

Storytelling Revivalism in England and Wales: History, Performance and Interpretation

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Abstract

This study discusses the storytelling movement in England and Wales as an example of the traditional arts “revival.” “Revivals” are qualitatively different from mature traditions, but this distinction eludes theorisation. This creates shortcomings in the literature, which are identified and discussed. It is concluded that mature traditions and “revivals” are both subcategories of traditional *milieu*. The “revival” is distinguished, firstly, by its attenuated diachronic chains of transmission and synchronic bonds of social cohesion, resulting in a loss of deep aesthetic consensus in the participant group; and, secondly, by its self-traditionalisation: its selfconscious self-presentation as a traditional form socioculturally opposed to a traditionless mainstream modernity. The “revival” is therefore often understood as a nostalgic and symbolic re-enactment of desired sociocultural conditions.

The study is an inductive, transparent consideration of storytelling revivalism in England and Wales in the light of this preliminary conclusion, considering three issues: the history of the movement; the whole-group performance of storytelling events; and emic interpretations and understandings of involvement, elicited in interview. The evidence is that storytelling revivalism is part of a long-lived appropriative process transcending sociocultural distinctions; that its performative idioms do not express but mediate - eventually, undermine - its iconoclastic separateness from modernity, integrating the formally “revived” form into the informal mainstream; and that interviews demonstrated nostalgic sociocultural beliefs to be contingent and of secondary importance to aesthetic experience. In conclusion, revivalistic communities indulge selfconscious self-traditionalisation sparingly and reluctantly. Emically, it is an uninteresting implication or a necessary cognitive and behavioural stopgap facilitating a deeper experiential familiarity with the form itself. “Revival,” although occupying an intellectually enfranchised *milieu*, is properly a nascent non-intellectual, aesthetic and social form. This conclusion overturns the preliminary conclusion, and suggests the general fallaciousness of assuming that cultural forms are primarily coded representations of sociocultural conditions.

“I have been deceived so often,” Tou replied, “that I am going to make a careful record.”

P'u Sung Ling *The Princess Lily*

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1 Introduction: revival, tradition, and the folklorist

Not only the result but also the route belong to truth.

Karl Marx¹

The following presentation is an analysis of the so-called *storytelling revival* or *storytelling movement* in England and Wales, undertaken within a framework, and with objectives, which are briefly sketched in the present chapter. The aim of this introductory chapter is to outline the necessity and usefulness of subjecting this topic to academic inquiry, and to provide an initial overview of the purpose, argument, scope and structure of the whole study. The unusual term *storytelling movement* refers to several decentralised but self-aware subcultures (Hebdige 1979), scenes (Mackinnon 1993), or, to borrow Elias' term, communities of interest (Pickering and Green 1987, 9) emergent largely over the last quarter-century in Britain, in other English-speaking countries, and also more widely in the affluent industrialised world. Storytelling movements comprise diverse groups, organisations, and informal and semi-formal networks which are consciously centred on the oral performance of narratives. Their precursors can be traced well into the last century, if not further, but in themselves they are largely a product of the late twentieth century. In England and Wales, the storytelling movement originated in the professional activities of official and semi-official groups and bodies in education and the arts, and has been partly deprofessionalised and spread from these groups into society at large. This process has generated a number of regional and countrywide storytelling festivals, a four-part documentary series on national television, and many other large, formal, and mass-mediated

¹ Quoted in Rogers 1983, 8.

events dedicated to the fairly formal, selfconscious, and partly improvised performance of stories; usually (at least in Britain and Europe) of traditional folk narratives. Participants also continue to promote spoken story in the arts, education, therapy, social provision, culture, commerce and other spheres, helping to shape education and culture at both national and local levels. Storytelling in this sense is experienced in Britain by an estimated two million people per year (see below, Chapter 4). This scale and longevity of storytelling movements testifies that storytelling movements are symptomatic of a form of artistic success.

Significantly, despite the continuing official character of much of this work, a large proportion of storytelling movements' activity occurs within informal and sociable settings and vernacular *milieux* (Pickering and Green 1987). Here, as will be seen, storytelling movements show an apparent shift from the normal informality of conversational storytelling in the affluent industrialised world to a greater formality and selfconsciousness of performative register. They also represent a manifest shift towards a public, often commercial, space, and away from the more private and informal settings which, as folklorists and other scholars have been demonstrating over the last twenty years, oral narrative usually occupies. This is true of the storytelling movement in England and Wales, and of sister storytelling movements on the European and North American continents. However, the most striking characteristic of storytelling movements is that their participants perform genres of traditional oral narrative which, if they ever had any other meaningful presence in the oral culture of participant sociocultural groups, have long since ceased to do so. Within the wider sociocultural constituency, oral narrative performances among adults tend to be centred on shorter and/or more realistic genres such as the personal experience narrative and the contemporary legend. Longer narrative genres are largely original works, in such forms as novels, films and

plays, which are commercially mediated to adult audiences through print, broadcast media, and formal theatre. By contrast, the storytelling movement thrives on the (sometimes commercialised) oral performance of longer, usually traditional genres such as myth, epic, and folktale; also, genres of original story are similarly performed which are influenced by these traditional forms, but have hitherto existed largely on the page, in the broadcast media, or on the theatre stage. Of these the *Kunstmärchen* or literary fairy tale is an obvious example. By contrast, outside the storytelling movement, in the wider sociocultural *milieu* dominated by the shorter and less formally fictional forms, longer genres of traditional and quasi-traditional tale are popularly regarded as, at best, suitable only for children. If they are verbally performed at all, they are typically read aloud to children from the page. This is done by adult parents or teachers within domestic or primary educational settings. Fully oral performances and adult audiences for longer folktales are generally quite unknown and incongruous. Therefore, in seeking to introduce or reintroduce longer genres of traditional narrative to oral performance before adult audiences, enthusiasts for storytelling movements depart from practices and violate norms which are otherwise pervasive in the oral narrative cultures which are personally proper to them as individuals. The demanding negotiation of this important fracture is a major preoccupation of the present study. To facilitate such negotiation, enthusiasts have evolved two overlapping social institutions, and furthermore adopt two typical and conspicuous cultural strategies. The two social institutions are, firstly, a body of professional storytellers, who earn part or all of their living by performing oral and traditional narratives in a variety of commercial performative settings; and, secondly, an adult audience and organised *milieu* for the oral telling of longer traditional and tradition-like tales for the sake of entertainment and sociability. The typical strategies additionally adopted compound the sense of distance between the storytelling movement and its immediate context. One such

strategy is the appropriation, as raw material for performance, of the traditional tales of distant cultures, times and places. That is to say: storytelling movements are appropriative over a wide range of extrinsic source traditions. Secondly, enthusiasts have often invoked the idea that they are departing from widely-held norms, not in order to create an absolutely new kind of storytelling, but in order to recreate the defunct storytelling of a more distant past: a past in which the art of storytelling is asserted to have been held in higher regard, to have exercised a more pervasive influence, and to have been practised to a higher standard. Of this distant past enthusiasts obviously cannot have had direct personal experience; it is too remote. Its representations within the movement are therefore derived indirectly, often from popular and vernacular scholarship. These representations assume in their use some of the qualities of myth, having legitimising functions regarding the activity immediately in hand. That is to say: as well as being essentially appropriative in method, storytelling movements are apparently reactionary and nostalgic in tone and ideology. Indeed, and crucially, this habit of self-interpretation and self-presentation has prompted participants, and also scholars, to call the movement a *revival*. Storytelling movements are seen as revivals of an ancient and defunct art.

Both as a word and as an idea, *revival* is an important *Leitmotif* in the storytelling movement, and, therefore, in the present study. Before proceeding further, it is worth pausing a moment to consider it in general terms. The idea of revival is extremely widespread in Western history and culture. Understood in a very broad sense, it features in religious, mythic, political and other cultural spheres to the extent that it is almost tempting to see it as a basic paradigm, the symptom of the discontinuous quality of Western development which contrasts with the smooth assimilative continuity of the East (McLeish 1993, 640). Its core is a conceptualisation of history which looks back, through

a blameworthy and more recent past, to a praiseworthy but defunct earlier period, which revivalists attempt to revive in the present: in the crucial formulation of Bausinger, they aim “not ... to preserve what pertains to yesterday, but ... to renounce yesterday’s traditions in favour of older, more historical, more substantial ones” (1990, 71). The idea of revival thus implies a three-stage temporal cycle of human perfectibility which blurs immediate distinctions between innovation and reaction, and claims reassuring precedents for change. This pattern is very widely exemplified. It can be discerned in medieval recreations of *Romanitas* (Davies 1976, 128 - 132); in Plantagenet and Tudor appropriations of Arthurian romance (Hallam 1987, 55, 113, 160; Gardiner and Wenborne 1995, 45); in medieval and post-medieval attempts, both monastic and heretical, to recreate primitive Christianity, culminating in the Reformation (Davies 1970, 337 - 8, Elton 1963, 16); and in popular movements of political protest which harked back to a time “when Adam delf and Eve span” (Hilton 1973, 211). In the nineteenth-century idea of postmedieval renaissance there lies a double revivalism, a modern harking back to a perceived early modern harking back to classical culture (Gardiner and Wenborn 1995, 643 - 4). Since the eighteenth century, political thought and action has looked back in its turn to primitive communism, a state of nature, or the nostalgically perceived heydays of particular régimes or ancestral groups, as Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment reverence for “science and reason,” and an optimistic trust in progress and the future, has been countered by a romantic and often nostalgic preoccupation with “feeling, intuition and above all the natural” (McLeish 1993, 273, 447, 507, 768 - 9, Roberts, 1990, 636, 641). In later artistic and cultural life, too, attempts were made to revive Greek, Etruscan, Romanesque and Gothic forms (McLeish 1993, 640-1). Typically, and crucially, such artistic revivals “have an intellectual rationale and are not simply stylistic” (McLeish 1993, 640). That is to say: revivalism appears to involve, not merely the appropriation of an

artistic form or cultural practice by normal and unselfconscious processes of dissemination; but its appropriation with a quite conscious sense of the wider values, implications and rationales thereby articulated. This is a central point of reference in the following discussion. Despite the manifest conservatism of typical revivalistic ideas, such as reverence for tradition and organic views of society, revivalism has paradoxically coloured thinking which is innovative as much as conservative at the political level (Lloyd 1967). Political conservatism, by contrast, defends the *status quo ante* in a more immediate and contemporary sense, while deploying a similar rhetoric of organicism and tradition (O’Gorman 1986, 1 - 8). It is clear from these examples that, in the study of “revivals” and revivalism, a basic and massively significant feature of European and Western culture is encountered.

The traditional arts “revival,” a generic category which includes storytelling movements, is a symptom of this paradoxical preference for innovation through nostalgia. Specifically, as part of the larger project of counter-Enlightenment, educated nineteenth- and twentieth-century interest in vernacular art has often gone hand-in-hand with many of the postmedieval renewals noted above, and expressed an intellectually formulated interest in ideas of the natural, atavistic and primitive. These developments are described more fully below in Chapter 4. From the late nineteenth century, vernacular performance arts - music, song, dance and eventually storytelling - were subject not merely to scrutiny but to appropriation in active performance by largely middle-class activists (Boyes 1993, Harker 1985, Mackinnon 1994, 21 - 33, Munro 1996, Woods 1979). The assumption behind these appropriations was revivalistic: that is, the appropriated forms were felt to represent an immemorial, often national culture, preserved over ages by ordinary people, but recently abandoned by them for the seductive but compromised blandishments of modernity (Mackinnon 1994, 1- 2). Nineteenth- and

twentieth-century song and dance “revivals” were a significant (but not the sole) form of middle-class appropriation of other people’s culture (Scott, 1989, 81 - 102). Storytelling movements are therefore only one more recent example of a larger and more durable process of appropriative middle-class “revivals” of putatively or actually obsolescent forms of vernacular art. They are also part of a vast global ensemble of present-day artistic and cultural “revivals” in the diverse cultures of the modern world. Music “revivals” alone are reported from western and eastern Europe, east and south Asia, and Latin America (Livingston 1999, 66), and the global scope of storytelling revival itself is no less great (Heywood 1998). Such “revivals” are symptomatic of modernity in a paradoxical double sense. On the one hand, they are attempts to define and defend local and particular cultural forms against increasing technological interdependence and cultural homogeneity; on the other, they are usually partly shaped and informed by the same technological and cultural interdependence, and appropriate from the dominant mainstream, rather than from the defended local community or group, particular practices as the use of recording technology, and particular political and quasi-intellectual ideologies. Thus, beneath their studied and apparent atavism, “revivals” are profoundly modern assaults on modernity. The enormity and diversity of the global phenomenon of “revival” is matched by the volume and diversity of the scholarly literature, as is made plain in the following chapter. No single study can now exhaustively survey either the phenomenon or the scholarship of “revival;” but a study of the present scope can say something worthwhile about it, because central issues in the study of revivalism have only recently been explicitly stated and have not been submitted to empirical inquiry, as will become clear.

Before explicating this point, the grounds of relevance of storytelling revivalism as a topic of academic research should briefly be recapitulated.

Firstly, the storytelling movement in England and Wales is, as argued, representative of a tendency within Western culture and a larger tendency within the postcolonial world towards revivalism in general, and towards the appropriative “revival” of traditional and vernacular art in particular. Questions regarding the nature of storytelling revivalism are therefore potentially pertinent over a very wide range of subject areas. Secondly, and despite this breadth of applicability, the storytelling movement in England and Wales has not so far been subjected to a full-scale academic study. This offers the scholar the chance to work in freedom from preconceptions and as it were with a fresh eye on the general issues as exemplified in this case. Thirdly, the movement’s contemporary occurrence allows detailed observation of a living, functioning subcultural *milieu*, of a kind which is clearly not possible in many of the examples of revivalism reviewed above, and even of many of the earlier traditional arts revival movements, whose heyday now lies in the past. Also, incidentally but conveniently, the relatively small scale of the movement to date allows thorough and comprehensive study of a kind which might not be possible for a larger or more dispersed social phenomenon. The existence of storytelling movements thus poses important questions, and offers the scholar a tempting opportunity for their resolution.

The overall aim of the present study is, straightforwardly, to define the essential characteristics of the storytelling movement of England and Wales, as a cultural *milieu* in which an adapted form of appropriated vernacular artistic performance is practised under the rubric of revival: to describe it as a “revival” and to ask thereby what “revival” is. This aim relates mainly to the enactment and meaning of storytelling revivalism as a whole *milieu*, rather than of the specific tales and fictions which are imaginatively evoked within it, although the eventual conclusions regarding culture and meaning are basic, and applicable at this more specific level by extension. Empirical and

inductive methods will be used to account for these defining characteristics. These aims, if achieved, will yield conclusions generally applicable to the study of traditional arts and other “revivals.” However, despite this wide application, and despite a necessarily eclectic approach and methodology, the present study is centrally concerned with the nature and operations of cultural tradition, and it is therefore undertaken under the aegis of academic folklore studies. The academic folklorist is not the only scholar qualified to consider traditional arts revivalism, but there can be little doubt that the folklorist is pre-eminently suited to the task. Firstly, appropriative “revivals” of tradition relate directly to the folklorist’s central preoccupation with tradition as a feature of culture, and they permit - indeed, demand - explicit or implicit comparison with the source traditions towards which they aspire, and from which they appropriate texts, repertoire items and other practices. In the present study, this comparison is implicit rather than explicit, but it is unavoidable and methodologically significant. Secondly, the historical development of traditional arts revivalism is closely bound up with the historical development of folklore studies as an academic discipline. Folklore research and folk art “revival” in industrialised cultures have been overlapping and mutually supportive processes, and many scholars whose work is reviewed in the following chapter, including Georgina Boyes, A. L. Lloyd, Alan Lomax, Ewan MacColl, Niall Mackinnon, Ian Pilkington, Owe Ronström, John Seaman, and Joseph Sobol, and also the present writer, have at times participated both in scholarly research of and in active encouragement of and participation in traditional arts revivalism. At an individual and disciplinary level, then, the academic folklorist is uniquely well-placed to discuss the preoccupations of the revivalist with rigour, empathy, and insight.

