) when they wish to

* This text was published in 1999 in Ignasi Roviró; Josep Montserrat (coords.): *La cultura*. Col·loquis de Vic 3. Barcelona: Universitat de Barcelona - Vicerectorat de Recerca, p. 77–106.

1. On the Marxist notion of the “popular classes” (not “popular class”) and their culture, see, for example, the view of Propp ([1944] 1984: 5).

contrast the culture of urban centres in industrialised societies with that of the lower sectors of rural centres in pre-industrial societies (which, moreover, are not generally their object of study, precisely because these sectors no longer exist in “modern” societies, in which the luxury of producing and consuming the work of sociologists can be permitted): thus, *traditional*, in this context, would mean something along the lines of ‘pre-industrial agrarian’ and is used to segregate a concept that now has only a historical dimension, so that it does not interfere with the concept of mass culture defined as “the popular culture of our times” (see, for example, Busquet 1998: 76). By contrast, in the world of cultural promotion (local study groups, cultural associations, public administration, etc.) the generally accepted label is *popular and traditional culture*, in which the two adjectives are coordinated. The expression *popular and traditional culture* reflects another concern with the changing scope of the term *popular*. *Traditional* appears to act here as a qualitative filter, and the expression is understood, I believe, as ‘culture of the people of a particular place with particular reference to that which is genuine, authentic’, sanctioned by a certain chronological dimension, in opposition to ‘modern’, which is perceived as foreign and cosmopolitan. This reflection on *popular* (and *traditional*), however hurried and sketchy it may be, cannot be brought to a close without mention of another observable fact. In most cases, *traditional popular culture* does not designate a fully articulated combination of knowledge, beliefs and behaviours; rather it is restricted to the specific practices of *folklorism*: the deliberate public exhibition of specific elements, entertainment or spectacles that have undergone a process of selection and reduction and acquired the status of symbolic referents of a collective identity (Martí 1990, 1996). To date, public authorities have tended to understand the expression *popular and traditional culture* in the latter sense (Contreras 1998).

Since I always prefer to stand on the solid ground of fact, I shall not speculate as to what a discipline dedicated to the study of popular culture should be; rather, I intend to analyse what such a discipline has historically been, from a theoretical point of view, and what defines the reductionism by which it has had to survive and the mechanisms of this process. Since I am one of those people who believe that the whole history of the universe is contemporary and local history, I make no secret of the fact that I aim not to conduct a simple exercise in historical writing but to chart what has occurred in this area of study in our country, in order to set things in order. I do not, then, consider the history of folklore from the viewpoint of “tot és bo el que l'olla cou” (“everything that makes

the pot boil is good”), preferring simply to think that after one folklorist comes another, and that all are equal under God (which is the drawback I have always found with the great store of erudition that is Cocchiara’s history of folklore). All scientific disciplines make progress by giving up on dead ends and mercilessly cutting away dead wood, and, for all that it is a child of Romanticism, the science of folklore cannot be an exception. Some of the ideas for removing the last traces of the Romantic from folklore (how I wish that among us there were only traces!) have been set out in a richly detailed study by Roger D. Abrahams, and naturally I am happy to find myself in agreement.

Introduction

Some years ago now a philosopher who is not unknown to this meeting, my esteemed colleague Ignasi Roviró – who made one of the very few “local” contributions, if not the only one, to the theory of the study of what until very recently had been one of the oldest and most indisputable aspects of “folk culture”: “folk literature” – called for a theoretical and methodological overhaul that would free the discipline once and for all from the fog of the Romantic. The interesting part of Roviró’s proposal was that he argued that if the discipline wished to be intellectually viable, its object of study could be neither *literature* nor *popular*. When he presented “the outcome of a conceptual study” that claimed to be “personal and enlightening in the field of the epistemology of folklore” (1992: 71), Roviró started from a radically new conception of *the people*. Before tackling the issue itself, however, he decided not to provide a “history of the problem”, as is generally required in all critical studies, particularly academic ones, and he lamented the confusion in Catalan literature over the status of the activity known as *folklore* – because here and now this is the name of the only discipline that claims *popular culture* to be its object of study. My thoughts today, therefore, are intended to clarify what the word has been understood to mean in each period of its evolution, with a view to defining its manifestations in Catalonia (research that I am currently carrying out as part of a project funded by the Ministry of Education).² My initial focus is, necessarily, highly provisional and far from complete: it is limited almost entirely to the emergence of the discipline in the nineteenth century and more closely resembles a map

2. Editor’s note.] “Orígenes, configuración y elementos simbólicos del catalanismo político” (Ref. PB97-0404) (1998–2001).

hastily drawn to guide my own work than a summary calmly drafted after an intense period of research.³

The problem is not simply that, as Roviró complained, folklore as a discipline is mistaken for ethnography, anthropology and [the study of] popular culture in general, but that under the term “folklore”, at least four types of quite different activities are confused.

To begin with, it is common knowledge that the word *folklore* has historically designated at least two great areas of speculative interests:⁴ in a narrow sense, folklore includes only verbal art, also traditionally referred to as popular literature; in a broader sense, folklore also comprises the study of other forms of cultural production that range from immaterial elements (such as customs and beliefs) to the “popular” arts, which can even include architecture.⁵

These facts – and the anxiety produced by the conceptual confusion that I fully share with Roviró and have done for some time now – lead me to one conclusion, the truth of which I hope to be able to convince you of below: in Europe (and, by logical extension, in Catalonia) there is nothing that can reasonably be described as a history of folklore; rather there is a history of

3. There are a number of overviews of the history of folklore studies in the Catalan-speaking territories. For Catalonia (leaving aside a hastily compiled and necessarily brief summary by Ramona Violant [1961], a posthumous capharnaum by Joan Amades [1974] and two early essays by Josefina Roma [1986] and Lluís Calvo [1992], published in two collective volumes), Prats, Llopart and Prat (1982) began the series, which was later continued by Prats (1988) for the nineteenth century and Calvo (1997) for the twentieth century. For the Balearic Islands, which I do not touch on here, there is an inventory of materials compiled by Sebastià Trias Mercant (1992). For the Valencian Country, I am only aware of a brief overview by Martínez i Martínez (1927), which makes no attempt at critical analysis. It is strange that in Catalonia and the Balearic Islands it is the anthropologists that have taken an interest in the history of folklore and included it in their histories of anthropology; as far as I am aware, this is uncommon elsewhere (with the notable exception, of course, of the British “folk anthropologists”).

4. I shall disregard, then, the first misconception that *folklore* designates both the discipline and the object of study. Some have attempted to overcome this troublesome homonymy by coining the term *folklorística* (“folkloristics”) for the discipline, whose object of study would therefore be *folklore*. However, the neologism is not recorded in any of the Catalan dictionaries.