However, folkloristic scholarship has so far tended not to take full advantage of this opportunity. Extant folkloristic methodologies for the study of

revivalistic movements in the traditional arts therefore need to be revised and extended if they are adequately to serve the present purpose. This is paradoxically the result of the same close relationship between scholar and revivalist. To more conservative folklorists, “revival” often seemed too much like a rather ambivalent offshoot of educated enthusiasm, and too little like a fully integrated aspect of vernacular tradition, to merit equal or consistent consideration alongside other categories of traditional behaviour. However, folklorists found revivalism impossible to ignore permanently. “Revival” is manifestly relevant to the study of cultural tradition, and in the later twentieth century folklorists have been well represented in the large group of scholars addressing the phenomenon of “revival” in general and the “revival” of tradition in particular. More conservative folkloristic scholarship of revivalism tended to be vague, inconsistent and even at times pessimistic in its consideration of the relationship between tradition and “revival.” The study of revivalism was often left to members of that subcategory of folklorists whose interest arose from a prior, non-academic participation in revivalistic movements, among whose ranks may be found the writers listed in the previous paragraph. The conclusions which folklorists reached by these methods were incomplete, and even at times misleading. More recent scholarship has begun to make good this deficiency, but the idea that “revivals” constitute a special case in the operation of culture has remained as a legacy of the old mistrust, perpetuating a theoretical problem which is only now approaching resolution.

There is a central paradox. On the one hand, revivalistic movements display no unique features as a form of cultural tradition. As argued in the following pages, no specific thing happens in them which does not also happen in some essentially similar form in mature traditional *milieux*. On the other hand, revivalism certainly has a certain defining ambience and developmental

pattern, and a specific generic place within the spectrum of traditional culture. Hitherto, this defining quality of revivalism has usually been construed in several ways. These are sometimes, so to speak, forensically comparative: that is, they explicitly or implicitly compare “revival” with tradition, and/or with a prior, and often by implication more authentic, cultural state. The older, more conventional view was to see “revivals” as in basic binary opposition to tradition, such that what enthusiasts for “revival” do is seen as intrinsically untraditional. More recent commentators have seen “revivals” as showing a requisite measure of authenticity or traditionality. This rapprochement, however, has often been achieved by a weakening of the sense of the importance of diachronic transmission and continuity in the operations of culture. The validity of “revival” is asserted in its own rather narrow and specific terms, and/or the relationship between mature traditions and innovative, imitative revivalistic movements are seen, not usually quite as non-existent, but as effectively trivial, or at least unworthy of systematic explication. All of these views are commonsensical from particular standpoints; none is wholly lacking in insight. All, however, evade or disguise the central paradox stated. On the one hand, “revivals” manifestly form a distinct category of traditional or quasi-traditional *milieu*. On the other hand, “revivals” do not merely imitate mature traditions as best they can without total failure; rather, they display no unique features which might allow them to be distinguished theoretically and essentially from mature traditions. The conceptual vocabulary of the scholarship is not fully adequate to express and account for the apparent and presumed difference. As argued fully in the following chapter, failure to resolve this central and conceptually fundamental paradox has led to unconvincing conclusions in extant studies of storytelling revivalism. Therefore, the essential defining quality of storytelling revivalism, and revivalism in general, needs to be reconsidered and more clearly stated.

The generic redefinition of “revivals” in these terms is of considerable and obvious significance to the study of folklore and traditional culture, and of culture in general. Scholars have failed to deal entirely adequately with “revivals” because they have relied on incomplete understandings of what “revival” involves. These understandings are in turn so conditioned by ideas of what happens in traditional settings that the major shortcoming in the former suggests a cognate shortcoming in the latter. Given that tradition is, on most accounts, the central theme of academic folklore,² basic omissions in the understanding of tradition are a serious matter. This argument applies equally to the scholarly constructions of “revival” canvassed above. That is to say, it applies irrespectively of whether “revivals” are assumed to be the binary opposite of tradition, practically the same thing as it, and/or as something which can be considered entirely independently of the issue of meaningful diachronic continuity with specific source traditions. This is because there has hitherto been insufficient detailed description or causative analysis of the behaviours necessitated by and the experiences and understandings involved in the “revival” of tradition. Scholars have left unanswered the question of how enthusiasts for “revival” behave and why. As will be fully argued below, these questions need to be asked, not only in order to understand “revivals,” but also in order to enrich and deepen scholarly understandings of tradition; perhaps, even, fully to acknowledge certain aspects of art or culture in their general senses. Late twentieth-century scholarship in folkloric, ethnomusicological, anthropological and other fields has expedited and systematised the understanding of revivalism, but it has not solved - arguably, it has not seriously attempted to solve - the central riddle posed by the existence of the innovative “neo-traditional” movement (Bottigheimer 1986, 13-29).

² See below, Chapter 2; also Georges and Jones 1995, 1.

The methodological priority of the present study is therefore to avoid these pitfalls, in order to resolve the central paradox of revivalism and clarify the fundamental conceptual confusion of which this paradox is a symptom. To this end, techniques of data collection and analysis are applied which are, insofar as is practicable, comprehensive in scope, exhaustive within stated empirical and conceptual boundaries, inductive in approach, equivocal in tone and independent of strong personal preference as a heuristic tool, and transparent, reproducible, and open-ended in result. The precise implications of this goal are developed in Chapters 2 and 3, but, briefly, three interlinked categories of data are indispensable: firstly, information on the global and historical development of modern storytelling movements, within the wider context of the recent history of affluent Europe and the post-colonial European diaspora; secondly, detailed accounts of what storytelling revivalists actually do at the meetings at which storytelling of their preferred kind takes place; and, thirdly and perhaps centrally, participant testimony of a specific kind, relating to the way participants understand what they do and explain why they do it. The aim is not to analyse a single aspect of the storytelling movement, so much as to obtain, apparently for the first time, a general and integrated view of what one traditional arts “revival” involves, and to generalise from this towards an explanatory and generic definition of revivalistic movements in the traditional arts.

Firstly, then, there is a need to make a more thorough study of the history, contextualised performance, and cognitive content of revivalistic storytelling; and, secondly, there is a need to adopt and develop the folklorist’s research methods in order to do so. These two points summarise the goals of the present study. There are a number of preconditions for the attainment of these goals. Their exposition comprises the bulk of the present study, and is divided among the subsequent chapters as follows. Firstly, the arguments summarised in the

present chapter must be developed fully, and the central objective reiterated in full detail. These tasks are accomplished in the first two chapters. In Chapter 2, the wider academic and intellectual context of the present study is considered. Specifically, the history, usage and definition of the key term *revival* are discussed, and the attempts by folklorists and scholars in related fields to describe what happens during the episodes called revivals are assessed. The methods and conclusions of previous scholars are reviewed, and the goals and epistemological strictures adopted in the present study in response are precisely stated; specifically, justification is offered for the three categories of data listed above as historical sources, observed interaction, and recorded testimony, and the relationship between them is theorised. Subsequently, in Chapter 3, the methodology adopted in order to meet these goals within these strictures is expounded, in largely chronological order, as follows. Firstly, an account is given of preliminary fieldwork. Then the formulation of the main fieldwork strategy is recounted, as dedicated towards obtaining data in the three categories described, and in accordance with the theoretical requirements stated. The actual execution of the fieldwork strategy, and the management and analysis of the three categories of collected fieldwork data, are narrated. Finally, the main fieldwork project as a whole is reviewed. Chapter 3 concludes with a prospectus of the following four chapters, which embody the presentation of fieldwork findings and preliminary conclusions. The data presented in these four chapters corresponds to the three categories of data identified above as crucial: historical sources, observed interaction, and recorded testimony. Chapter 4 presents findings on the global historical development of revivalistic storytelling movements. Chapters 5 and 6 present findings on participants' interaction and behaviour in the meetings at which they tell stories in their preferred way; the volume of data to be presented is so large and diverse that presentation is divided into two linked chapters. Chapter 7 presents testimony from participant informants as to the nature and purposes

of their involvement in the movement. The concluding chapter, Chapter 8, draws together the conclusions of fieldwork and offers the general conclusions which have been stated in the present introduction to be the ultimate goal of the study. The findings of the three foregoing chapters are collated and summarised. The result is a descriptive account of the revivalistic storytelling movement in England and Wales, which has exemplary explanatory force regarding traditional arts “revivals” generally, and is intended to be applicable, hopefully across disciplines, as a model for interpreting and understanding cultural revival in the widest sense.

2 The scholarship of traditional arts revivalism

The majority of researchers begin with classification, imposing it upon the material from without and not extracting it from the material itself. ... Investigators here have proceeded according to instinct, and their words do not correspond to what they have actually sensed ... [but] in contradicting himself, he [the investigator] actually proceeds correctly.

Vladimir Propp¹

2.1 Preview

The aims of the present chapter are stated in the foregoing. They may be recapitulated as follows. They are, firstly, to survey the context of the present study, including the history, usage and definition of the key terms *revival* and *tradition*; secondly, to assess critically the methods and conclusions of previous scholars who have attempted to describe revivalistic movements, especially those in the traditional arts; and, thirdly, to state precisely the goals and epistemological strictures of the study.

2.2 Revival and tradition

The *Oxford English Dictionary* does not record a substantial history of linked usage of the terms *revival* and *tradition*. Linked usage seems to be peculiar to nineteenth- and twentieth-century folk and related “revival” movements. However, the terms *tradition* and *revival* evolved separately in quite similar ways. Both began as late medieval borrowings from French, with narrow, often

¹ Propp 1968, 5-6.

religious and/or legal referents. Both acquired wider, more secular, and more figurative meanings as the centuries progressed. During the seventeenth century, both terms spawned fluid and elaborate terminologies, and there was a rapid rise in the numbers of etymologically related synonyms and near-synonyms recorded for each idea. This was followed by a whittling-down process, resulting in smaller standard vocabularies of related terms, in general use today. This process involved a slow progression towards the senses currently acknowledged by those involved in the study and emulation of folk culture.

The English word *tradition* came, *via* Old French *tradic(c)ion*, from Latin *tradition-*, “delivery, surrender,” or by extension “handing down, a saying handed down, instruction or doctrine delivered,” as in Tertullian’s *traditio evangelica* and *catholica traditio*. This meant the teachings of the Christian church, orally preserved and transmitted over generations by the body of its members. As such, it is recorded, in pejorative use, in English in the 1380s; Wycliffe’s contrast of “the tradicioun of men” and “veyn tradicioun” with “Goddis maundement” are apparently the earliest recorded usages in English. Like its Latin and French antecedents, *tradition* is therefore ultimately an ecclesiological term; it was later applied in the same spirit, from the early eighteenth century onwards, to the teachings of (specifically Sunni) Islam.² However, from the early modern period, the referents of *tradition* were not only multiplied but also secularised. From the late fifteenth to the seventeenth century *tradition*, as “surrender,” could mean, simply, betrayal, especially religious apostasy. Differently, and more germanely to the present study, by the late 1500s it had come to be applied more freely of a religious context, to mean

² This meaning gave rise in the mid-nineteenth century to *traditionalism*, an anti-rational Catholic philosophy, and *traditionalist*, and this sense has persisted to the present day. In another example of secularising and diversifying meanings, in the mid-twentieth century *traditionalist* came also to refer to a devotee of traditional jazz music.

A long established and generally accepted custom or method of procedure, having almost the force of a law; an immemorial usage; the body (or any one) of the experiences and usages of any branch or school of art or literature, handed down by predecessors and generally followed. (OED (2nd ed., 1989), *Tradition* 5(b))

Savile's 1591 translation of Tacitus referred to "Old songs delivered ... by tradition, from their fathers," and Shakespeare uses the term in this sense (*Richard II*, III - ii - 173). By contrast with the original ecclesiological meaning, this was tradition more or less as the contemporary folklorist still understands it. *Traditional(ly)* was recorded with this meaning from the early seventeenth century, eventually supplanting the contemporary synonyms *traditionary/traditionarily*, *traditionate*, *traditious*, and *traditive*. Already, tradition had a dual meaning which has exercised folklorists greatly: from the first, it has referred simultaneously both to a body of mentifacts, and also to the process whereby these mentifacts are transmitted and preserved. *Traditionalize*, to "render traditional" or to "imbue or constrain by tradition," followed in the late nineteenth century, and *traditionalization* in the mid-twentieth.

Revive (French *revivre*: *re-* + *vivre* "live") is first recorded in English in 1432. Its meaning was to resuscitate, in a narrowly physical sense: to "return" or "restore to consciousness ... from a swoon or faint," both transitively and intransitively. However, by the early sixteenth century, *revive* had also begun to acquire numerous additional and figurative senses: to "assume fresh life or vigour ... resume courage or strength," or to "come back to life," often, specifically, to undergo Christian Resurrection; and also, of rights, customs, manorial tenures and other offices, to "revalidate" or "restore" in the eyes of the law. By the end of the sixteenth century, *revive* had come additionally to be applied also to mentifacts in general - knowledge, ideas, and memories - in the sense of "bring[ing] back again into ... currency," and again, more generally, to

individual or collective states of being, such as sin, desire, war, as to “reawaken.” It had also generated the nouns *reviver* and *revivement*, used to mean an agent which revives. In the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, strangely to modern ears, *revive* was itself used as a noun, meaning both literal “restoration to life” and figurative “revival (of a play) on the stage.” It also generated a specialist scientific meaning, which it retained at least until the nineteenth century: the restoration of a chemical to its natural metallic state. In the mid-seventeenth century, then, specialist meanings aside, *revive* appears to have referred, as a verb or less often as a verbal noun, to resuscitation, either literally, or figuratively of a wide range of mentifacts and personal or social states of being.

Although there was as yet no hint that revival might be applied to custom or tradition, the mid-seventeenth century approaches the historical point, significant for the present study, at which the original verb *revive* generated a noun, applicable to social and cultural institutions in a figurative sense. Over the following centuries it acquired just this meaning, and related neologisms followed suit. According to the OED, the word *revival* itself is first recorded in Davenant’s *Gondibert* of 1651 (III - iv - 68):

The King has now his curious sight suffis’d
With all lost Arts, in their revival view’d.

From the mid-seventeenth century to the present, *revival* has been applicable generally, as in the above quotation, to “learning, letters or literature,” most conspicuously, in the later nineteenth century, of the vogue for Gothic architecture. Also, and more specifically, it has supplanted the shortlived verbal noun *revive*, applied to individual “play[s], ... literary work[s],” and subsequently “broadcast programmes,” in the sense of resumption of public

performance, publication or transmission. It has also largely supplanted other, mostly seventeenth-century, versions of verbal nouns with a synonymous, more general meaning, including *reviver*, *revivor*, and *reviving*, all of which were used more or less as *revival* in the current, general sense.

From the later seventeenth century, various other roughly synonymous terms were generated from *revive*, as happened simultaneously in the case of *tradition*. These included *reviviscent*, *reviviscency*, *revivification*, and *revivify*. *Revivement* was recorded in 1637 with a rather changed meaning, as a term for the Protestant Reformation, and subsequently as a synonym for *revival* in a more general sense, but it too failed to supplant *revival* as a term. Then, in 1702, an important specific figurative usage of *revival* was first recorded which has persisted to the present: to mean “a general reawakening of or in religion.” Additionally, and more generally, from the mid-eighteenth century onwards, *revive* was used as a verb, meaning “return,” of temporal periods and historical states generally, such as “the pastoral age” or “the old time.” *Revival* in the more narrowly religious sense was usually applied to evangelical Protestant Nonconformism, often in a derogatory sense “in reference to the excitement and extravagance which tend to accompany such movements” (OED (2nd ed., 1989), *Revival* (3(b)). *Revivalism*, *revivalist* and *revivalize* were recorded, in 1815, 1820 and 1882 respectively, referring to enthusiastic religious revivals, to their adherents (as noun, and attributively or adjectivally), and to the preaching involved. *Revivalistic* followed in the 1880s. However, by the mid-nineteenth century, these terms, like their predecessors, had begun to assume a more general application to art and culture generally. In 1870, Ruskin referred to the builders of the Vatican and Versailles - neither group, presumably, being dominated by charismatic evangelical Nonconformists - as “Revivalist.” As one commentator dryly remarked in the 1870s:

However far the rage for revivalism may be pushed, nobody will ever want to revive the nineteenth century.³

Although, as stated, the *Oxford English Dictionary* does not hint at it, the later application of the term *revival* to *tradition* is reviewed and assessed by Rosenberg (1993). *Revival* was first applied to art and craft by the pre-Raphaelites and their successors from the late nineteenth century; the Gothic revival has already been mentioned. Early twentieth-century folksong enthusiasts such as Sharp were arguably revivalistic in ideology (in a non-religious sense), but they made little explicit use of the term. Sharp seems to have used it only in a general sense; he advocated revival of folksong, but he did not refer to the folksong movement itself as the revival, or as a revival (Rosenberg 1993, 17). Importantly, however, *revival* was adopted in the 1950s by folk music activists explicitly as a name for the movement in which they participated; this seems to be the point at which revival and tradition became cardinally linked as terms and concepts. In the United States of America, Charles Seeger used *revival* to distinguish the folksong movement from extant source tradition, which he termed *survival*. In Britain, *revival* as a label found an influential sponsor in the singer, songwriter, collector and organiser Ewan MacColl. As a result, by the 1960s, *revival* had replaced older (and possibly more politically explosive) terms like *movement* as the term for the wave of interest in vernacular song then sweeping across Britain and North America. As traditional song and music acquired new constituencies, the idea of revival allowed members of these new constituencies to acknowledge their difference from traditional source communities, but simultaneously to claim kinship with them. In storytelling, *revival* was in similar use by the 1970s (Baker and Greene 1977) to describe a related, similar but less politicised upswing of interest in traditional story. This upswing of interest eventually became the contemporary

³ L. Stephen, *Hours in Library* I-245 (quoted in OED (2nd ed., 1989) *Revivalism*, 2).

storytelling movement currently under discussion, and this brings the etymological story up to the present day and the present study.

Though some prefer terms such as *re-awakening* (Ryan 1993), both activists within the storytelling movement (Medlicott 1990, Haggarty 1995) and scholars of other “revival” movements (Rosenberg 1993, McCarthy 1994) identify recent developments specifically as “revivals.” While the term is not universally accepted by activists, it has no single realistic competitor either among scholars or among practitioners of any “revived” art. *Revival* has superseded its rival synonyms in this case, just as, in different contexts, it previously superseded *reviver*, *reviving*, and *revivment*. The implications of *tradition* are discussed in the present chapter, below; the utility of *revival* is addressed at once.

In adopting *revival* and related terms, then, twentieth-century enthusiasts for folk music and storytelling have unselfconsciously maintained congruence with long-term semantic developments. From the first, terms with originally quite specific, usually religious referents have been gradually subjected to wider applications in the secular sphere. Moreover, this extended range of referents has long included movements of activists with emotive enthusiasm for social, cultural, artistic and religious renewal. From this standpoint, there is little reason to cavil at the common-sense use of *revival* to denote appropriative movements in traditional arts. However, as stated above, such common-sense usage is, in practice, often loaded and problematic. This is because, as suggested in Chapter 1, *revival* necessarily invokes the three-stage cyclical model of development formulated by Bausinger (1990, 71): the idea that a “revival” constitutes the restoration of the distant past, as well as a rejection of the immediate past and present circumstances. Used with specific reference to storytelling in England and Wales, and in other affluent English-speaking

societies, this implies three things: firstly, that storytelling (in whatever way this is defined) has fallen into complete disuse in the recent past, the nadir-like middle stage of the Bausingerian model; secondly, that “revival,” so called, exactly replicates it; and thirdly, that nothing outside the “revival” does so (Medlicott 1990, 3). Strictly speaking, these implications are untenable. Firstly, the proposition that “revival,” so called, exactly replicates tradition ignores a complex and problematic transitional process that has preoccupied both scholars and revivalists, and about which the present study will have much to say (Rosenberg 1993, xiii, Haggarty 1995); specifically, it ignores the important fact that “revivalists” are vitalistically appropriating bodies of narrative from outside their own culture area, however this is defined. The recent *Dictionary of English Folklore* notes under *revival* (Simpson and Roud 2000, 294)

Problems of definition start to occur when others *start* a new series of performances which they have copied from elsewhere.

Secondly, the proposition that storytelling is moribund, outside a relatively institutionalised movement of enthusiasts, ignores the vast range of activity discussed as storytelling in an immense academic and specialist literature, and in vernacular and non-specialist usage.⁴

The idea of a literally revived storytelling is therefore specious. However, *revival* continues to be used by both scholars and activists as an inexact common-sense term. This usage can be an acknowledgement of the movement’s claims or goals, rather than of its actual nature. One can use the term *storytelling revival* as a figurative title, with an implied “so-called” or “self-styled,” just as one can refer to Catholic or Orthodox Christianity without

⁴ See, for example, Allen 1989; Bauman 1986; Brandes 1989; Bell 1989; Bennett 1980, 1985, 1987; Bennett and Smith 1985, 1988 (1), 1988 (2), Bennett, Smith and Widdowson 1987; Buchan 1992; Dégh 1992; Macdonald 1996; Paredes 1989, and numerous other monographs.

necessarily conceding the expressed claims to universal (catholic) or authoritative (orthodox) status. There are at least three objections to the use of the term in this sense. Firstly, there is no guarantee of its literal precision. Scholars have already rejected a similar lack of precision in terms such as the now vernacular *urban myth*, preferring *contemporary legend* or *belief legend* (Bennett, Smith and Widdowson, 1985-1988). More importantly, referring to a movement as a “revival” implies that this term, with its concomitant ideology, is a central or defining claim or preoccupation of its participants. There is certainly *prima facie* evidence that this is not the case for all of the movements termed “revivals.” It is therefore rash even to imply *a priori* that it is the case for storytelling movements. The folk music revivalist Alan Jabbour, a member of an influential band in the US folk “revival,” regards the idea of revival as approximate, symbolic, even misleading:

Nor can ... the Hollow Rock String Band claim comfortably that it “revived” a string band style ... What we were doing is hard to classify as a revival, by most uses of the term ... The way we felt, on reflection, may provide the clue to why we and others kept calling it a revival. Our revival was not so much a revival of specific artistic artifacts ... as a revival of symbolic values, like a religious revival. (Rosenberg 1993, xiii)

Even for activists, “revival” is an inexact and potentially problematic term of convenience. Indeed, this ambivalence itself has to do with the subject matter of the present study. The use of *revival* is to be avoided for the time being. The following terminology is therefore adopted in the present study. Obviously, *revival* is reproduced in *verbatim* quotations from other writers. Also, *revival* in a plain, general sense is so called. In referring to movements which are characterised by some esoteric use (Jansen 1965) of the term, sparing use, within inverted commas, is made of “*revival*” to call attention to this use, and/or to the thinking which appears to underlie it. Generally, however,

preference is given to Wallace's term (*revivalistic*) *movement* (Wallace 1956), which remains congruent with the terminological history reviewed above, but, usefully, remains equivocal. More broadly, and equally equivocally, *revivalism* and *revivalist* are used to refer to revivalistic ideas, ideologies and enthusiasts, specifically concerned with traditional art, and the general phenomenon of appropriative movements in traditional arts, without conceding that they are literally "revivals." Revivalistic movements in these senses are distinguished from *non-revivalistic* traditions or cultures, referred to as *source traditions* to denote their status as models or inspirations for revivalists. Finally, this schema has been quietly set aside for stylistic reasons, if thereby an awkward-sounding sentence could be amended without loss of precision or clarity. The nature and history of the storytelling movement has now been briefly described, the conceptual context stated, and the terminology clarified. It is therefore possible to begin the detailed critical assessment of the methods and conclusions of previous scholars who have attempted to describe revivalistic movements in the traditional arts and in other spheres.

2.3 Scholarly approaches to traditional arts revivalism

To the present writer's knowledge, there has been no large-scale scholarly study of revivalistic storytelling in the British Isles. An incipient scholarship, largely from the mid-1990s, relates to North American storytelling revivalism (McCarthy 1994, Mullen 1981, Peiffer 1994, Sobol 1994, Stone 1998). Also, storytelling revivalism can be understood in two more general ways: as an oral narrative culture, and also - more pertinently to the present study - as a form of traditional arts revivalism. Each of these two categories - oral narrative and traditional arts revivalism - has its own scholarly literature, spanning several disciplines as described above: the social sciences, psychology, history, musicology, and cultural studies. A vernacular or popular scholarship often also

arises within active revivalism. Each of these disciplinary perspectives contributes to the study of storytelling revivalism, but at no point have all perspectives been coherently integrated. Thus, methodological and conceptual weaknesses, silences and inconsistencies persist in the literature when reviewed as a unitary whole, and aspects of the essential nature of storytelling revivalism remain unexplained. The aim of the present section is to identify these weaknesses; it will be argued that they arise from an imperfect integration of diverse approaches.

Essentially there are three problems in this literature. For convenience, these may be named the problem of transparency of representation, the problem of scale of scrutiny, and the problem of consistency of interest. Firstly: the problem of transparency of representation is a pervasive one in the study of human behaviour. It arises from the inevitable fact that scholarly representations and interpretations of the actions, thoughts and words of other human subjects recast these actions, thoughts and words in a new form for the purposes of analysis and representation. For example: observed actions are narrated by an authorial voice, or talk is imprecisely transcribed, selectively quoted and/or paraphrased, and overall patterns of cultural content imputed by scholars trusting ultimately to their own opaque perspicacity. In subtle and/or substantial, open and/or covert ways, these nuanced differences invest the material represented with meanings which derive not so much from the people studied as from the scholar's own personal and disciplinary preoccupations, by a form of expositional ventriloquism. Therefore, over all scholarly representations of human behaviour, there hangs doubt regarding the source and validity of the precise, nuanced meanings imputed to given observed acts. This problem is beyond absolute resolution, so scholars have responded by working with it, honing in a variety of ways the sensitivity and accountability of their observational methods, and the transparency and reflexivity of their

strategies of argumentation and presentation. This irreducible problem is too large a subject for full treatment in the present study, but, as will be seen, it has pervaded and conditioned the other more specific and manageable problems, and all strategies adopted in the present study are, at root, attempts to take this basic dilemma into account.

The second problem concerns scale of scrutiny. Scholarship of storytelling revivalism, and some scholarship of other forms of revivalism, has failed to correlate scrutiny of the large-scale (or global) and small-scale (or local) properties of culture. Apparently because of disciplinary boundaries, scholars have not always even attempted to describe causative and developmental patterns in revivalistic movements by comparing global and local patterns and integrating interpretation accordingly. This disguises the fully emergent character of storytelling revivalism: that is, the fact that it spreads and develops at once globally, on the scale of countries, regions and social classes, and locally, on the scale at which people interact in rooms and influence each other with an irreducible measure of free will, without it ever becoming possible to explain what happens at one level reductively in terms of causes at the other level. Some detailed and plausible strategies exist for explaining social phenomena at the global level of scale, and others for explaining social phenomena at the local level of scale; but they are not applied in parallel, with equal rigour, in specific monographs. Instead, phenomena at one level are explained, reductively and unsatisfactorily, in terms of conclusions about phenomena at the other level. The frequent lack of methodical integration along the continuum from large to small of the scale of scholarly scrutiny is a specific central methodological problem in the study of storytelling revivalism, and of revivalism in a more general sense. More recent studies go some way towards making good this lack, but these in turn are limited by the legacy of the third problem.

The third problem concerns consistency of interest. Scholars' approaches to revivalism have been slightly less than even-handed. On the one hand, folklorists normally acknowledge the responsibility to portray their subjects empathetically, or at least objectively. Most monographs on tradition and tradition-bearers achieve this in some measure. This goodwill, however, has been withheld from revivalistic movements in storytelling and other traditional arts by some more conservative scholars, largely because of a principled disapproval of the fallacious terms of revivalists' claims to continuity with the imagined traditions of an imagined past. The legacy of this partisanship is discernible even in the work of more recent and sympathetic scholarship, which maintains a preoccupation with revivalists' habit of tendentiously claiming continuity with past traditions. In this more sympathetic scholarship, more or less apologetic theorists of "revival" still draw attention to such claims, invoking them to maintain a sense of the distinctness of "revival" from tradition at an absolute level; or, more tolerantly still, scholars bypass the whole troubled issue by effectively disregarding historical and diachronic issues and focusing on synchronic aspects of performance and context. Both approaches have yielded illuminating results, but important questions remain unresolved.

This problem is associated with a close relationship between some folklore scholarship and traditional arts revivalism. As described above, the folklorist has often regarded "revival" as an offshoot of popular culture, and/or of educated enthusiasm, consanguine with the scholar's own, and not qualifying for consideration as a fully integrated aspect of vernacular tradition. The present study will shortly argue in detail that there are good reasons to regard "revivals" as a qualitatively distinct kind of undertaking within traditional culture; scholars of folk music and other revivalisms do so, as does the present study, in order to resolve the confusion surrounding them. Nevertheless, there is no overriding reason to regard "revival" *a priori* as essentially distinct from

traditional culture as such, or as a false example of it. “Revivals” show all storable defining characteristics of traditional culture. These latter two problems are symptoms of the historical emergence and development of the academic discipline of folklore studies. They are discussed in detail below but, as a necessary preliminary, this historical development of the subject of folklore is now briefly reviewed.