5. The clearest expression of this error is found in the notorious twenty-one definitions of folklore given, since no consensus could be reached, in the *Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend*, directed by Maria Leach from the time of the first edition, in 1949-50 (Leach 1972: 398–403; see also Utley’s thoughts on the subject, 1961).

folklores, each fenced off in its own incommunicable autarky, protected by bibliographic corpora that resist homogenisation (Pujol 1993: 12).⁶

Popular literature, I:

Popular poetry, from Herder to the study of ballads

The oldest branch on the tree of folklore is that of song as popular poetry. As we know, its discoverer/inventor – this was a genuine intellectual construction – was Johann Gottfried (since 1802, “von”) Herder (1744–1803), but Herder did not make a single reference to folklore, and it is only much later that his “popular songs” were integrated into a project that was referred to as such. He was concerned not with the social sciences but with poetics (specifically, the formulation of an anti-poetics, as Hermann Bausinger pointedly observed [1980: 15]) viewed through a certain philosophy of history. Herder found himself in the midst of a literary controversy that began in the 1740s between the theorist Johann Christoph Gottsched (1700–66) and the Swiss academics Johann Jakob Bodmer (1698–1783) and Johann Jakob Breitinger (1701–76) – very much the most emblematic “Swiss” in the history of German literary criticism – and which had also drawn comment from Gotthold Ephraim Lessing and Herder’s maestro, Johann Georg Hamann (1730–88) (Garland 1979: 93–103; 407–421).

The dispute dealt with the subjection of German literature to the classical model as it was defined in France in the seventeenth century, defended in Gottsched’s *Kritischer Dichterkunst*, whose detractors attempted to raise a new model founded on the pre-Romantic sensibility of the Sturm und Drang (for Herder it was a matter of “Phantasie und Leidenschaft”), to which Hamann himself had made a decisive contribution. The fuel that fed the fire of the controversy included, on the side of the renewalists, a number of elements that originated in the British Isles: Shakespeare (recently translated into German), the Scot Thomas Blackwell’s work on Homer (*Inquiry into the life and writings of Homer*, 1735) and two recent works: the “Ossianic” poems translated or created by James Macpherson (1736–96) – *Fragments of ancient poetry collected in the Highlands of Scotland and translated from the Gaelic or Erse Language* (1760), followed by *Fingal* (1762) and *Temora* (1763) – and the *Reliques of ancient*

6. “Folklore is an ideological discipline. Its methods and aims are determined by and reflect the outlook of the age. When disappears, the principles of scholarship it has created also disappear” (Propp [1949] 1984: 3).

English poetry (1765) by the Bishop of Dromore ([Northern] Ireland), Thomas Percy (1729–1811).⁷

Herder became familiar with Percy's *Reliques* through his reading of the critical editions by Rudolf Erich Raspe and Gerstenberg, and he received a copy of the second edition from Raspe (1767) on 4 August 1771. Percy turned Herder's attention to the oral origins of some of the ballads and songs and gave him the idea of examining the oral dissemination of something that Herder had, until that point, considered only as historical material; before the year was out, Herder had asked Goethe to collect songs for him, and Goethe sent a dozen annotated transcriptions of songs from Alsace (Röllecke 1975). This was the first time that "popular songs" had been compiled in Europe in the exercise of a specific and systematic curiosity. Of the examples recorded by Goethe, only three found their way into the *Volkslieder*;⁸ the examples collected personally by Herder account for no more than half a dozen.

The notion of popular poetry came to Herder from Montaigne, Macpherson and Percy, but the model unquestionably belongs to Percy, who is by far the most widely represented in the two volumes of *Volkslieder* (1778-79) (the second edition of which bears a significant change of title: *Stimmen der Völker in Liedern*, 1807):⁹ of the 162 texts compiled, 53 (almost a mathematical third, 32.7%) are English, and of these some 24 were recorded by Percy (half of the English texts [45.2%] and almost a sixth of the overall collection [14.8%]); of the remaining English texts, 8 are from Shakespeare, 3 from Macpherson and 18 from other sources. Of the 38 German songs compiled, only 9 come from direct oral sources, 6 are originally from oral sources but taken from written records, and 23 are taken from poems by authors from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (including two by Goethe – one of which was the famous "Rose on the Heath" [II.ii.23] – and five by Herder, which do not appear in the second edition).¹⁰ Of the rest of the collection, the largest group is formed by the 18 Spanish contributions (which range from *romances moriscos* [Moorish ballads]

7. In 1773 one of the major manifestos of Sturm und Drang was published (*Von deutscher Kunst und Art*), containing two commentaries by Herder on Ossian and the songs of ancient peoples ["Ossian und die Lieder alter Völker"] and Shakespeare.

8. The rest appeared in *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* (1806–8, which was sub-titled "Alte deutsche Lieder") by Achim von Arnim and Clemens Brentano.

9. Herder's manuscript is divided into in parts and numbers, in the same way as the *Reliques*.

10. II.i.29-30, ii.24, i iii.24 i 26. After noting the German origin, Herder omits (in the latter two cases) or claims indirectly that he does not recall where they were obtained from.

to the *Historia de las guerras de Granada* of Ginés Pérez de Hita, predominantly, to Jorge de Montemayor and the *romances líricos* [lyrical ballads] of Góngora). The Latin texts include medieval rhythmic modes and even a poem by Gaius Valerius Catullus, while some of the Greek texts are attributed to Athenaeus (*fl.* c. 200 DC). Needless to say, Herder translated everything into German (even transposed into *Hochdeutsch* in the case of German texts recorded in other dialects) and made changes where he deemed necessary. Thus, the “popular song” for Herder is an aesthetic category and bears no relation to its origins: he does not demand anonymity, and has no problem accepting authored songs. It was Herder who initiated the trend among folklorists to first decide exactly what they wished to collect, and then go in search of it by sorting through all the pieces that they had managed to gather.

It is time to ask, then, who Herder considered the “folk” to be. They were not, of course, the peasantry, though evidently he did not exclude them. In one of the few statements that shed light on his method, Herder said that popular songs could be heard “auf Straßen und Gassen und Fischmärkten, im ungelehrten Rundgesange des Landvolks” ‘in the streets and alleys, in the fish markets and in the unlearned round-dance songs of the peasants’ (V: 180).¹¹ For Herder, the folk were not the peasantry and less so still the *vulgus in populo*, as they would become later, but rather an essentialist abstraction: the nation expressed by its *Volksseele*.¹² As early as 1767 he had proposed the compilation of the “alte Nationallieder” (Bausinger 1980: 14). This is how Herder understood “natural” poetry: poetry that corresponds, like languages, to the mental configuration specific to each of the nations (*Volksgeist*), which is therefore – indeed, must be – perceptible in the poetry of its archaic periods and in the poetry still found in its “natural” state among the population.

Herder, then, developed his concept of *Volksgeist*, of national spirit, which provided the framework for his understanding of the popular song, and he did not leave for posterity any “anthropological” or “sociological” theories on the origin or the definition of popular poetry: his notion of folk is an abstraction that does not identify with any group or social class, the only historical component

11. We note that the qualification “unlearned” is applied not to the exponents (the peasants) but to the product (the round-dance songs).