2.3.1 Folk, lore, tradition and authenticity

At the turn of the twenty-first century, academic folklore in the British Isles is approaching a synthesis between broadly European and broadly North American approaches which are united, firstly, in attempting to reject the founding definitions of *folklore* and, secondly, (to generalise) by a continued concern with *tradition* or something cognate with it. European approaches inherit a more conservative view of the subject which was the unchallenged standard until the mid-twentieth century. They remain largely humanistic in their premises; empirical, analytical, and often quantitative in their methods; objective in their exposition; inclined to consider longer-term diachronic developmental processes and continuities in folk culture; and (sometimes) uneasy about the term *folklore* itself. North American approaches, by contrast, show the influence firstly of the social sciences and more recently of later twentieth-century cultural and critical theory. They are often postmodernist and, so to speak, post-humanist in their premises, politicised (often in terms of ethnic and personal rather than socioeconomic identity), and often painstakingly theorised in their expository manner; they are usually qualitative in method, subjective in tone, and epistemologically cautious; they are often preoccupied with folk culture in the present moment rather than developmentally over time; and they are somewhat more comfortable with the term *folklore*, albeit under revised definitions and often in revised forms, such

as *folkloristics*, which recall the fertile early modern experimentation with Latinate synonyms for *tradition* and *revival* as reviewed above. In the British Isles, the older and more substantial centres of folklore study in Scotland, Ireland and Wales have always inclined more towards a European approach, and in England the same approach seems to be broadly dominant in the synthesis.⁵ Crucially, however, and despite these attempted rejections and revisions, the central focus of academic folklore is now, as it always has been, universally felt by folklorists to be forms of cultural marginalisation or centrifugality.

To elucidate: it is a commonplace that the discipline originally called *popular antiquities*, and famously renamed *Folk-lore* by W.J. Thoms in 1846 (Dorson 1968, 52), has always known terminological and conceptual turmoil (Burns 1989). The Germanic *folklore* was coined as a scholarly label for the traditional songs, tales, legendary history, sayings, beliefs, customs and (later) artefacts of the common people, in most cases specifically the rural working classes. *Folk-lore* was coined as an alternative to the Latinate *popular antiquities*, a neat etymological miniature of neoclassical Enlightenment and quasi-atavistic counter-Enlightenment in contest. Ever since, definitions, redefinitions, and rejections of the concepts of *folk* and *folklore* have abounded, and the history of the subject has been punctuated by immigration of aims and methods from other fields. The development of Anglo-American folklore studies falls very approximately into two epochs: an early period of relative buoyancy and stability, and a later of relative turmoil. The first occupied roughly a century from about 1850. During this century, Europe - increasingly nationalist, economically liberal and intellectually positivistic - was economically, politically

⁵ The present study conflates the two approaches; although it is methodologically fairly revisionist, its conclusions, as will be seen, tend towards a reformulation of a conservative position.

and culturally the dominant force in the world, and was the confidently self-proclaimed vanguard of universal human progress. The marginality of folklore was construed in large-scale historical, social and geographical terms, relative to the mainstream developmental progress which Europe led and exemplified. Folklorists assumed that the folk constituted marginalised communities perpetuating a stage of culture which educated Europe had left behind. That is to say: folk communities were “small, isolated, nonliterate, and homogeneous” (Redfield 1947, 297), and their “lore” was, straightforwardly, the traditional elements, possibly as such the whole, of their culture (Bauman 1971; 1986, 7; Dorson 1976, 33-73; Finnegan 1992, 174; Roberts 1993, 158).⁶ Tradition was viewed diachronically as the way in which this folk, “traditional, spontaneous and uncritical” as they were, and lacking the intellectual and creative resources required to question and so vary these cultural materials, passively preserved them “from generation to generation” (Cox, 1897, 4-5; Dorson, 1976, 36; Redfield 1947, 300). Folklore was a fact, a symptom of history, of diachronic sociocultural development. By 1900, within the Folklore Society (founded in 1878), cultural evolutionism had won the battle to theorise this assumption (Dorson 1968). The legacy of its dialectical opponent, Müllerian comparative mythology, meanwhile, was preserved in the historical-geographical method of Julius and Kaarle Krohn and their successors of the so-called Finnish school, which applied the folklorist’s expertise in etic taxonomy (Abrahams 1992, 46) to the study of spatiotemporal diffusion and variation of collected folklore texts (Aarne and Thompson, 1964 (1928); Chesnutt 1993 (1), 237; Dégh 1972; Dorson 1976, 38; Thompson n.d.).

In this early epoch, the folklorist’s subject matter was diachronically understood and could be viewed from two contrasting perspectives: the

For discussion of a cognate approach to “tribalism” in colonial Africa, see Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983, 248-9.

evolutionary and the devolutionary. From the former perspective, scholars understood their subject, especially traditional beliefs, customs and ritual observances, simply as an error of academic interest only, which, thanks to progress, humanity was gradually sloughing off: a “long tragedy of human folly and suffering” (Fraser 1927 (1); 1936 vol. 1, vi; 1938, 420-421). However, a more optimistic strain of romantic nationalism, voiced by Herder (Dorson 1976, 33-34; Wilson 1989) but deriving from earlier representations of country people and culture (Abrahams 1992, 36), had already been applied to folk culture - more to art than belief, and especially to the folktale (Dégh 1972) (see below, Chapter 4). This body of scholarship saw folk art and tradition as preserving something worthy of emulation. The traditions surviving in the contemporary world were seen as fragmentary evidence of a societal and spiritual wholeness which had been lost as humanity degenerated into the enervating fragmentation of sophisticated civilisation. From both perspectives, however, crucially for the present argument, folklore was marginal to the main flow of development: a holistic anti-type of rationalism, liberalism, technologised, urban industrialism and/or capitalist alienation. Exactly a century later, Redfield’s schema of the “folk society” was still governed by this search for anti-type, “a type which contrasts with the society of the modern city” (Redfield 1947, 293, Paredes and Bauman 1972). Devolutionists, though friendlier to folk culture as such than evolutionists, took no less dim a view of the folk themselves. The longevity of traditional culture, though valued, was ascribed precisely to the inability of ordinary people to create anything original and valuable. Early scholars studied the origins, forms (whether *einfache* or otherwise) and structures of folklore texts independently of context (Dégh 1972; Propp 1968; Raglan 1965; Smith 1978), precisely because source communities were seen to lack understanding, preserving the lore of their greater ancestors unconsciously, unintentionally, and, by implication, unselfconsciously (Hopkins 1976, 450; Kosby 1977, 16).

By 1950, however, European dominance in the political and economic spheres was rapidly vanishing, and old European complacencies had been undermined by the apocalyptic events of the early twentieth century. The objective, historical, linear, view of social development which underpinned the definition of folklore as vestigial, was being rejected. Folklore as an intellectual project had depended on it. Bereft of it, folklorists embarked on a long quest for an identity (Sobol 1994, 52; Smith 1978). This search echoed a more general self-questioning by the postwar, postcolonial West. Conservative folklorists, especially in Europe, continued to define folklore largely in terms of genre, to give attention to patterns of dissemination, and to base their study around typological taxonomies. Meanwhile, in North America, new methodologies were sought in sister disciplines which could provide folklorists with new working habits. From anthropology came functionalism; and from sociology came expressive, interactionist and performance-centred approaches, sociolinguistics, and the ethnography of communication (Abrahams 1992, 34, 41; Baron 1993, 229; Bascom 1965; Bascom 1965; Chesnutt 1993 (1), 237-8; Dorson 1976, 33-73; McLeish 1969, 15-28; Virtanen 1993, 266). In reviewing these developments, four key ideas quarter the conceptual ground: firstly, *folk*; secondly, *lore*; thirdly, *tradition* and its relationship with *folklore*; and fourthly, and perhaps most centrally, purity or *authenticity*.

To discuss these in turn: during the twentieth century, the idea of a separate and homogeneous *folk*, never anyway universally unchallenged (Abrahams 1992, 42), finally retreated from Anglo-American folkloristics, and by the mid-century it was, as Smith put it, “doubtful that the uneducated or illiterate can be considered apart from other persons” (Leach 1949-1950, 402). Once-definitive characteristics of folk groups, such as orality and concomitant insulation from print and from electronic media, rurality, and technological simplicity, were questioned and rejected (Baron 1993, 234; Bausinger 1990; Ben Amos 1971;

Dorson 1976, 37, 48). More deeply, and crucially, the sense of the holistic community of folklife was challenged by concepts of differential identity (Bauman 1971) and, in Rivière's words, "the reinstatement of the individual as a thinking and feeling subject who is the creator of his society and culture" (Finnegan 1992, 2; Bauman 1986, 78). Also, folklorists were increasingly reluctant to question a more diffuse scope which defined as subject "any group of people whatsoever who share at least one common factor," in Dundes' typical formulation of the "folk group," in any societal setting, urban and mainstream as well as rural and marginalised (Dundes 1978, 1-21; Kosby 1977, 12). Folkness now was no longer an objective feature of people or communities existing in external reality, but a quality discerned, even imposed, by the scholar's subjective gaze.

This inclusive, subjectivised redefinition of *folk* was partly prompted by a redefinition of *lore*. Structural and textual approaches (Dundes 1978, 178-205, 223-262; Köngäs Maranda and Maranda 1971) were superseded in the USA, but remained more current in European folklore studies (Holbek 1987). For the revisionists, text was practically supplanted, or supplemented, by the making and analysis of audio and video recordings by a new breed of technologically literate professional folklorists and, like *folk*, theoretically reconfigured as the method rather than the matter of folklore (Abrahams 1992, 46; Rosenberg 1993, 13 Paredes and Bauman 1972). Context and performance became central issues to an approach eventually labelled "performance" by Glassie and articulated in a special 1972 edition of the *Journal of American Folklore* (Briggs and Shuman 1993, Rosenberg 1993, 13, Paredes and Bauman 1972). Folklore was redefined not as a body of text, existing as it were within but independently of the lives of the folk, but as a medium of expression in which the source communities' and performers' perspectives and creativity were issues of central importance. The new definitions of *folk* were applied, and the

retreat of cultural evolutionism left no reliable grounds for considering features such as orality and rurality, or even traditionality, as definitive and universal rather than descriptive and incidental qualities of folklore (Ben Amos 1971). From the 1970s, the genre typology of folklore and folk narrative was re-assessed by scholars in Britain and the USA (Abrahams 1992, 32, Bennett 1980), increasingly by the elicitation of emic categories from informants rather than, as previously, by the imposition of etic ones by scholars (Abrahams 1992, 46). Modes of behaviour and communication, such as rumour legends (Bennett, Smith and Widdowson 1985-1989) and photocopylore (Dundes and Patger 1987; Preston 1974; Smith 1987) were observed within the more mainstream communities of contemporary affluent societies, which seemed to circulate in a tradition-like manner and so to qualify as suitable for research by the folklorist. Performance was often reconceptualised such that textual and contextual elements were seen as indistinguishable.

Perhaps most fundamentally, *tradition* itself was being similarly reconceptualised. It was famously rejected altogether as a definitive feature of folklore by Ben Amos in favour of a narrowly synchronic definition as “artistic communication in small groups” without necessary reference to the historical context (Baron 1993, 233; Ben Amos 1971). In an influential article, Handler and Linnekin (1989) defined tradition not as a bounded, essential body of culture, existing apart from people’s perceptions of it and forming an objective link with the past, but as a process of symbolic evocation of pastness which is itself constantly in flux. This was a crucial redefinition. Tradition came to be seen as synchronic, not a guarantee of pastness and authenticity, but, in the words of Briggs and Shuman, as a process of “traditionalising,” or “identifying aspects of the past as significant in the present” (Bausinger 1990, 64, Briggs and Shuman 1993, 109, Finnegan 1992, 114, 127, 128, Handler and Linnekin 1989, Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983, 2, Rosenberg 1993, 11, Smith 1978).

Tradition, too, was now no longer seen as an objective, developmental fact of culture but as a subjective, synchronic, rhetorical stance.

The study of vernacular culture in Britain retained an often Marxist interest in history and socioeconomics (Lloyd 1967, Pickering and Green 1987), and in diachronic modelling of a more objective tradition (Smith 1985) which was more compatible with European approaches. The contrasting redefinition was therefore, at bottom, an extension of a tendency noted by the US folklorist Deborah Kodish, for postwar scholars in the United States to “abandon attention to political-economic, socio-cultural and historical contexts” (Kodish 1993, 195). Like performance folklore, this new, historically decontextualised, subjectivised folklore was also eventually codified in special editions of relevant journals: the *Journal of American Folklore* (Feintuch 1995) and *Western Folklore* (Briggs and Shuman, 1993). Undoubtedly, much of the early revisionism had been positive and enriching in its effects (Honko 1981, Kvideland *et al.* 1992), but, taken collectively, these later special editions do not present an appetising, still less a convincing account of the contemporary folklorist’s subject, because of this extremely and narrowly ahistorical and non-socioeconomic scope. It is effectively a truism that folklore, like all culture, is shaped by its past, and its political, social or economic context. It is therefore uninformative to theorise or study it as if this were trivial or untrue. Indeed, the tendency of scholars from the United States particularly to evade these issues is both generally and specifically ethnocentric. Generally, it reproduces what the US folklorist Alan Dundes has identified as a general cultural orientation in US society away from the past and towards the future (1978). Specifically, it reproduces the market-driven preoccupations of capitalism, in that it involves a reductive totalisation of the process immediately in hand, and sometimes too an unexamined assumption that this process is best represented as an idealised market - that is, as free and equal exchange. Kapchan (1993) is conspicuous

but not incongruous (see, for example, Bohlman 1988, 121 - 140) in offering the market as a basic “emerging paradigm” of worldwide folkloric and traditional cultural exchange. In other words: a scholar from a conspicuously extreme and globally dominant capitalist culture offers the basic capitalist socioeconomic institution - the market - as a global model for culture in general. This is an ethnocentric, not to say neocolonialist, master narrative, of the kind explicitly rejected elsewhere in the same volume (Ritchie 1993, 365). It would be unfair to assert that these omissions and inconsistencies were universal in revisionist folkloristics. Monographs by US folklorists have certainly retained a necessary recognition of the reality and relevance of history and of socioeconomic issues (Briggs 1990, Georges and Jones 1995). However, as has been pointed out, this retention has therefore tended to be untheorised and rather unsystematic (Pickering and Green 1987, 22 - 24).

The treatment of the idea of *authenticity* is a case in point. Early on in this process of redefinition, however, though there was debate about what guaranteed it, the idea of authenticity remained: that authentic folklore existed somewhere, in distinction from its anti-type, inauthentic folklore or non-folklore (Dorson, 1976). This seemed to be partly related to folklorists’ desire to preserve the identity of their discipline (Baron 1993, 228). In particular, Dorson, though a contextualist who celebrated the extension of the definitive boundaries of the subject, argued vociferously against over-inclusive definitions and over-porous boundaries such as might admit traditional arts revivalism and comparable forms (Dorson 1976, 45 *et seq.*). Here is encountered the most uncompromising and substantial rejection of revivalism as a subject for folklorists, and its motivation was as much practical as disinterestedly intellectual. In Dorson’s pejorative coinage *fakelore*, the non-folk agents are unqualified “dilettantes” frustrating the attempt to argue the seriousness of folklore both as traditional culture and as an academic discipline directed

towards its study (Dorson 1976, 123, 116). Dorson invokes a Redfieldian contrast: fakelore is “commercialised and ideological,” whereas folklore is “traditional” (123). With the emergence of contextualism and performance folklore, folklorists who, like Dorson, denied the authenticity of revivalism did so on the grounds that the relationship of traditional text to revivalistic context was spurious (Rosenberg 1993, 13). This rejection itself depended on concepts such as authenticity, purity, and traditionality, which soon approached untenability within revisionist US folklore; in Harris’ words, they became “negotiable traits” (Briggs and Shuman 1993, 349, 356-359; Harris, 1995, 521). As Rosenberg put it (1993, 30):

rigid academic distinctions between *folklore* (“pure,” “original,” “genuine”), *fakelore* (“spurious and synthetic (rewritings) from earlier literary and journalistic sources”), and *folklorism* (commercial exploitation of uprooted and displaced folk art) are not helpful terms for a definition of folklore in today’s society.

Thus, tradition came to be seen as itself potentially commercialised, ideological, and technologically mediated, while commerce, ideology and the media came to be seen as influenced by tradition. As a result, Dorson’s distinction seemed to collapse. Whereas folklore had once been seen in distinction both from popular and from high culture, it was now seen as a segment of a continuum with them (Narváez and Laba 1991). Contributors to the special editions of journals in the 1990s additionally questioned the idea of folklore as othering, or as representing given cultures as insurmountably alien, which they regarded as underpinning ethnocentricity. The postmodern disavowal of ethnocentricity (which, as exemplified, is ineffectual against the ethnocentricity of the scholars professing it) has dovetailed with the general weakening of the sense of difference between folklore and other forms of culture to rob the term of much of its utility (Shuman and Briggs 1993, 109; Baron, 1993, 241). Indeed, a more tolerant attitude towards revivalism has been one symptom of this softening of

stance. Incidentally, again, at the sociopolitical level, the disregard of authenticity shows the effects of the late capitalist context of revisionist folkloristics. Authenticity and purity, being inalienable and unquantifiable, impede the imposition of views of culture as a marketplace defined by alienation, scarcity, and exchange value. Their characterisation by Harris (1995, 521) specifically as “negotiable” - amenable to bargaining - is highly and apparently unintentionally revealing. Similarly, authenticity, which appears most obviously detectable in relation to diachronic continuity, is unlikely to survive a totalisation of the momentary transaction which discards diachronic continuity as a consideration.

Something of the old sense of the distinctness of folk culture has, however, been preserved. This, again, has tended toward the exclusion of revivalism. Scholars who did not abandon *folklore* altogether, in favour, for example, of *cultural tradition* (Smith 1985), struggled to reformulate it as a quality of, or tendency in, culture, rather than a type of it. Even in a folklore-popular culture continuum, some sense of a qualitative difference between folkness and non-folkness is logically necessary to preserve the possibility of continued study of the relevant subject matter. Significantly, marginality was re-applied in defining this quality. Often, in present-day Anglo-American academic discourse, if the term *folklore* means anything at all, it arguably seems to mean simply communication through socioculturally marginalised media. There are a number of reasons for this. Firstly, scholarship has now been repoliticised, and marginality has remained more tenable than the folklorist’s former, largely sociocultural, shibboleths - such as primitivity, savagery, or simplicity (Baron 1993, 229). Secondly, marginality is distinctive. Folklorists require an otherwise untenanted conceptual niche, synchronically conceived if the current intellectual climate encourages it. Marginality fulfils this role. Thirdly, during the US revision, the discipline of folklore came increasingly to be used to

support political positions regarding personal politics - gender and ethnicity - within the USA. Here, again, the effects of the US context are markedly discernible elsewhere. In the USA, as stated, scholars have tended to ignore economically based and social divisions in favour of distinctions of ethnic and personal identity. Thus, ethnicity and gender have been prioritised, and socioeconomic class has been ignored, even asserted, with striking *insouciance*, to be defunct as an issue (Stekert in Rosenberg 1993, 146). US academics, many from minority backgrounds, prized open involvement above objectivity in scholarly practice (Abrahams 1992, 34, 44; Mechling 1993, 271; Kodish 1993, 195). Just as, in the nineteenth century, intellectual structures had framed a window onto a utopian past, so now they seemed to frame a new window onto a more emancipated, but still, naturally, tacitly capitalist, future.

To summarise, therefore, evolutionary vestigiality was superseded by unofficiality, vernacularity, locality as opposed to globality, emic triviality, and often by ethnic and cultural disenfranchisement, as the terms of the folklorist's persistent instinctive gravitation towards the margins (Dorson 1976, 46; Briggs and Shuman 1993, 109; Sobol 1994, 53; Rosenberg 1993, 20; Virtanen 1993, 267). Concomitantly, the newer genres of folklore, such as photocopylore and the contemporary legend, continued to derive their identity partly from their marginality. The novelty was that this marginality was now defined not globally with reference to whole societies, but locally with reference to the lived experience of life within the mainstream. In doing so, crucially, scholarship often seemed to continue the necessary practice of tacitly enthroning the mainstream as absolute, because, if the marginality of folklore was to be preserved as a definitive quality, there had to be a dominant mainstream for it to be marginal with reference to. Like their distant predecessors, but for different reasons, folklorists still defined the mainstream as the official, modern, urban world. Photocopylore was, explicitly, the "misuse" of official equipment,

“which separates it from the proper, or serious use of the machine” (Preston 1974, 12; Smith 1991, 45n). Urban in setting, contemporary legends, by definition for Oring (1996), speak specifically from, and about, the margins of the credible and experienced (affluent and industrialised) world. Qualitatively, and despite the massive differences, the new scholarship therefore perpetuated the assumptions of the old in several important senses. Scholars of “urban folklore” (Dundes and Patger 1987) shared with folklorists of the old school a preoccupation with informal, communal, unmarked patterns of culture. Even though folklore had been newly discerned in the modern world, official modernity was still ratified as the standard from which folklore was defined by its deviation. Folklore was brought closer to home, and its outline fudged to a liminal blur on a continuum, but its essentially peripheral nature was preserved intact, still contrasted with a capitalist, technologised, urban modernity which was if anything, more strongly felt to be unanswerably given. This point should be emphasised. It will be seen below that, in this reformulation, traditional arts revivalism remained not quite peripheral enough, as for Dorson it had not been quite traditional enough. Formally organised in character, and populated by selfconsciously book-educated activists, revivalism remained at the border between the official mainstream and the unofficial margin; it was, so to speak, a marginal form of marginality. Like photocopylore and contemporary legend, it was close to the folklorist’s own clerkish world, but, unlike them it was perhaps too deeply clerkish to be comfortably accepted as true folk culture even in the new context. It was too official in its social structures, and too selfconscious in its approach. To summarise: whereas folklore was once seen as an objective fact of global cultural development, it has come to be understood in a variety of looser senses, which express an increased preoccupation with the loaded but fecund and fluid provisionality of culture and, taken to their logical conclusion, express an extreme scepticism, and approach the abolition of the folklorist’s subject. Consistently, however, the marginality of folk culture has

remained a central preoccupation, and this has important and ambiguous implications for the understanding of the movements labelled “revivals.”

The broad history of the discipline has now been reviewed. This has raised many ontological and methodological issues of which a resolution is outlined in the conclusion to the present chapter. However, first, the scholarly literature should now be assessed in more detail within this broad context. The literature falls into three relevant categories, based on the foregoing observation that revivalist storytelling can be studied as revivalism, as oral narrative, or as both: firstly, studies of storytelling revivalism; secondly, studies of revivalism in the traditional arts generally and wider studies of cultural “revival;” and thirdly, studies of oral narrative generally. These three categories are not considered separately; discussion is, rather, arranged in terms of the three major problems outlined above. These are the problems in achieving transparency of representation, the gap in the scale-range of scrutiny, and inconsistency of interest in scholarly judgements of the validity of revivalism as a form of cultural tradition. These may now be described in detail in turn.

2.3.2 The three problems in detail

2.3.2.1 Transparency of representation

The problem of transparency of representation is, as argued above, basic, pervasive and beyond final resolution. It arises in the interpretation of sociocultural phenomena such as observed human acts, including expressions, communicated mentifacts, and artefacts, and specifically in the ever-present danger that the scholar might misunderstand, that is, misleadingly impute a spurious but apparently plausible meaning. To give a well-noted example: Frazer, working in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries within the

objective and developmental view of culture reviewed above, misleadingly concludes that nineteenth-century Devonshire harvest customs were cognate with the ancient mysteries of Osiris, and historically derived from a common source (Frazer 1993, 447). Frazer at no point gives Devonshire farmworkers' own reasons for observing a particular custom: what they themselves say about what they were expressing by doing what they did. Frazer's logic is thus opaque on two counts. It is representatively opaque in that, by implication, he is occluding the view of Devonshire farmworkers' emic understandings of harvest customs by supplanting them with his own, etic ones. Also, it is methodologically opaque, in that he simply asserts harvest customs to have a specific, literally outlandish meaning, without stating why or how he knows this to be true in this specific instance.

Frazer's shortcomings are those of his time, and this critique of his work is a scholarly commonplace, but it is possible to give more recent examples. Hebdige (1979) begins by noting how in youth culture "the most mundane objects - a safety pin, a pointed shoe, a motorcycle - ... take on a symbolic dimension, becoming a form of stigmata, tokens of a self-imposed exile" (2), and declares his objective "to recreate the dialectic between action and reaction which renders these objects meaningful" (2). Quotations from case studies of skinhead and punk subcultures illustrate the methodological and expositional tactics whereby Hebdige "recreates" meanings.

Thus, while I agree with John Clarke and Tony Jefferson (1976) that this [i.e., skinhead] "style attempted to revive, in symbolic form, some of the expressions of traditional working-class culture" ... the unique and paradoxical manner in which this revival was accomplished should also be noted. It was not only through congregating on the all-white football terraces but through consorting with West Indians at the local youth clubs and on the street corners ... that the skinheads "magically recovered" the lost sense of working class community. (56)

... the Pakistanis were singled out for the brutal attentions of skinheads, black and white alike. Every time the boot went in, a contradiction was concealed, glossed over, made to “disappear.” (58)

... the skinheads turned away in disbelief as they heard the Rastas sing of the “have-nots seeking harmony” ... It *must have seemed* as the rudies closed their ranks that they had also changed their sides and the doors were doubly locked against the bewildered skinhead. ... Reggae had come of age and the skinheads were sentenced to perpetual adolescence ... (emphasis added) (59)

Dread, in particular, was an enviable commodity. It was the means with which to menace, and the elaborate freemasonry with which it was sustained and communicated on the street ... was awesome and forbidding, suggesting as it did an impregnable solidarity, an asceticism born of suffering.

But this difference [i.e., between black and white ethnicity] could be magically elided. By simple sleight of hand, the coordinates of time and place could be dissolved, transcended, converted into signs. (65)

As in Frazer, there is no hint of where, how, or within what reality such meanings are created or sustained; little sense of the polyvalent intersubjective negotiations wherein “social reality is *made up* of actors’ points of view and ..., therefore, to treat social wholes as phenomena *sui generis* simply means reification” (Button 1991, 138). That is to say: just as Frazer omitted to consult Devonshire farmworkers, so Hebdige omits to consult skinheads. If he cites guides or authorities, he occasionally quotes a vernacular participant, but he prefers fellow-scholars (1979, 27, 54, *passim*). In the scholarship of traditional arts revivalism, opacity of representation presents in a number of ways: generally, in similarly unsupported imputations of specific meanings to specific forms by scholars; and, specifically, in deductive imputations of meaning according to overarching ideological frameworks. As shown below, these are pervasive problems.

2.3.2.2 Scale of scrutiny

The second point is best illustrated by analogy with a cognate problem in science, noted by Goodwin (1998). To physicists, water consists of atoms of hydrogen and oxygen, which have known properties. Also, on a larger level of scale, water has liquid properties, known to students of fluid mechanics. However, the properties of water as liquid cannot be predicted from the atomic properties of water, or *vice versa*: “Trying to explain why water spirals down a plughole simply from a knowledge of atoms is an impossible task” (Goodwin 1998, 32). The liquidity of water requires a quite separate branch of scientific study which does not concern itself with the properties of atoms. Thus, total explanations of water - encompassing both its high-level liquidity and its low-level atomic properties - cannot be worked up from the atomic to the liquid level or down from the liquid level to the atomic. Instead, scientists develop consistent but non-reductive theories by “working back and forth between the levels.” Goodwin, a biologist, notes a similar problem in the study of ant behaviour. The high-level social order of ant colonies cannot be explained reductively in terms of the low-level behaviour of individual ants; nor does knowledge of the social order help in predicting the behaviour of specific ants on specific occasions. Goodwin therefore reports a non-reductive explanation in the form of the “superorganism, a coherent whole with properties that are distinct from those of its constituents and which cannot be predicted from them.” In a word, both fields have failed to find a total pattern of causation or give a reductive explanation of large-scale and small-scale phenomena.

In the study of traditional arts revivalism, comparable correlations between global and local processes, between the big histories and social contexts, and the way revivalists actually do things face to face, have long been attempted. However, they have not been full or convincing either logically or empirically.

By default, attempts to correlate global and local facts about revivalism have been methodologically and representatively opaque, and hampered by the flaws exemplified above in the work of Frazer and Hebdige. They are certainly consistent and plausible from particular points of view, but ultimately they are inconclusive. Scholars, including folklorists, have always modelled transition and change in culture, often as part of a more general modelling of tradition (Finnegan 1992; Smith 1985; Vansina 1973). Models of change advanced by scholars are often applicable to revivalistic movements, and many scholars who model culture change seem to have something comparable to revivalism in mind. Within a general category of revitalisational movements, defined as “deliberate, organised, conscious effort by members of a society to construct a more satisfying culture,” Wallace distinguished “‘Revivalistic’ movements” which “emphasise the institution of customs, values and even aspects of nature which are thought to have been in the mazeway of previous generations but are not now present” (1956, 265-267). Wallace identified five stages of development in the revitalisational movement: a steady state; a period of individual stress; a period of cultural distortion; a period of revitalisation, during which founders formulate, propagate and adapt their message to ensure its enduring survival, take over society as a whole, and impose new norms; and, finally, a new steady state. Wallace’s essay is a general model without evidence or example, but his use of psychological theory tends towards deductivism and towards the problem of opacity noted above (McLeish 1969, 34, 70-72). The movements he discusses encompass global religious and political reform of whole societies; traditional arts revivalism might conceivably show analogous features, but it is much more limited in scope. Also, given that storytelling and other traditional arts revivalistic movements appropriate material from other cultures, they are vitalistic as much as revivalistic in Wallace’s terms.