12. Wolfgang Brückner went further still: “La couche sociale que Herder, originaire de Riga (république commerçante prospère, allemande à l’époque et russe aujourd’hui [1984]), désignait comme *Volk* était une classe sociale précise des années soixante du XVIII^e siècle : la bourgeoisie des villes. Et peut-être, très vaguement, le campagnard (le *Landmann* de l’époque)” (1987: 226).

of which, if any, was that of a fantastic uchronia. In the framework of a “sociological” theory of popular poetry, it provided an ideological construction aprioristically defined on the basis of an alternative poetics to the (neo)classical model constructed in Germany largely between 1740 and 1765 and, we should note, imbued with national essences. Paradoxically, these national essences were in fact “cosmopolitan”, as *Volkslieder* happily accommodated English, Gaelic, Lithuanian, Estonian, German, French, Spanish, Italian, Quechua, Latvian, Sorbian, Greek, classical and medieval Latin, Dalmatian, Danish, Lappish and Greenlandic. Herder comes across not as an exclusive nationalist in the “modern” (twentieth century) sense but rather as an “archetypal” and pluralist nationalist who simply shows each nation the path of its particular fundamentalisms. As such, the notion of “popular song” can be adopted and employed by all those nations who wish to use research as the basis for affirming or reinforcing their identity, or for exalting – by bestowing the honour of consideration as the store of the essences of national spirit – the only literary heritage that they have in some cases: oral heritage. Herder, then, imbued folkloric research with a patriotic motivation that was to become a permanent fixture of the discipline, furnishing it with a point of reference and a cause, even in the absence of a theoretical justification.

Herder was the starting point for two speculative traditions. The first, and one of two traditions that have on occasion been confused – not without some justification – by those outside the discipline, was “linguistic folklore”, which focused on the study of the folk song as the quintessential model of “popular poetry”: the ballads of the “oral tradition”, or *romances tradicionales* (traditional ballads) in the terminology of Spanish experts, which derived from Menéndez Pidal.¹³ This “folklore” entered Catalonia by two different routes, but in both cases with France as an intermediary: academically, thanks to Milà i Fontanals (Piferrer and Quadrado stuck to the field of literature) in the early 1830s;¹⁴ and in the more popular sense, some time later thanks to Francesc Pelagi Briz

13. As is well documented, as early as 1916 Menéndez Pidal had proposed and defended (successfully, in Spanish-speaking countries) replacing the term *popular* with *traditional*, but the usage comes from Milà i Fontanals, as noted recently by Romeu (2000: 9, referring, in turn, to Jorba 1991: 127): *Romancerillo*, published in 1882, was sub-titled *Canciones tradicionales* (*Traditional songs*).

14. Aguiló, who claimed to have begun compiling popular songs spontaneously in around 1835, did not publish his work until many years later (1893). On Milà i Fontanals, see Jorba (1982*a-b*, 1992); the authority on Aguiló is J. Massot i Muntaner (1980, 1981 and 1985); there are no updated studies of Pelagi i Briz as a folklorist, but Massot i Muntaner offers a richly detailed perspective on the *Renaixença* and popular poetry.

(1839–89), through the *Chants populaires de la Provence* (Aix, 1862–64) of Damàs Arbaud, in about 1865.¹⁵ The adepts of this tradition prefer to speak about “popular poetry” and “popular song” rather than folklore, and apply the methods of philology to examine the poetics and history of the ballad texts (by some distance their preferred genre), overlooking the melody and the people by whom they were sung. This area of study – initiated, as I have said, by Manuel Milà i Fontanals – has both a Catalan branch, represented in academic circles (albeit sporadically) by Dr Josep Romeu i Figueras (Pujol 1993) and J. Massot, and a Spanish branch, largely driven by Ramon Menéndez Pidal and culminating in the creation of the Menéndez Pidal University Institute, with which the work of some Catalan researchers is connected.

The second speculative tradition that derived from the work of Herder but which was not strictly folkloric (and thus is of less interest here) despite being described by the adjective *popular* (it was not connected to orality or to the field work of the ballad scholars) focused on the study of “popular poetry” in the written tradition in European literature since the Middle Ages,¹⁶ many of whose advocates also worked within the first speculative tradition described above (as is the case of Milà i Fontanals in Catalonia, Gaston Paris in France, or Josep Romeu among our contemporaries). This tradition put greater value on the study of lyric poetry than lyrical-narrative poetry,¹⁷ and only made use of the adjective *popular* (and, on occasion, *folkloric*, which is clearly out of context) to designate a strictly aesthetic value; just as, for Herder, the poetics of the popular song contrasted with classical song, so for the medievalists the “popular lyric” was the alternative to the hegemonic poetics of a particular era.¹⁸ For these scholars, “folkloric” described a transmission – more precisely, a social acceptance – of “popular poetry”, whose re-creation in the oral world – demonstrated by the presence of “variants” – has only in fact been evident (although not everyone is diplomatic about this point) since the emergence of folklorists.¹⁹

15. Cheyronnaud (1986) has dealt with the French collections of popular song and gives an account of the famous campaign of Minister Fortoul (1852–57), which motivated the Provençal compilation of Arnaud’s collection.

16. Literature in Vulgar Latin or Latin, as there is also a body of Latin “popular poetry”.

17. Or “epic-lyrical”, as he once put it, with an ostentatious Germanism that betrayed his roots.

18. Romeu, who currently has in print a “corpus of old Catalan popular poetry”, has presented on a number of occasions the basic lines of this philological credo (see, for example, 1974: 8-9 and 1993: 5–10).
Editors’ note.] See Romeu (2000).

19. “In recent studies some scholars have replaced the term *popular poetry* with *folkloric poetry*. Clearly, ancient poetry must have undergone a process of transformation, of collective oral diffusion

Popular literature, II:

The popular tale: from the Grimm brothers to the study of folktales

The second of the traditions related to popular literature, though not directly to Herder, was the study of folktales: I should stress that I do not refer here to folk narrative in the broad sense but strictly to folktales.

One of the most restless young Romantics of the second generation (the Heidelberg group) was the novelist and poet Clemens Brentano (1778–1842). Whereas Herder had discovered the “original” poetry of the people, Brentano, together with his friend Achim von Arnim (1781–1831), set about collecting the “popular songs” of medieval Germany and published them, with his own amendments, in the two volumes of *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* (1805–8).