Wallace was an anthropologist, but folklorists such as Honko have attempted similar models of cultural change. Without explicitly discussing revivalism, Honko models transitional processes in folklore in a possibly relevant way (1981). Three of his four named forms of adaptation are diachronic in the long term and textual and structural in nature. However, Honko, seeking to synthesise the contextualism of the US revisionists with more conservative textualism of Scandinavian folklore studies (Kvideland *et al.* 1992), regards the study of functional adaptation as one way of rescuing academic folklore from becoming a sterile catalogue of forms. Functional adaptation occurs within a shorter timescale, constituting “a sort of final polishing in the adaptation process.” It “contains both the general social function and the specific communicative function of a tradition product in a certain context,” shaped by “the narrator’s personality, the composition of the audience, current spheres of interest within the tradition community, events in the immediate past,” and “hopes and fears for the future” (27). Functional adaptation in Honko’s sense is personal in scale, but it could be modified to apply to revivalism on a more social, global level.

However, apparently the earliest model explicitly relevant to revivalism was advanced not by a folklorist but by another anthropologist, R.R. Marett. Marett’s approach was strongly influenced by psychology, and his dissatisfaction with the folklore and anthropological method of his day stemmed from its lack of engagement with the subjectivity of the folk themselves (1920). He chipped at the foundations of evolutionism, foreshadowing later developments with startling foresight in his description of “the transvaluation of folklore.” For Marett, “folk-lore research” should not centre on text or item, as “a static treatment” resulting in “a bloodless typology,” but “by reference to an object which is defined generally as a kind of movement or process” (101). He emphasised the synchronic function, in largely

psychological terms, rather than the diachronic development of specific practices. Rather than search for origins (13), he preferred to ask “How and why do survivals survive?” He sees the answer in the way that “they help to constitute and condition the living present.” He questioned universalising models supported by opacity of representation - what he called the “somewhat sweeping style of explanation” resulting from the application of “the Darwinian theory” to the study of culture. Marett himself, typically for his time, was nevertheless a cultural evolutionist and a psychologist. However, he regarded cultural evolutionism as “provisional,” calling for “verification” “group by group instead of in the lump.” Furthermore he advocated emic rather than etic interpretation of folklore’s “uselessness.” “Is it the observer’s sense of fitness and convenience, or is it that of the people concerned?” (8). As a result, although he shared fully in the prevailing assumptions of his time, his work is not itself absolutely dependent on these and retains considerable interest, firstly because (very remarkably for the scholarship of the early twentieth century) it usefully addresses the problem of opacity, and secondly because it specifically discusses revivalism.

Marett considered “transformism” (14), the ongoing process of culture change, and in this he prioritises a permanent, ongoing role for revivalism.

Revival no less than survival must be reckoned with, the history of culture testifying to the continuous interplay of old and new forces. In one word, then, cultural process is a transvaluation. Regarded from without, such a process of change may be expressed in terms of form and function; but regarded from within as an expression of the human will, it is change in respect of the values recognised and sought (99).

He accuses his contemporaries of neglecting revivalism, because it gravitates against the search for origins, against evolutionary models of culture, and

evolutionary models of folklore. In reality, he asserts, "There never was a time ... when the interplay of old and new did not go on, exactly as it does now - when survival and revival, degeneration and regeneration, were not pulsating together in the rhythm of the social life." This model is preferred precisely because it is not "unilinear" but "indicates process without limiting it to a single direction" (107). Postmodernism has nothing to teach this scholar of the 1920s about the mistrust of linearity.

For Marett, custom "amounts to a kind of value - one that for the most part is apprehended subconsciously, yet is none the less inwardly satisfying" (108). For Marett, as for others, a major achievement of custom is to provide the familiar as a form of reassurance. However, the value attached to forms changes over time in a process Marett labelled *transvaluation*. He distinguished value, an internal and non-utilitarian property of form, from function, and external and utilitarian property. The transvaluation of custom occurs vertically as "metataxis" or horizontally as "metalepsis." The metataxis of a form is a "change of standing" or status, often accompanied by a transition from one social group to another, Marett's "vulgarisation" effectively expressing *gesunkenes Kulturgut* and his "devulgarisation" its revivalistic opposite. The metalepsis of a form is the alteration of its meaning, typically through "depragmatisation," whereby an item "is transferred from the sphere of the useful to that of the ornamental;" for Marett, "devulgarisation and depragmatisation are conjoined in the typical revival" (100). Marett thus defines a "revival" as a movement wherein stable forms acquire higher status, and perhaps a different social constituency, simultaneously as they shed practical functions and become symbolic of ideological "values recognised and sought." It is striking that Marett is not more often cited in the scholarship of traditional arts revivalism; an apparently rare reference (Dorson, 1968, 290) preserves the patronising tone of an orthodox anti-revivalistic contextualist

confronted with an old cultural evolutionist's more positive manifesto for "revival." Decades before Dorson, Marett had already spotted an essential elasticity in the relationship between form, content, and context in folk culture, which the later scholar seems to have missed.

Models such as Marett's and Honko's have not been exhaustively applied in field research. The most relevant works here are the British and European scholars of popular and vernacular culture, including those broadly Marxist writers mentioned above. The interpretations of these writers generally depend on ideas like "reperformance" (Boyes 1993, 18), which are deduced from a global model without evidential support or qualification, or, indeed, elucidation of what specific features of local-field behaviour they refer to. As such, they are superorganic and opaque in the terms specified. Their intrinsic interpretative potency peters out as they approach the autonomous structure and polyvalent complexities of situated performance which Marett theorised. As is so often the case, the resulting argument is far from implausible, but its exposition is incomplete and its reasoning apparently arbitrary.

Echoing Dorson's *fakelore*, Harker's *Fakesong* (1985), following the Marxist cultural study of Raymond Williams, describes "the *mediation* of songs" in support of his thesis that "concepts like "folksong" and "ballad" ... are conceptual lumber, and they have to go" (xiii). For Harker, terms like *folksong* and *ballad* originate in selective readings of working-class culture by middle-class mediators such as collectors, scholars and publishers, and they articulate exclusively middle-class "assumptions, attitudes, likes and dislikes." This argument is extreme, but its tenor is not entirely controversial; middle-class collectors were partial and selective and exerted considerable influence over the understanding of genre categories. However, detailed exposition of this idea

can throw up unexpected problems, as Boyes exemplifies (1993). Her lengthy historical study of the first folksong revival begins by stating plausibly that

Through the institutions of the Revival, new concepts of folksong, custom and, most critically, of the social groups by whom they were performed, have been formulated and reproduced. ... To reach any conclusion about the validity of such representations, an understanding of the process involved in their creation and maintenance is necessary (2).

Boyes posits folk music revivalism, again uncontroversially, as a continuation of a process of middle class appropriation of working-class culture (31). However, for Boyes, as for Harker, revivalism is a hazardous and predominantly negative process of “mediation and expropriation” (47), resulting ultimately in “reperformance” (123). It is never clear whether Boyes is objecting to the forms which mediation took, to the class self-interest which underlay it, or simply to the fact that mediation took place at all. This lack of clarity regarding the grounds of her disapproval ultimately disperses the impact of her work. However, in her examples, it is possible to discern some of the grounds of her objections. She objects to the middle-class collector Percy Grainger’s recording of songs secretly without the consent of his informants, and to “*backsheesh*, in the way of snuff, tobacco, tea and ale” (48) as deceitful and commercial practice for a collector. She concedes, however, that traditional singers themselves behaved in very similar ways to middle-class collectors, exchanging songs for a “range of ... symbolic and material rewards” and using virtually deceitful collecting practices, as in the case of the singer Henry Burstow, who appropriated material from a rival singer by a form of espionage (54). However, rather than censure the traditional singer for effectively behaving exactly like a bourgeois collector, she responds:

... [in the source tradition] the transaction between a collector and a singer was different in its implications and its results [from

collection by revivalists]. The distinction ... lies in the purpose to which that acquisition was put. A collector's purchase of songs involved not an individual singer's or a community's response to performance, but the extraction of an item of culture for an extrinsic purpose. What had been a social activity, with a range of personally and locally determined symbolic and material rewards, was objectified. As a result of the process of collection, singing became a number of folksongs, dancing a fashionable form of exercise ... each was isolated in a new, *constructed* setting (54). (emphasis added)

These and similar judgements on such issues as the precise significance of women's dance costume (210), or of the insistence on Sharpian dance steps by his coterie of successors in the EFDS (203), are not empirically induced from local-field data, but deduced from the global argument they are used to illustrate. The logic is opaque, circular, and arbitrary. Appropriative middle-class collection is concluded to be wrong on the grounds that it "objectified" songs; but that it did so is not induced from evidence (none of relevance is given), but deduced from the assertion that appropriative middle-class collection is fatally "constructed." Suspicion immediately falls on the implication that the pre-revivalistic context of the song was any less "constructed" than the revivalistic. Source traditional communities presumably constructed their own song culture just as did middle-class appropriators, and deserve to take the credit for doing so. To assume otherwise approaches the view of an inert folk, passively obedient to immemorial superorganic laws of tradition. Boyes is rightly dismissive of the idea of the "unindividuated," "neo-pastoralist" "'immemorial peasant,' a literary fiction" (96-7), but in covert ways she is dependent on it for her understanding of the transition from source tradition to "revival." The unindividuated peasant is loudly shown the front door, and then smuggled in through the back for the purposes of pejorative contrast with revivalism.

Overall, then, in the absence of specific evidence, the condemnation of revivalist song collection is supported solely by the idea that it was done in support of a "revival" which was fatally flawed. In support of this wider idea, specific examples of the flaws of "revival" are given in accounts of revivalists' efforts at song collection; but the flawed nature of these efforts cannot be argued, except by referring back once again, by circular logic, to the idea that it was done in support of "revival." This is the documentary method rightly criticised by Garfinkel in sociology, wherein "the underlying pattern itself is identified through its individual concrete appearances, so that the appearances reflecting the pattern and the pattern itself mutually determine one another" (Benson and Hughes 1983, 90). Its fallaciousness is illustrated by the plausibility with which, using the evidence given, it can be reversed. The working-class Henry Burstow's collection of songs from a rival can certainly be described as "the extraction of an item of culture for an extrinsic purpose;" but this is conversely how Boyes describes middle-class collection in contrast to working-class practices. Similarly, middle-class folksong "revival," "developing," in Boyes' words, "through the enthusiasm, enjoyment and creativity of thousands," is certainly "a social activity," "an individual singer's or a community's response to performance" (xii); but this is conversely how she describes working-class song culture in contrast to middle-class enthusiasm for folksong. These distinctions rest ultimately on no grounds other than arbitrary ideological *fiat*.

This is a general difficulty, also manifesting in another now-standard Marxist work on tradition, which defined it in three-way contrast with *custom* and *routine*. Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983, 1) define "invented tradition" as "a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past."

This idea as explicated is inapplicable to vernacular culture in context and specifically unhelpful in the detailed analysis of face-to-face interaction in vernacular *milieux*. According to Hobsbawm and Ranger, the anti-type of invented tradition is *custom*. Custom is an actual, working-class, and by implication a valid response to given circumstances, and as such it varies with those circumstances; tradition, by contrast, is fixed and by implication imposed from above and less valid or invalid. Hobsbawm and Ranger's *custom* is therefore roughly cognate with the revisionist folklorist's *traditionalisation*: the assertion of real or notional precedents for specific power relationships, undertaken for practical purposes in the present. Hobsbawm and Ranger's *tradition* is roughly cognate with the folklorist's *folklorism(us)*: the attempt to prevent change by fossilising past forms and investing them with symbolic meaning by a process which recalls Marett's transvaluation. Though Hobsbawm and Ranger suggest hereby that *custom* and *tradition*, so defined, are mutually exclusive, this is not implicit in their definitions, which actually seem to overlap. To illustrate: custom is seen as "giving ... the sanction of perpetuity" and tradition is invented partly in order to do exactly this (2). In essence, the difference is apparently that *custom* refers to practices of practical value which change, and *tradition* to practices of symbolic value which do not. If this is the case, it is not obvious either in what sense *custom* differs from Hobsbawm and Ranger's third category of *routine*, or how helpful this distinction is in understanding empirical local-field realities. It can readily be imagined that the differences in people's actual behaviours are not so clear. For example, some practices of practical value might remain stable over time; some symbolic practices may change; and many practices may combine practical and symbolic functions. Like Boyes', Hobsbawm and Ranger's assignations of meaning are opaque in the terms noted, deduced from global axioms, and imposed in specific local fields without a test of applicability or result. Marxist historiography is at heart deductive (McLeish 1969, 2, 70); Hobsbawm and

Ranger, like Boyes and Harker, are documentary in the Garfinkelian sense. To them, the local field is a source of context-free examples and counter-examples, not a sphere of activity with its own identity and patterns, worthy of study in its own right.

By contrast with these historians, folklorists have tended to engage more successfully with tradition - as indeed might be expected, given that it is their specialism. Bausinger (1990) argues in conventional terms that the folklorist's original definitions of folklore and tradition had mistaken non-definitive features, such as rurality, for definitive ones. Correcting this tendency, he anticipates Handler and Linnekin in defining tradition synchronically:

The binding character of tradition was not due to the long periods of transmission; on the contrary, the long periods of transmission resulted from the binding character of that which was always newly traditionalised (64).

His central thesis is that, as a result of technological developments, the sphere of "familiar contact" or (borrowing Litt's term) *Umgang*, has expanded spatially, temporally and socially, and that the folk culture which exists within the *Umgang* has likewise broadened (38). He does not define folk culture precisely but tends to an extreme inclusiveness: folk culture is the total common cultural experience of a society, and, as such, is in a sense more centripetal than centrifugal. He denies that technological change has led to changes in folk culture and consciousness:

Even though it is necessary to distinguish the mechanical technology of our time from the mere tool technology of the craftsman and of handcrafted manufacture, the forms of awareness when using technology seem quite comparable in its various stages ... manifestations of technology are neither immune from nor even merely resistant to pre-rational forms of behaviour and thought ... (10)

Bausinger not only stresses the prerational aspects of the use of technology, he conversely insists on the rational aspects of folk culture itself.

... the processes of origin and tradition have proven to be neither entirely nor even predominantly rooted in nonrational elements. (10-11)

Theoretically, at least, Bausinger does not concede any boundary between irrational and centrifugal folk culture and rational and centripetal non-folk culture. This model therefore seems rather inhospitable towards the conventional idea of revivalistic transition. At this point Bausinger is apparently building up to address the interplay between reason and unreason in a folk culture permeated by industrial technologies. Surprisingly, however, he shies at the last moment, and turns his attention exactly to the reactionary de pragmatism of folk culture against technologising modernity. More seriously, he sees folklorism, applied or official folklore, such as the choral societies, the *Heimat* movement, and the presentation of regional culture to tourists, as in contrast to a supposedly more unconscious and less contrived folk culture. He accepts the fact that these attempts constitute a transition from tradition: participants in transitional forms often perceive their task more in terms of generating a dialogue between old forms and their new contexts than of literally reviving the past (71). However, his subject is not how the folk embrace technology so much as how they recoil from it, using folklore as a non-utilitarian anti-type of modernity. Despite this inconsistency of application, Bausinger's is the most persuasive summary of the idea of revival yet offered.