On 22 March 1806, Brentano, busy collecting materials for the second volume of *Wunderhorn*, wrote to his brother in law Friedrich Karl von Savigny, professor of law at the University of Marburg,²⁰ to ask whether he knew anyone who could search through the Kassel university library and copy out any “old songs” they found. Savigny recommended one of his students, Jakob Grimm (1785–1863), who quickly became, together with his brother Wilhelm (1786–1859), one of the most efficient contributors to the work. It was in Kassel, in the autumn months of 1807, that the Grimm brothers’ natural vocation for the folktale came to light: while reading the novel *Schilly* (1798), by Karl Nehrlich (another contributor to the *Wunderhorn*), Jakob Grimm encountered and

and profound transformation, like the products gathered from the contemporary oral folklore tradition. But precisely as a result of this contemporality – because the poems in question have come to our knowledge from many years ago and are preserved in our memory – we must recognise that the term *folkloric* when applied to popular poetry implies coetaneity to those of us familiar with them; in other words, the word should be used preferably to denote popular poetry that is still recorded today or recoverable from the oral tradition, and not extrapolate it – unless we do so with great care – to old popular poetry, because, among other reasons, we are not sufficiently aware of the extent to which the vast majority of the ancient sources of poetic products conserved today belong to the folkloric tradition.” (Romeu 1993: 10).

20. Savigny’s legal perspective was inspired in part by the Romantic movement. From the legal point of view, law is not something that can be constructed through formal and rational legislative activity but is instead originated the singular spirit of a particular people and expressed spontaneously in its customs and, much later, in the formal decisions of judges. Savigny viewed law as the product of a slow, almost imperceptible action, much the same as language. Consistent with this idea, legislation and legal codes can only, and at the very most, give verbal expression to a pre-existing legal corpus, the content and meaning of which can only be discovered through detailed historical research. Savigny’s aim was to discern the content of existing laws through historical research. The notion, so frequently repeated in certain circles, that nations are characterised by the presence of their own law, as well as a language, derives from Savigny.

copied out his first folktale, a version of “*Peau d’Âne*” (AaTh 510B, Alcover’s “*Espirafocs*”). At the time Brentano was considering completing his collection of poetry with a selection of prose: “legends and folktales collected from the old oral tradition”. But in 1811, Arnim, having waited in vain for a reply from Brentano about the folktales he had sent, negotiated a deal with his editor in Berlin to publish the collection of the Grimm brothers (2 vols., 1812–15).

Following the publication of the first edition, a series of other collections were printed (the first was the collection of Vuk Stefanovich Karadzich [1787–1864], in Serbia, which contained 6 narrations, in 1821), and talks were held about the need to explain the similarities in the themes, arguments and motifs that appeared. The decisive step came with the publication of the second edition of the *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (1819), which included a prologue and a separate volume of notes and addenda (1822): from this point on, the tales would cease to be simply a model of literary fecundity and would become an intrinsic object of intellectual speculation. It was the ideas of the Grimm brothers, particularly Jakob, and Herder that almost converged with what was to become *fölklore* (a subsequent English creation), particularly after the publication of the two volumes of *Deutsche Mythologie*, in 1835.

The Herderian genealogy of the brothers Grimm was crystallised in the following words by Wilhelm, which belong to the final, 1856, edition:

[p. 405] There are situations which are so simple and natural that they reappear everywhere, just as there are thoughts which seem to present themselves of their own accord, so that it is quite possible that the same or very similar stories might have sprung up in the most different countries quite independently of each other. Such stories may be compared with the isolated words which are produced in nearly or entirely identical form in languages which have no connection with each other, by the mere imitation of natural sounds. We do meet with stories of this kind in which the resemblance can be attributed to accident, but in most cases the common root-thought will by the peculiar and frequently unexpected, nay, even arbitrary treatment, have received a form which quite precludes all acceptance of the idea of a merely apparent relationship.

[p. 409] Fragments of a belief dating back to the most ancient times, in which spiritual things are expressed in a figurative manner, are common to all stories. This mythic element resembles small pieces of a shattered jewel which are lying strewn on a ground all overgrown with grass and flowers, and can only be discovered by the most far-seeing eye. Their signification has long been lost, but it is still felt, and imparts value to the story, while satisfying the natural

pleasure in the wonderful. They are never the iridescence of an empty fancy. The farther we go back the more the mythical element expands: indeed it seems to have formed the only subject of the oldest fictions. [...]

[p. 410] In proportion as gentler and more humane manners develop themselves and the sensuous richness of fiction increases, the mythical element retires into the background and begins to shroud itself in the mists of distance, which weaken the distinctness of the outlines but enhance the charm of the fiction. [...]

All the folktale theory that existed prior to the 1960s can largely be summarised as follows: (1) the “Indo-European theory” (that the borders of shared narrative heritage follow the frontiers between the Indo-European languages and the similarities therein issue from the primitive communities of these peoples); and (2) the “theory of the decomposition of myth”. The task of folktale scholars was to piece the “broken jewel” back together (that is, to reconstruct the mythology of the original “national” man), and as a first step in this process the Grimm brothers threw themselves into collecting the fragments. Thus began the first obsession of folktale scholars: the gathering of data for comparative purposes, but with no clear idea about the methodology that was needed.

In our own tradition, Maspons i Labrós (1840–1901) took as his starting point – albeit in a rather disorderly fashion – the work of the Grimm brothers, and expressed his feelings on the subject with great clarity (meanwhile in 1866, albeit with a different intention, Thos i Codina [1841–1903] had still drawn inspiration from Perrault):

The great love that I feel for all things from my land has moved me to publish this book of folktales, which though beautiful in their essence may not be so beautiful in the form in which they appear. Although I well know that simplicity is what best suits them, these daughters of the people, as has been shown by the masterful work of the Grimm brothers in Germany, my desire to show off our language has in some cases prompted the use of the literary form. For all this they have not lost any of their naturalness, as great care has been taken; as daughters of the people they must resemble the people, they must be natural and simple, like the people themselves, who know and understand them, and not resemble those of Perrault, which, arranged to suit the tastes of the period in which they were collected, are close, like the great majority of the French collections, to new tales and which – as Beauvois says of his collection of Norwegian, Finnish and Burgundian stories, transforming Princesses, created and known by the people, into real Princesses, moulding the characters and language to the tastes of the era and the society in which he lived, changing arbitrarily the mystical

and marvellous element of their folktales – are everything but of the people. (1871–74, I: v-vi)

Maspous, through the explanations and comparative data he publishes in the prologues to each of the three volumes of the *Rondallaire* (and even in the notes to *Qüentos populars catalans*, 1885), is the only exponent of this tradition, since subsequent scholars of folktales gathered examples for purely patriotic reasons (for example, Serra i Boldú [1875–1938]), took their inspiration from literary models (Alcover [1862–1932], for example, acquired an interest in the folktale through the work of Antonio de Trueba [1819–89]), or, like Bertran i Bros, belonged to other theoretical schools of folklore (Pujol 1989).²¹

Folklore (in the strict sense)

We now come to the third stage of folklore: folklore in the strict sense, which is a wider ranging interpretation of the term (which we will see, however, is not the original sense). Folklore in the strict sense is the fruit of historical curiosity and can be found in all European countries that had had some sort of prestigious past before they were conquered by the Romans: the Celts in France (conquered by Julius Caesar in 58–49 BC), the Germanic peoples in Germany (which did not become part of Europe until the time of Charlemagne) and both of these peoples in Great Britain (conquered by Rome in 83–84 AD). This line of academic inquiry was first expressed in a conscious and substantive sense in England. I shall now outline the English origins of folklore, a task made easier by the rigour with which the subject has been treated by Richard M. Dorson, who provides the model, although it is also necessary to revise its history in Germany (where it coincides in part with the work of the Grimm brothers) and, above all, in France, which played a crucial role in shaping the history of our own folklore.

The origin of the word *folklore* is well known:²² on 22 August 1846, the scholar William John Thoms (1803–85), under the pseudonym Ambrose Merton, published a letter in the magazine *Athenæum* in which he asked

21. Significant with regard to the phenomenon of compartmentalisation of the “folkloric traditions” is the case of Milà i Fontanals. In 1853, influenced by the Grimm brothers, he recorded twenty Catalan folktales (some of them highly fragmented) that were published in the *Gaceta de Barcelona* and in an appendix to the *Observaciones*, but he never returned to the genre.

22. Though things may not necessarily be as clear as they seem. American scholars have begun to defend the theory of multiple origins for the term, which in their lands would have as its main proponent William Wells Newell (Bell 1979; Abrahams 1988 and 1993: 8–13, where the role of Thoms is examined from a different perspective).

readers for their help in collecting folkloric materials. He said the following (the quotation is a little long, but exegesis will be necessary):

Your pages have so often given evidence of the interest which you take in what we in England designate as Popular Antiquities, or Popular Literature (though by-the-by it is more a Lore than a literature, and would be most aptly described by a good Saxon compound, Folklore,—*the Lore of the People*)—that I am not without hopes of enlisting your aid in garnering the few ears which are remaining, scattered over that field from which our forefathers might have gathered a goodly crop.

The historians of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries studied the antiquities of the different peoples and regions; that is, the visible physical remainders of local historical past – Celtic, Germanic – that they considered their genealogical badges of honour, as remnants of the customs and mentality of past generations.

The father of this particular form of historical study in England was William Camden (1551–1623), author of *Britannia* (1586) and later of *Remaines of a Greater Work concerning Britaine* (1607).

Camden did not only concern himself with the material remnants of the past; he also travelled to visit monuments and to interview local inhabitants. One of the sections of *Britannia* was titled “Manners and customs of the ancient Irish”, and in it he explained that the ancient Irish did not clean their horses’ hooves or give them grass to eat on Saturdays, but on feast days; that the owner of a horse always had to eat an even number of eggs so as not to harm the animal; that giving your neighbour a light put the horses in danger, and so on, from which he deduced that horses were particularly important to the ancient Irish.

In England, Camden had numerous and capable successors, one of whom was John Aubrey (1626–97),²³ author of two volumes on the supernatural, apparitions, witchcraft, superstitions, strange occurrences, etc.: *Miscellanies* (1696) and the *Remaines of gentilisme and Judaisme*, published at the end of

23. Who at times appears to be a supporter of the evolutionist folklore of the nineteenth century: “In the County of Hereford was an old Custom at funeralls to hire poor people, who were to take upon them all the sinnes of the party deceased. One of them I remember lived in a cottage on Rosse-hig way. (He was a long, leane, ugly, lamentable poor raskal.) The manner was that when the Corps was brought out of the house and layd on the Bier; a Loafe of bread was brought out, and delivered to the Sinne-eater over the corps, as also a Mazar-bowle of maple (Gossips bowle) full of beer, w^{ch} he was to drinke up, and sixpence in money, in consideration whereof he tooke upon him (ipso facto) all the Sinnes of the Defunct, and freed him (or her) from walking after they were dead. This custome alludes (methinkes) something to the Scape-goate in y^e old Lawe.”

the nineteenth century by the Folk-Lore Society in London; Rev. Henry Bourne (1694–1733), author of the *Antiquitates vulgares; or, The antiquities of the common people, giving an account of several of their oppinions and ceremonies, with proper reflexions upon each of them, shewing which may be retaind and which ought to be laid aside* (1725). In 1777, Bourne's *Antiquitates vulgares* were re-published, with additional contributions by John Brand (1744–1806): *Observations on popular antiquities*. Brand was by this time an antiquary and, on his death, left a series of unpublished materials that were put into auction. These materials were bought by an association of friends and taken to Sir Henry Ellis to be prepared for printing, and were published in 1810 in two volumes under the title *Observations on popular antiquities, chiefly illustrating the origin of our vulgar customs, ceremonies and superstitions*. The book became the folklorists' Bible, and the division of the two volumes was becoming a familiar one:

Volume I lists in chronological order the most significant days in the calendar – customs related to pilgrimages, fleecing and shearing animals and other rural practices – in the form of a supplement. These are followed by descriptions of customs and ceremonies that could not be attributed to a particular time of year.

Volume II presents the customs and rituals of daily life, followed by a list of beliefs, games and popular misconceptions.

It has been oft repeated by many that folklore was not “born” in 1846: it had existed before and only the word was new. But that is not the case: what had existed previously was research. What Thoms was really proposing was to reconsider the old popular antiquities and to treat them as documents for a new type of inquiry that was also being carried out in Germany, albeit with another type of material: the comparative mythology of Jakob Grimm. Thoms continues (and the continuation of the quote is almost as important as the beginning itself, because why should a new name have been sought for an old interest among local historians unless there had been an important change?):

No one who has made the manners, customs, observances, superstitions, ballads, proverbs, etc., of the olden time his study, but must have arrived at two conclusions:—the first, how much that is curious and interesting in these matters is now entirely lost—the second, how much may yet be rescued by

timely exertion. What Hone endeavoured to do in his *Every-Day Book*, etc.,²⁴ the *Athenæum*, by its wider circulation, may accomplish ten times more effectually—gather together the infinite number of minute facts, illustrative of the subject I have mentioned, which are scattered over the memories of its thousands of readers, and preserve them in its pages, *until some Jakob Grimm shall arise who shall do for the Mythology of the British Islands the good service which that profound antiquary and philologist has accomplished for the Mythology of Germany.* [My italics.]

The period 1834–40 saw the emergence of a number of academic historical societies. In these antiquarian clubs, particularly the Percy Society and the Camden Society, the study of popular antiquities was commonplace.

Following the publication of his letter in 1846, Thoms was given his own section on folklore in *Athenæum*, which was an example the method that was to become traditional in the discipline: direct field observation, accurate information, publication of specific facts and the comparative commentary of Merton, where necessary with the support of the *Deutsche Mythologie* (1835) of Jakob Grimm or other English antiquarians.

The folklore section of *Athenæum* ran successfully for two years, until on 3 November 1849 Thoms launched a new magazine, *Notes & Queries*, dedicated to the subject of antiquities and containing a substantial section on folklore. From 1876 onwards the pages of *Notes & Queries* would feature correspondence between “An Old Folk-Lorist” [Thoms] and George Laurence Gomme, who was a key figure in the founding of the Folk-Lore Society in 1878.