Almost all traditionalist movements do not consider it their primary task to preserve what pertains to yesterday, but rather to renounce yesterday's traditions in favour of older, more historical, more substantial ones. (71)

However,

we must expose the error ... that the adoption of old forms also completely restores the old system of meaning and content. (71)

This depragmatised folklore is characterised by “Museum-like” “mummification” (73). This “historicising tendency” (75) is termed by Bausinger “requisite freezing” (76) in contrast to Schmidt’s “requisite shift” (75), which defines the truly traditional obligation to maintain a degree of contemporaneity. Here is encountered a distinction cognate with Hobsbawm and Ranger’s between the fluidity of real vernacular culture and the fixity of invalid impositions. In actual tradition, according to Bausinger, stories adopt the features of the teller’s environment: for example, telephones, tobacco pipes, contemporary political references and other technological and cultural paraphernalia. In applied, mummified folklore, these details are felt to jar somehow. Bausinger explains this by arguing that a conscious and, by implication, selfconscious reification of tradition is now itself a part of folk culture. He argues that selfconscious revivalists are behaving congruently with the folk culture of their group, in which a reflexive but rather dehistoricised awareness of folk culture is itself a feature. The terms of this awareness are, for Bausinger, part of the folk culture of the group. He nevertheless concedes that, perplexingly, they may perhaps derive from discredited academic theory, and that, in reality, even before “revival,” *contra* Redfield, forms were originally always “social greenery” rather than “natural wild growth” (72). He agrees with those scholars who attack “requisite freezing,” the invariant quality of mummified, official forms, and the timeless Herderian fantasy with which they are invested, because this mummification “ignores the power of the historic” (73); that is, it protects cultural goods from criticism, robbing them of the

chance to establish themselves as potent in our time by reducing them to mere figments.

In short, Bausinger imagines a process whereby a form of de pragmatism in Marett's sense - the retention of a form beyond its utilitarian function - occurs in the realm of the aesthetic. That is: in "revival," forms are valued not because they have genuine aesthetic impact but because they symbolise certain extrinsic ideals; in this case, Herderian fantasies. That is to say: revivalism is aesthetic de pragmatism. Put very simply, it suggests that revivalistic forms are bad art which revivalists pretend to enjoy as a symbolic show of support for a certain extrinsic ideology, usually reactionary and pastoral. This presumably supposes that revivalists do not, or rather cannot, in fact, derive deep enjoyment from, or find deep meaning in the artistic form simply as such; what they enjoy is, less discriminatingly, their consciousness of their own re-enactment of a desired sociocultural state. This is essentially a phenomenological evaluation and ideally it requires evidence to support it, presumably in the form of testimony from informants regarding their motives for, and experiences of, involvement. In actual fact it is straightforwardly deduced from the global narrative without such corroboration. Bausinger's account is more plausible than Boyes', but, again, it is a global model which peters out into opacity as it approaches the local field and the concrete experience and discerning free will of the individual participant.

A similar weakness characterises the work of Pickering and Green. Their model of the local field and its articulations with the global (1987) is precise, detailed and persuasive. However, again, when addressing individual cases, they abandon it for deductive and reductive global modelling. They see the vernacular sphere as

the local environment and specific immediate contexts within which, as part of their everyday life, people participate in non-mediated forms and processes of cultural life. By definition, that cultural life is non-official, and while it is at times assimilated into the national culture, it is experientially felt and understood by its participants as quite distinct (2n.)

Pickering and Green re-theorise the relationship between locality and globality in a number of ways, giving full and convincing weight to historical and global issues. Following Elias, they define community in terms of relations of interdependence, and note variations in the geographical scale of these relationships between small, diverse and large, more homogenising communities. Their local field is seen as a vernacular culture whose precise function in relation to larger spheres is precisely outlined. For them, the global picture is one of increasing globalisation and commercialisation, and the local vernacular sphere is understandable as a counterbalance to this: opposition, palliative, denial or compensation. They gloss the organised formality of middle-class “community” endeavours as a compensation for eroded informal communities. With the erosion of actual local networks, the symbolic value of vernacular performance arenas increases, representing threatened community by creating a sense of belonging in participants, which is not merely deprivatised, “reflective or mimetic,” but concrete and “intersubjectively realised.” Like Bohlman, they take the conventional view of “revival” as “an overt and explicit act of authentication” relying heavily “on new symbols masquerading as the old;” as for Wallace, it is “not so much ... a representation of existing political and social agendas as an effort to develop new agendas” (Rosenberg 1993, 20, 21). In a polyvalent modernity which “is both emancipatory and destructive” (29), this realisation of community can be positive and emancipating, or alternatively simply “another way of dreaming of flowerbeds of ease in the middle of a burning field” (29).

This is the most detailed and sensitive theoretical framework for the study of revivalism as an integrated phenomenon in both global and local fields. However, again, it seems not to be applied even by its authors, who go on to argue, for example, that

... if it is realistic to talk at all about “working class culture,” then I believe that we must mean the shared culture of the group, as manifested in public performance, not the poems that some working men and women read in private (14).

This does not follow from the model; in fact, it represents a type of argument which the model excludes. It is simply another denial of another form of locality. Their citation of Lentricchia is similar:

We need to distinguish between the retrogressive ideology of traditionalism, and uncontrived involvement in the active, indigenous usage of objects from the past for the sake of a progressively oriented social present. ... “ ... active reception permits the persistence of the old but only on the condition that the needs of the new are satisfied” (17).

This is certainly a coherent global argument. However, it does not derive from the model. Nor is it obvious how to measure contrivedness, activeness, indigenoussness, or progressiveness of orientation in the local-field study of culture, especially as all culture is contrived: it is social greenery in the Bausingerian sense. This obfuscation is not accidental: these categories were never intended to be applicable to empirical study of the local field, and, as such, they are methodologically indistinguishable from the superorganicism which the authors aim to supersede. In short, having established a workable model of vernacular and revivalistic culture, Pickering and Green arbitrarily problematise certain modes of culture and walk into the traps that the model has just located and evaded. Overall, then, these global-level studies of revivalism, although often plausible, are incomplete. They seek to impose

global distinctions and definitions on local behaviours. However, often, they cannot themselves practically apply these definitions consistently; nor can they furnish supporting evidence that their conclusions describe the actual experience and understandings of participants. When they try, the more closely these impositions are examined, the more incongruous, arbitrary and groundless they seem to be.

In a word, then, all global-level studies, from Wallace to Green and Pickering, have failed to incorporate the local. Conversely, however, local-level studies fail to incorporate the global. Here, the most significant works are by US revisionist-style folklorists, for whom concentration on the local field facilitates the silence on socioeconomic issues which Kodish notes (1993, 195). In these works, diachronic issues are often not discussed separately or exhaustively. Some diachronic contextualisation is logically necessary in some form, however vestigial. It is stated either roundly but often rather baldly, or fragmentarily and by implication. Within this, traditional arts revivalism is usually contextualised as a transitional form originating ultimately in a source tradition, and straddling the boundary between traditional and non-traditional culture, on the margins of the margins. This, indeed, is how revivalistic movements often view themselves.

In the most substantial study of US storytelling revivalism to date, McCarthy (1994) edits essays on the Ward and Hicks families of the Appalachian mountains of the south-eastern United States. Ward-Hicks family members were major informants for Chase's seminal collection (1943), and as source tradition bearers subsequently became influential and respected in the US storytelling movement. Their careers exemplify the transition from source tradition to revivalistic movement. The essays map continuity and change in "texture, text and context" (Ben Amos 1971; Dundes 1978; McCarthy 1994,

xxxvi). McCarthy examines the global forces operating in terms of individual tradition-bearers' biographies, which are further contextualised in a wider historical scope: the penetration of the mountain landscape by transport and communications infrastructures, and official cultural and educational structures, bringing isolated communities into more pervasive interaction with a wider world. Accounts of the source tradition and early fieldwork are solidly and persuasively secured within a historical and social landscape (McCarthy 1994, xxiv-xl). After this promising start, the link between local and global spheres weakens. McCarthy readily accepts that "revival" is an increasingly selfconscious cultivation of storytelling, with concomitant modulations in performance idioms, and motivated by broader historical forces. The performative changes noted are undeniable and of central importance. McCarthy is rather less explicit as to why and how any such attitudinal shift occurred, why it was accompanied by the observed changes in performance idiom, and in what sense this articulated a response to the social and historical context described. The transition to "revival" is invoked, but not explained, as a cause of performative change.

Stone (Bottigheimer 1986, 13-29) distinguishes three elements in modern North American oral narrative culture as a whole. Firstly, there is the obviously complex and developed traditional oral narrative cultures; secondly, the "urban storytelling that preceded and continues to exist along with revivalist storytelling" (14); and, thirdly, a storytelling defined by the "deliberately paradoxical" term "neo-traditional" (16) - a term used by Ranger, in a very different disciplinary context, to describe the "invented traditions" of colonial Africa (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983, 247). Stone defines revivalistic movements in conventional terms as liminal and transitional, "blend[ing] old and new in challenging ways" (Bottigheimer 1986, 16), in terms of a transition from a diachronically apparent tradition. Stone is thorough in connecting the

observed nature of revivalism with its historical and social context. Persuasively, nontraditional storytelling is distinguished from traditional in that it is “not historically or culturally connected with long-standing narrative communities” (28). Its idioms and institutions, such as the relatively formal storytelling workshop, its scheduled rather than spontaneous nontraditional storytelling, and the lack of traditional transmission and dissemination within it, are explained in terms of this diachronic process as compensation for the absence of a source community and a consensual standard. Moreover, this lack of spontaneity and of sociocultural framework carried over into early “neo-traditional” telling, resulting in a high degree of performer-audience separation and the greater use of formal performance skills in the revivalistic movement. “The fundamental difference between traditional tellers and neo- and nontraditional tellers is the relationship between teller and community” (26). The lack of community in the revivalistic context forces the teller to assume a dominant role in the exchange, as s/he relies less on the socially shaped interaction of the moment, and more on literary, often predetermined programmes and repertoires, and individualistic approaches and philosophies. Stone notes a clear diachronic break between the tradition and the revivalistic movement, spanned only, and tenuously, by the printed page whereon most “neo-traditional” storytellers conduct dialogues with real tradition. Nevertheless, as she notes with unease, many “neo-traditional” storytellers assert their own continuity with a tradition with which their familiarity is neither detailed nor deep. This is a plausible picture.

Contextual change is typified in a more immediate and local sense by Sobol, discussing the transitional figure Ray Hicks, a source-traditional storyteller from the Ward-Hicks families who performs annually at a major US revivalistic storytelling festival in the Tennessee town of Jonesborough. Sobol contrasts

the domestic milieu, “the real source and home place of Ray’s art,” with “(t)he stage at Jonesborough,” which constitutes

a translation ... of the natural intimacy and at-homeness of the stories into a gigantic artificial frame, which was only borne and transcended year after year through a leap of faith and love on Ray’s part and on the part of his audience (McCarthy 1994, 4).

Sobol’s account tallies in general terms with other studies of the effect of revivalistic transition on performance norms (Porter 1976, Mullen 1981, McDermitt 1985, Bauman 1986), and here are encountered the irreducible empirical facts of traditional arts revivalism. There is an objective and concrete diachronic transition from source tradition to “revival” in the performance idioms of the local field. According to Mullen (1981) and Bauman (1986, 78-111), as the source-traditional storyteller Ed Bell made a similar transition to revivalistic contexts over a fifteen-year period, his telling underwent marked textual and textural changes, chief among which was a conscious increase in the length and elaboration of his performances. Mullen focuses on changes in Bell’s active repertoire, Bauman on stylistic changes to tales that he has continued to tell. Bell made additions to individual episodes of the tale, such as expansion of episodes of direct quoted speech, an increase in repetition, parallelism and redundancy, and an increase in the amount of metanarration, but the order of episodes and the overall structure of the tale remained constant. Bauman explains these alterations in three ways. Firstly, practical restraints have been relaxed. In Bell’s source-traditional milieu, his freedom to elaborate was limited by the relative scarcity of free time and by turn-taking conventions whereby the right and responsibility to perform was shared, even competed for, among the participant group. The preset structures and roles and dedicated leisure-time nature of the revivalist setting relax these constraints. Secondly, the performer-audience distance within the event is now greater: Bell

has to work harder to enlist and feel his audience's engagement; again, the dedicated quality and the set roles of the encounter heighten the expectation that he will succeed. Thirdly, the new audience is unfamiliar with the setting, content and generic requirements of the tale, and Bell has to establish his own identity more strongly, gloss other esoteric features of rural life, and modify the laconic understatement that once defined the generic textural requirements of the tall tale.

McDermitt (1985) similarly discusses bearers of established storytelling traditions: Ray Hicks of the Ward-Hicks tradition, and the Scottish ethnic traveller Stanley Robertson, one of the Stewart family of Scottish traveller tradition-bearers, which occupies a leading transitional role relative to traditional arts "revival" in the British Isles, rather as does the Ward-Hicks family in the USA. Recalling Sobol on Hicks, and Bauman and Mullen on Bell, and also Porter's discussion of the singing styles of Jeannie Robertson (1976), McDermitt discusses ways in which Stanley Robertson "must project his personality and dramatically enlarge his performance style" in response to the transition to the larger, more public audiences which revivalistic storytelling involves (McDermitt 1985, 138). Like the Ward-Hicks storytellers, moreover, Stanley Robertson is highly aware of the commercialisation implicit in the transition to public space. Unlike many of them, he is extremely wary of it, preferring to earn his living in the Aberdeen fish trade. McDermitt concentrates on changes in performative and contextual idiom, and on biographical issues; the emergence of the revivalistic movement in itself is taken as a historical given.

Textual and textural change is thus effected both by tradition-bearers in response to revivalistic transitions, and more radically by revivalistic appropriators themselves, showing how, in Lindahl's words, "an old, 'shy'

tradition of storytelling” becomes “more dramatic and public,” and can even be “trivialised” or “warped into a dramatic form by storytelling circuit performers wishing to realise their own distorted notions of its scale and grandeur” (McCarthy 1994, xxi, 27). The apprehensive tone is reserved for revivalistic storytellers. Although tradition and “revival” alike allow considerable individual creativity (148), tradition is held to enact a consensual aesthetic rooted in shared experience of community and life. Revivalistic networks lack these links and this consensus, and engender more individual freedom, but inferior communal standards, leading to untraditional performance textures, such as the revivalist Ed Stivender’s jarring practice of telling Jack tales in the first person: “Hi! My name’s Jack and I’d like to tell you a story ...” (158-163). The contextualisation of these changes of idioms within the larger historical and sociocultural landscape remains rather generalised.

As discussion turns from tradition-bearers to revivalistic appropriators, scholars necessarily confront the risks of appropriation and transition through reference to “authenticity,” the ability of revivalists to sustain the “evident identity” (148) or “traditional colour” (156) of the material, and their implicit duty to do so out of “personal responsibility” to source tradition-bearers. As Stotter and McCarthy acknowledge, most revivalists are too remote from the source community to fulfil these obligations reliably, but they do not follow through to the pessimistic conclusion that revivalism is wrong. Instead they retreat into a more subjectivised affirmation of the continuities inherent in the mere act of storytelling, whatever its context: “(d)espite changes ... it does seem that in a revivalist storytelling context the storytelling event, the experience of an audience listening to a narrator, remains remarkably consistent” (155).