This is the typical folklore, the one of dictionary definitions: the folklore that examines popular literature, particularly folktales, customs and superstitions, festivals and legends and popular sayings (and “etc.,” as it is customary to add). It is also the folklore that establishes the characteristic notion of the informant as a member of the *vulgus in populo*: the old and illiterate peasant. It is the folklore that conceives folklore as a remnant of times immemorial, always at risk of being lost. Indeed, one of the most renowned antiquaries, John Aubrey (1626–97), expressed himself in the manner of a Romantic folklorist as early as the seventeenth century:

24. William Hone (1780–1842), a book-dealer, journalist, editor, writer and acerbic pamphleteer in the Regency era of the future George IV (1810/1830), compiled and published a range of interesting works on *popular antiquities*, such as *The Every-day book and Table book; or, Everlasting calendar of popular amusements, sports, pastimes, ceremonies, manners, customs, and events*, cited by Thoms: a weekly miscellany of texts on the lives of saints, customs and festivities, biographical notices and collaborations on the various topics in the publication's title.

Before printing, Old Wives Tales were ingeniose: and since Printing came in fashion, till a little before the Civil-warres [1642], the ordinary sort of People were not taught to reade; now-a-dayes Bookes are common, and most of the poor people understand letters; and the many god Bookes and variety of Turnes of Affaires have put all the old Fables out of dores: and the divine art of Printing and Gunpowder have frightened away Robin-Goodfellow and the Fayries.

This “English” folklore (which in England, its birthplace, culminated in the creation of the Folk-Lore Society in 1878) was introduced to Spain in 1880 by Antonio Machado y Álvarez (better known by his pseudonym, Demófilo) and was already being talked about in Barcelona by 1882 (in mid-October of that year Milà i Fontanals described it as a passing trend in the newspaper *Diario de Barcelona*). On 30th May 1885 the society El Folk-Lore Català was founded as part of the Associació d’Excursions Catalana (the Catalan Excursions Association). This is the society to which Pau Bertran i Bros belonged, as did (very loosely) the excursionist folklorists; Maspons i Labrós also found himself dragged along by the current, albeit reluctantly. The independent Cels Gomis became familiar with the movement through its expression in France, specifically via Paul Sébillot. But folklore in this rigid sense of the word was to die out so quickly, that of El Folk-Lore Català Society we know nothing more than the date of its foundation (Pujol 1989: xxx–xlii).

Volkskunde

The fourth stratum in the history of European folklores consisted of an exclusively German discipline that remained largely within the country that spawned it, so it is preferable not to translate the name: *Volkskunde*, ‘science of the people’ (Weber-Kellermann and Bimmer 1985; Brednich 1988: chaps. 1–3). *Volkskunde* belonged to an ethnically and regionally diverse central Europe, far removed from the centralised states that emerged from the French Revolution; it arose from the field of German studies (*Deutschumwissenschaft*), the response of the Prussian state to the disaggregation of the German peoples.

The principal feature of *Volkskunde* is that it provided such an extensive programme of knowledge on the regional and local realities of the German peoples that it was presented as a science of culture and ways of life.

Its origins, which date back to the late eighteenth century, combine contributions from two different schools, to which a third was later added. The earliest influence – sometimes referred to as the political school – derives from applied statistics, from the surveys that enlightened politicians begin

to employ with a view to rationalising public administration. These surveys foster a genuine interest in what would effectively be a form of regional human geography (an interest in contemporary reality, unlike the English folklore and the speculations of Jakob Grimm). Thus *the people*, in *Volkskunde*, are not the *vulgus in populo* but rather the inhabitants of the region. From an organisational perspective, the *Volkskunde* movement was effectively articulated: it spread and prospered through the network of local history societies and had very little need to create specific associations of its own, finally establishing a firm foothold in the universities at the beginning of the century. For these reasons, *Volkskunde* would prove to be the only variety (to put it one way) of folklore capable of evolving at a reasonable pace and of demonstrating any real capacity to adapt.

This emerging “regional human geography”, which stems from the eighteenth century, quickly assimilated, in a second stage, the interest in popular literature espoused by Herder and the Grimm brothers. Finally, in 1858, Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl, professor of administrative economics and statistics and later professor of cultural history at the University of Munich (who is hailed – though not without some opposition – as the man who shaped the discipline), gave a lecture that is considered to be the foundation of the theoretical definition of the discipline: “Die *Volkskunde* Wissenschaft”, *Volkskunde* as a science.

The third influence also came from the field of economics: towards the end of the third quarter of the nineteenth century, economists studying the putting-out system as a source of employment were ultimately responsible for the inclusion of arts and crafts into the *Volkskunde* project.

This is not the time to recount the internal history of *Volkskunde*, which is extremely detailed. I would simply like to cite the most recent of the developments it has contributed to the framework of academically viable social sciences.

Towards the end of the 1960s, the prevailing model of *Volkskunde*, which was still essentially descriptive and had become permanently anchored to under-developed rural society, reacted to the phenomenon of industrialisation with a series of ground-shifting critical debates at the biannual conferences of the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Volkskunde*, first in Würzburg, in 1967, and later at Detmold, in 1969, where the discussion became so heated, particularly on the part of students from Tübingen, that it led to the resignation of the association’s president. Finally, a group of *Volkskundler*, at a meeting in Falkenstein, agreed on a new definition of *Volkskunde*, known as the “Falkenstein formula”, consisting

of two statements: “*Volkskunde* analyses the transmission of cultural values (including their causes and the causes that accompany them) in objective and subjective form, and aims to help solve sociocultural problems”. As sure as I’m standing here, as is popularly said, this definition is equivalent to that of cultural anthropology. With the Falkenstein formula, *Volkskunde*, under a change of name (*europäische Ethnologie*), was assimilated into cultural anthropology.

Volkskunde has two representatives in Catalonia: Ramon Violant i Simorra (1903–56; Violant i Calvo 1990), through the Romance scholar Fritz Krüger (1889–1974), in his adherence to the school of *Wörter und Sachen*; and Tomàs Carreras Artau (1879–1954; Calvo 1994), influenced by the *Völkerpsychologie* of Wundt and an acolyte of the Archive of Hispanic Psychology and Ethics and the Archive of Ethnography and Folklore (1915–1921/22; Calvo 1991). However, we should be under no illusions about the real transcendence of this latter institution. Prats, Llopart and Prat put it clearly: “Folklore had passed through the Archive like water slipping between stones, without leaving even a trace of «contamination». [...] The folklorists continued with their folklore. That is, they stuck fast to their ideological, theoretical and methodological constants and, above all, retained the definition of their object of study (in practice, that is), addressing only the most backward and striking aspects of rural society and displaying a preference among them for the symbolic and cognitive aspects of «popular wisdom»” (1982: 76).

These are the four rivers than run into the sea of folklore. We must leave for another occasion the story of how the great vulgate was created from a confused mass of earlier materials that had been chewed up and regurgitated by a caricature of positivism, adapted to patterns taken from Paul Sébillot (1843–1918) and Giuseppe Pitrè (1841–1916) with little theorisation or critical reasoning. All in all, a great editorial contrivance created by Joan Amades, (hopefully) the last great mythified icon of folklores in Catalonia.

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Extraordinary Stories, Urban Legends

For too long, an overtly “folkloric” notion of what constitutes folklore¹ has led us to accept two serious preconceptions: that traditional literature consists exclusively of printed texts published by folklorists, and that the *folk* who produce and consume this *lore* are peasants (the older and less literate the better). Given that industrialisation (and the resulting urbanisation of the country) and advances in public education have reduced the proportion of illiterate peasants to a minimum, folklore – which, if we take this view, is essentially the cultural heritage of the peasantry – must therefore be on its last legs.

The first of the two errors equates folklore with written literature, which is understandable if we consider that the first folklorists were trained philologists but it acts as a barrier to the correct understanding of the folkloric phenomenon. Today we know that folklore is not the text but rather the communicative act; that no-one is a conscious consumer of folklore in the same way that they might be of literature, *pour son bon plaisir*, and that in terms of function, a folktale properly narrated bears no relation to the same tale read in the form of a printed book, even if the text is, hypothetically at least (since this would be impossible), the same.

The telling of a folktale is contingent on the presence of a transmitter and a recipient in a shared functional circumstance: the need to keep children entertained while they wait around the fire for their supper, with no toys or electric light; or the need to keep an unwilling child in a sufficient state of immobility to eat without excessive resistance. Alongside this function, which we might call “mechanical”, a part of the course of daily life, the folktale also has a psychological function: to reinforce a child’s spiritual calm, which is achieved by transforming the child into a hero who triumphs over the problems that are the his greatest source of preoccupation: the frustrations of youth, the fear of losing parents, the superiority (for the child, arrogance) of adults, and so on. Unlike written literature, then, traditional literature, as a communicative act, fulfils an external function, whereas as content its function is internal, subliminal, of a

* This text was published in 1986 in *Perspectiva Escolar* 102 (February 1986): 16–20.

1. For the sake of simplicity I use the term *folklore* in the strict sense of “traditional literature”, as it is customarily applied by Anglo-Saxon scholars. Among our circle, as you know, it generally takes the broader sense (in the German style) of “traditional culture”.

psychological nature. There is nothing less inoffensive or less innocent than traditional literature.

The early folklorists realised that the stories grandparents told their grandchildren around the fire could be regarded as literature because they were consistent with the notion of *fiction* that they discussed in their lectures. But the decision was not so straightforward when the narrative was not intended for children and the supernatural elements were no longer in the framework of “Once upon a time...” and “they all lived happily ever after”. Literature or not literature? In the absence of an objective system of measurement I turned to cultural prejudice: “Literature is what *they* believe and I do not”. Tales of imps and water nymphs? Stories for superstitious, illiterate peasants who are behind the times: literature and, therefore, folklore. Stories of punishments and miraculous rewards for our labours? The beliefs of good Christian folk, pure and simple reality, or, at the very most, little more than entertaining expressions of devotion. Hence, the notion of *folk* had to be based on social and cultural otherness; were this not the case, the folklorist ran the risk of being subsumed by folklore (something he already did perfectly happily, albeit unwittingly, when he took off his gown, put down his pen or turned off the gramophone, and told jokes to the amusement of his friends). Yet the most rigorous scholars shared a common concern: could any area of knowledge whose gaze was so fixed on the navel of the researcher be deserving of the name “science”?

The notion of *folk* needed to be objectivised and the types of communication regarded as literary defined.² The second of these problems could be solved (if not definitively, then to a considerable extent) if literary quality were ascribed to communication based on the poetic function of language (its use outside the “degree zero” of expression, as Barthesians would say) or at least not based on the informative function, as would be the case of the communication that is generally produced in conversations intended simply to pass the time, in idle chatter.

At this point, the notion of *folk* was suddenly quite straightforward: the transmitter and recipient of a message are *folk* if they are in direct mutual contact – even by telephone. It could be you (or indeed me) when you meet someone and strike up a conversation.³

2. For which the Pompeu Fabra dictionary is of no assistance: “*Literature*: body of literary production of a people; *literary*: relating or pertaining to literature”.

3. I gave a more extensive analysis of the background and history of this question in my talk at the 2nd Seminar on Popular Culture of the Catalan Institute of Anthropology: “Literatura tradicional i etnopoètica: Balanç d’un folklorista” (1985).

With this objectivisation, folkloristics gained acceptance as a science and folklore was the contribution made by millions of practitioners who were entrusted with safeguarding the livelihood of future generations of folklore teachers. Folklore is a special type of communicative act: just as matter is neither created nor destroyed, merely transformed, neither do we need fear for folklore's survival as long as there are two people on the face of the earth who are able to talk to one another.

A direct consequence of this Copernican Revolution in the science of folklore was that increasing attention was paid to “conversational genres”, among the most prominent of which are ghost stories, horror stories and the extraordinary cases that everyone has heard, referred to by Anglo-Saxon folklorists as *urban legends* or *urban belief tales* (although I prefer to call them *extraordinary stories*).⁴

These stories are recounted as if they were true stories, particularly (though not exclusively) among teenagers, and, like the ancient legends, have an implicit psychological function: to administer a healthy dose of preventive fear of particular dangers in modern life (leaving small children to the mercy of a babysitter [1]; exposing yourself to the perils of picking up a hitchhiker [2]); or to warn against more traditional demons (neglecting maternal duties [3]; lacking respect for the dead, such as the notorious dare to spend the night in a cemetery [AaTh 1676B]; losing the fear of thieves [4], or simply over-confidence [5]). Alongside this “morality”, all extraordinary stories contain some formula that purports to demonstrate their authenticity: you heard it from the friend of a friend of a relative of the protagonists, you read it in the papers – though there is never any way of knowing exactly who or exactly when – and so on.

(I collected all of the examples myself in Barcelona, from local informants [although number 5 is, in fact, from Parma]. Numbers 1, 2 and 5 were collected in universities, from informants aged between 30 and 35, in interviews carried out in April and May of 1983. Numbers 3 and 4 are courtesy of a septuagenarian housewife and were recorded in May and November of the same year using contextual inducement, which was particularly successful in the case of number 4.)

4. The most detailed studies of this genre can be found in two books by J. H. Brunvand (1981; 1984).

[1]

There was a girl who went to a couple's house to babysit for them.

The couple went to the cinema, and when they came back there was no sign of the babysitter. They were pretty scared, they looked in the bedroom and couldn't find the baby, they looked all around the house and couldn't find the girl either, and eventually – no-one really knows why – they went into the kitchen, and in the kitchen they found the ... that the baby was in the oven, roasted alive.

And well, they were horrified, obviously, there were all sorts of ... they went through the normal procedures ... The babysitter was the friend of a friend of a niece of these people, they didn't know anything about her, and she was never found again.

It seems she was a ... that the girl was on drugs, and in a fit of madness, well ... she roasted the baby alive.

This is one of the more common extraordinary stories, which has been widely reported in the literature since it emerged in the USA around fifteen years ago (L. Fish [1971]: 151). The initial warning directed against hippies has in this version been focused on drug addicts. Cf. Brunvand (1981: 65–69).

[2]

There's ... well ... a boy who's hitch-hiking ... a young kid ... out on the road, at night. A man goes past on a motorbike and the kid says:

— Hey, I'm going to the town up the road ...

— Ah, well, get on then; I'll take you.

They set out ... I don't know, I don't know for how long, along the road, and when they reach the first lights of the town, the man turns round and the kid isn't there. What's happened, what's happened? And he's got ten finger-marks stained in blood on his jacket.

COL.: And what explanation is given for that?

INF.: They say that he was a kid that ... who died ... run over by a train! I've also been told ... well ... there's ... there's the story about a train, too, somewhere in between. If I remember it right, he'd been hit by a train and he walks along next to the track until he gets to the town, and when he gets there he disappears.

The central motif of this story, which belongs to the collection of variants on the Vanishing Hitchhiker, is a variant of Mot. E332.3.3.1(c) *Ghost of recently drowned girl leaves water spot on automobile seat*. The story has been known in the USA since the beginning of the 1930s. Cf. The extensive monograph by

Brunvand (1981: 24–46). On 24.4.1985, the Valladolid correspondent for *La Vanguardia*, M. A. Rodríguez, published, on page 24, a story about sightings of the Vanishing Hitchhiker at various points along roads in the Bierzo area of León. At the end of the item, he added a version of the story similar to the one that Brunvand records under the letter *D* (Los Angeles, 1940): “Among the many stories, some have something of the romance novel about them. They say that a young man picked up a girl who was hitchhiking, and that the two were getting on well during the drive. Since it was a bit chilly, the boy gave the girl his jacket to keep warm. The next day, he went to her house to pick up the jacket but the girl’s parents told him that their daughter couldn’t have his jacket because she’d died two years earlier. In disbelief, the boy went to the cemetery to see for himself, and found his jacket next to the girl’s grave. These are the sort of things that happen out on the road ...”

[3]

In a village out in the country, this woman had a little baby, and ... (in those days, babies didn’t have a cot: they lay next to their mother, and when they were hungry, they just took the breast and suckled).

And anyway ... the woman ... when she got up, she felt tired, and the baby wasn’t gaining weight; “That’s strange”, “That’s strange”...

And her husband says:

“We’ll soon find out”, he says, “A snake might be getting in somehow and suckling your milk.”

(And to stop the baby crying, the snake puts its tail in the baby’s mouth.)

And so he put ash down on the path that led down to the road. And then because of the trail left by the snake, he saw that the snake ... got into the bedroom and drank the milk that was meant for the baby.

Mot. B 65.6 *Snake attaches itself to a woman’s breast and draws away her milk while she sleeps* (Indian testimonies). The story is an old one in Catalonia, explains A. Mestres: “It is also widely believed that snakes have such a thirst for breast milk that in the evening they slither into the beds of women who have just given birth and feed all night long, placing their tail in the baby’s mouth. The babies suckle in vain but, so it is said, keep quiet all the same. This strategy is also said to be responsible for the fact that many babies who seem to feed all day long grow up to be all skin and bones” (1895 [no. XC]: 224).

[4]

A boy was on the bus, and ... a woman realises that there's blood ... coming out of his pocket here [*touches trouser pocket with the right hand*]. [*Lowering voice to a whisper:*] "What can be the matter with him." (But the poor woman, like me, well what was she to think: "That boy must be ill!") And ... she says to a man next to her. [*In a very low voice:*]

"Look, poor kid, his side's bleeding ..."

So the man goes up to him, and ... (it turns out he was a plainclothes police officer) and says [*in an authoritative tone of voice:*]

"What's that you've got in your pocket?"

[*Explains, in a low voice:*] (Or he may have said "What have you got there!"; I can't remember whether it was in Spanish or Catalan.) [*Very low voice:*] And he looks completely bewildered. [*Raises voice again, speaking quickly and decisively:*] And they search him and find a finger with a ring on it ... [*Pauses*] A diamond ring!

According to the informant, recorded on 29-10-1983, the events had taken place three or four days earlier on one of the buses that go along Carrer de la República Argentina. A variation on the story appeared in print in *Diez Minutos*, issue 1,704 (21.4.1984): 20: "ARRESTED WITH A BLEEDING FINGER STILL WEARING A RING. An enormous fuss broke out in one of the carriages of the Madrid-Parla train, when at the station in Getafe it was discovered that a young man was carrying a human finger in his trouser pocket, with a ring still on it, apparently made of gold. Two officers of the *Policía Nacional* arrested the stunned carrier of the ring, according to the Madrid daily *Ya*. Eyewitnesses insisted that a man saw that the pocket of the young man who was on the train had a stain on it that looked like blood. He went discreetly to the driver and told him about the suspicious-looking passenger. The driver notified the station in Getafe. When the train stopped there, the police, who had been called, got on to the train and arrested the young man. That's when the passengers saw that what had caused the stain around the pocket was a bloody human finger, which had a ring on it, and they came to the conclusion – according to the quoted source – that he had cut it off someone's hand to steal the ring."

[5]

A man went out in his car and parked it somewhere. And when he came out of wherever he'd been, the car ... had disappeared. So ... he looks for the car, it's a disaster ... and well, obviously, as you would, he calls the police... and all that.

The next days he finds the car parked outside his house.

“What? The car? Did the police find it?”

No, they didn't: it was the thieves. They'd brought it back. And inside the car they'd left a note: “We're very sorry; we stole your car, but we really needed it. We needed it, it was really important.” (I don't know ... someone was ill, something like that.) “We're really grateful, and we're sorry about the trouble we caused you”. And to make up for it, they leave him two tickets to go to the Reggio.

And the man says to his wife:

“Oh! Wasn't that good of them, eh? Poor people! They must have really needed the car (I don't know ...).”

So, anyway ... To sum up: they went to the theatre to see an opera, and when they got home the whole place was empty! They'd cleaned the house out!

I am not aware of any other version of this story circulating at the moment, but one of the group, like me, recalls hearing it told some years ago in Barcelona.

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This volume contains a selection of three translations of articles by Josep M. Pujol (Barcelona, 1947–2012), one in each of the three areas that he defined to characterise his work in the field of folklore: the theory of interactive artistic communication; the history of folklore studies and folk literature; and folk narrative. The three articles give a taste of the important contributions he made to the study of folklore, and which have been studied and contextualised by Carme Oriol in the introduction that precedes the three texts. This edition also includes the complete folkloric bibliography of Josep M. Pujol in chronological order, with all the references.