Similar issues are addressed in British scholarship of folk music revivalism. Pilkington (1989) surveys a wide range of issues in the social context and

organisation of folk music in order to determine whether the Huddersfield folk scene should be classified as a popular or communal *milieu*. Through interviews he characterises the revivalistic ideology of folk musicians, and asserts that the past plays a crucial symbolic role in it: “every time I sing a song it gives me a picture in my mind of the past.” (350) The past defines in participants’ minds the traditionality of a music which they seek to distinguish sharply, often iconoclastically, from commercial or popular forms. This traditionality is figured by participants in Bausingerian terms as embodying timeless qualities resulting from its shaping by tradition. This emic ideology contrasts with the actual transmissive and social context of the music, which is shared through a range of mediating technologies within a hierarchically demarcated, partly commercialised, and predominantly middle-class milieu. However, it is not simply a musical ideology. It correlates with a whole range of lifestyle choices, and discrete and stable social networks coalesce around it. Again, the liminal quality of revivalistic participation is evoked:

the music is as much an intellectual experience as a pleasurable one, the *concept* of what is a folksong being based upon subjective as well as objective definitions (350).

Indeed, a local rock musician, introduced by Pilkington to the folk scene, commented that “certain members [of the folk club] seemed more concerned with authenticity than high quality entertainment” (365-366). Overall, Pilkington emphasises the differences between the claims and the realities of revivalism; the extent to which the claim to revive is a useful fiction, masking real, underlying artistic and social transactions.

Kosby (1977) assesses a single folk club from an ethnosemantic perspective. She reviews diachronic issues enough to assert the appropriateness of studies of folk “revivals.” She argues against unselfconsciousness as a defining

characteristic of folklore, but she characterises revivalistic folk music as “extremely self-conscious” (14), both in its awareness of itself as in contrast with other available musical forms and scenes, and in the readiness of its participants to adapt the textual and textural features of their performances from literary and other documentary sources. This is a familiar argument, recalling Pilkington’s. Many other writers testify to the consciousness, even the selfconsciousness, of revivalism compared with tradition, as described by Rosenberg in a paradox:

a professionalized music with an ethos of nonprofessionalism. ... an essential aspect of the construct [i.e., the idea of folksong] was that folk music was unselfconscious behaviour ... In this sense the nascent revival was an intellectual music with an anti-intellectual ethos (1993, 8).

Similarly, to McCarthy, “revival” is “the *conscious* cultivation of storytelling as a North American traditional art form” (emphasis added) (x). The consensus is that revivalism is conscious, even selfconscious, in contrast to tradition. This contrast is implicitly maintained in the literature on other forms of oral narrative in the contemporary affluent world, which are seen as traditional in an unselfconscious way, if at all. Bennett even warns that the mere narrativity of legends, their status as story, may be more etic than emic in non-revivalistic *milieux* (Bennett, Smith and Widdowson 1987, 27).

The relative selfconsciousness of revivalism is also a theme of the most convincing English-language study of the folk music movement, namely Mackinnon’s (1993). Mackinnon addresses the “construction and meaning of performance, staging and sound, and the association of these with social identity” (1). Working from the conventional consideration that musical meaning is created through performance in dialogue with the social and cultural context, he reviews the history and ideology of the second folk music “revival,”

the scale and extent of the contemporary folk club scene, the demographic and cultural profile of the audience group, their aesthetic and performative standards and priorities, and the interrelationships between these and observable features of performative and interactive behaviour. The prioritisation of attentive listening and the relative tolerance of poor performance are seen as partly intellectualised and above all selfconscious (31-2) enactments of a revivalistic ideal. Mackinnon quotes the celebration of the revivalist editorial writer:

It is against the laws of nature that people should be able to play and sing as part of the living tradition and at the same time be able to conduct rational polemics ... but we are thankful to say that an increasing number of people are acquiring these incompatible abilities (32)

This testimony describes the attempt to recreate the intimate, egalitarian relationship between performer and audience of the source traditions. Mackinnon sees this conscious traditionalisation as in tension with the emerging professionalisation and hierarchical structuring of the folk music scene. The iconic use of imagery of the past, such as the use of old pubs and old tunes, co-exists with an open-ended approach to precedent, as when a Morris fool replaced the traditional air-filled bladder with an inflated rubber glove. To Mackinnon, the central dynamic “is no longer the reliving of the past, but affirming a certain articulation with it” (66); that is to say, it is characterised not by Bausingerian “requisite freezing” but by “requisite shift.” Simultaneously, however, an affirmed continuity with the past consciously articulates the communality of the music, and diffuses the internal threats of commercialisation and/or personality cults emerging within the movement. Paradoxically, maintaining this informal equability requires extensive backstage control by organisers, as audience members are better used to more distant and less personalised performer-audience relationships and more open displays of

status. Folk music revivalism does not therefore circumvent so much as mitigate and disguise emergent hierarchies, through the maintenance of “low-brow” textures which “may be the key ethnomusicological link” (67). Thus revivalism is seen to consist in a certain communal ambience achieving a radical, partially successful subversion of “the dominant modes of musical socialisation,” not, however, by “those who have rejected contemporary Western society” but by “those who have succeeded within it but are not happy to conform” to that socialisation (131). Revivalism here is the selfconscious maintenance of an apparently unselfconscious ambience and approach.

These writers, especially Mackinnon, have considerable methodological strengths. Firstly, and crucially, they are inductive. Also, they integrate local and global scrutiny with relative coherence and thoroughness, and achieve a persuasive picture of revivalistic transition. To an extent, the preoccupation with revivalistic selfconsciousness carries the implication that tradition in its “unrevived” state is unselfconscious. This could, admittedly, imply superorganic views of tradition; but the idea itself is basically plausible, and the evidential basis is solid. Moreover, there is exactly the integratedly global and local explanation that the study of storytelling revivalism is currently working towards: to Mackinnon, the aesthetic ambiances of folk music revivalism are, precisely, a sublimation by “those who have succeeded” socioeconomically (131). In fact, the only significant shortcoming of Mackinnon’s method is a lessened but still present opacity of method, comparable with that of Sobol, Falassi, and Dégh, reviewed below. He elicits testimony from informants; but his methods of editing and selecting excerpts from interview transcripts are not stated and may have weighted his account to an unknowable extent. This is the problem which Holbek (1987), following Propp (1968), circumvented in his study of the folktale by taking a random sample with fixed boundaries and analysing it exhaustively and non-selectively. If Mackinnon’s methods were

adopted and refined in this way - if, that is, a method used in the analysis of fixed texts could be adapted and applied to the analysis of relevant data - then the resulting method would transparently and rigorously satisfy all the methodological requirements of the present study.

Rosenberg (1993) takes up the theme of the transitional process in his title *Transforming Traditions*. Jabbour introduces these essays with anxiety about the scholarship of revivalism in the global field:

... when it comes to understanding the cultural significance of the revival, or the larger forces that generated it and impelled it into prominence, or its relationship to other cultural revival movements, our histories of the folk music revival are less helpful (xi).

As noted in the previous chapter, Jabbour defines “revival,” “a cultural transfer of a musical tradition from one segment of American society to another,” as “not so much a revival of specific artistic artefacts ... as a revival of symbolic values” (xiii). Of his own revivalistic musicianship he writes:

the older musicians from whom we drew our inspiration regarded our band more as a continuing development than as a revival of the tunes and styles they shared with us (xiii).

To Jabbour, revivalism symbolised a

quest for cultural roots, our admiration of democratic ideas and values, our solidarity with the culturally neglected, and our compulsion to forge our own culture for ourselves (xiii).

To recapitulate: the literature presents a largely consistent but rather unclear and incomplete picture of traditional arts revivalism. Consistently, scholars at both the local and global level describe a process whereby a particular cultural

form originating within one sociocultural group is appropriated by another over time. On the one hand, this process is motivated by the desire of the appropriating group to affirm a certain articulation with the past, a past which the tradition itself represents. On the other, the appropriative process involves adaptations to the idiom, which usually involve formal elaboration and expansion; it also involves a reduced depth of shared knowledge of the form on the part of the appropriating group. Appropriation involves the often selfconscious imitation of bygone practice, but there is often a more open-ended willingness to experiment, play with and adapt precedents. The literature serves rather well to obtain a sense of what traditional arts revivalism is like. There are, however, two related shortcomings. The first is that, as noted, monographs tend often to be either local or global in scope, and therefore integrated scrutiny at all levels is not always fully achieved; thus, the immediately foregoing summary in this paragraph is a composite. The second and more serious problem is that this practical scholarly achievement is at odds with a prevalent tendency to see tradition largely as symbolic traditionalisation: the affirmation of a symbolic relationship between aspects of the past and aspects of the present which is common both to mature traditional *milieux* and appropriative revivalistic movements. Current folklore theory is inadequate to process the extant evidence of revivalism as the distinct phenomenon which it clearly is.

A Shetland legend (Bruford 1991, 125) forms the basis of a thought-experiment in illustration of this point. According to the legend, two trows,⁷ Skeenglo and Skeengles, burst in on a farmer as he warmed himself by the fire. Terrified, the farmer hid in a pile of straw, and the trows made themselves comfortable by the fire without noticing the hidden man. As time passed, the

⁷ A Shetland species of elf.

man could not help but fidget slightly under the straw, and Skeenglo exclaimed in alarm: "Gloy gangs!" ("The straw is moving!"). Skeengles dismissed this out of hand with the uncontroversial and reassuring axiom "Gloy canna gang" ("straw cannot move"), and when at last the trows left, the man escaped undiscovered and unharmed. Skeengles never suspected that he was in the presence of a mortal man. His cognitive incompetence in this regard is interesting and useful. Skeengles shows a typically elvish inability to achieve intuitive interpretations of whole situations within the human environment; instead, he exhibits a scholastic and anti-empiricist reliance on true and therefore apparently infallible axioms. With this in mind, one can imagine what would happen if Skeengles were invited to visit the mortal world, including revivalistic folk and storytelling festivals, and if, in preparation for his visit, he anxiously studied current trends in folklore theory, but entered our world knowing nothing else about it. Under such circumstances, he would apply folklore theory with the same insensitive deductivity with which, in the legend, he applied his knowledge of straw. His conclusions would be striking. Skeengles would observe that a revivalistic folk festival was a vernacular performance *milieu* in dialogue with technological mediation along the folklore-popular culture continuum. He would regard talk of source traditions as conventionally traditionalising rhetoric. He would not be unduly troubled by commercialised and competitive relationships, or by the fact that folk festivals sometimes seemed not to be quite as close to the real spirit of source traditions as their publicity and participants claimed or assumed them to be. It would never occur to him to look for purity, orality, or perhaps even authenticity in performance texture or context, or in the interrelationships between these. He would expect to see personal creativity and individualistic variation and differential identities. Moreover, and crucially, if Skeengles visited a gathering within a mature, accredited source tradition - a *ceili* at an Irish or Scottish visiting-house or travellers' campfire, or a storytelling session in an

Appalachian farmhouse, a Bahamian bar or a Romanian work-camp, or at a Tuscan *veglia* or Newfoundland *veillée*, in the examples described below - he would look for the same things, and find them. Source traditions and folk cultures generally incorporate vernacular performance *milieux* in dialogue with various forms of technological mediation, such as print or the electronic media, often along a folklore-popular culture continuum. They are often rhetorically traditionalised, characterised by differential, competitive and commercialised relationships, personal creativity and individualistic variation, and significantly resistant to superorganic concepts of purity or absolute orality. As he experienced varying *milieux*, Skeengles might note differences in the quantitative scale of such factors as the complexity and extent of technological mediation, the basis and expression of differential identity, the cultural proximity to and attitude towards past precedents, and the quality and type of rewards for expert or successful performance. The problem is that his theory would give him no grounds for regarding these differences as essential. In fact - because he would work purely intellectually from his theoretical axioms, without trying to sense the situation intuitively or holistically - he would have no chance of perceiving or understanding a generic difference between “traditions” and “revivals” at all. He could have no understanding of the folklorist’s idea that revivalistic movements are a distinct, still less a marginal form of folk culture, and no understanding of the folklorist’s idea that “revivals” are unusually derivative in the terms just described. The distinction would be as imperceptible as is, for example, the distinction between King Edwards and Maris Pipers to a person to whom all potatoes are effectively identical. Moreover, and equally importantly, this incomprehension would have no intellectual consequences. That is to say, it would not in itself render Skeengles intellectually unfit to practise as a folklorist. He would remain capable of conducting academic folklore research into the *milieux* he observed, whether mature tradition or innovative “revivals.” He would even be able to

make comparisons of specific variables as previously described, such as technological mediation and differential identity, without feeling that the noted differences had any wider implications regarding the basic essence of the traditional *milieux* observed. The only thing he would not be able to do is perceive a basic, unitary, taxonomic difference between tradition and “revival.”

Certainly, too, he would have a point. Folklore theory and folklore research - on, it must be admitted, good grounds - have eroded the basis of any essential or straightforward distinction between the two. Equally crucially, however, it is apparent that something is missing from Skeengles’ understanding. Revivalism seems to be qualitatively and generically different from mature tradition in consistent and repeatedly occurring ways, and scholars have effectively proven that this difference exists by studying the changing performance habits of transitional artists such as Jeannie and Stanley Robertson and Ed Bell. They have even begun to explain the causes of these transitions coherently and persuasively. However, paradoxically, revivalism has no single feature or aspect which is not equally present in some form within mature traditions, and in this sense the two cannot be absolutely distinguished. Scholars such as Stone (Bottigheimer 1986, 27) have begun to unravel this paradox; but it remains in many ways mysterious. *Contra* Skeengles, the existence of some form of qualitative difference need not therefore be doubted, but it must be better explained. The fact that it has not been is partly the result of the third problem, which will now be discussed.

2.3.2.3 Consistency of interest

The third problem is that scholars assume the responsibility to judge revivalist endeavours critically as art, while by contrast deferring relativistically to other tradition-bearers; but at the same time, as with the previous problem, both

theory and evidence are less than clear on the relevant distinctions. As described above, many scholars have seen the diachronic development of revivalism in terms of “requisite freezing,” an imposed fixity of form which actually has a negative affect on the quality of the performance simply as art. Continuing this theme, Röhrich (Bottigheimer 1986, 1-9) expresses concern about outdated social and political messages within fairy tale texts performed in a modern revivalistic context. Like others, he seeks reassurance in the idea of authenticity. The interpolations of collectors and the storytelling “renewals” of “neotraditional” tellers (5), which mechanistically preserve anachronistic or oppressive messages, are “ballast ... that should be tossed overboard” (5-6). By contrast, “authentic” tales are “essential and substantial stories which offer paradigmatic examples of conflicts in decisive life situations” (1), and “always reflect the society in which they are told” (5). As such, they forestall the revivalistic tendency to become “a flight from a technically rational world into neo-irrationalism” (1). It is notable that Röhrich proceeds immediately to discuss the complex ironies and ambiguities of *Märchen* representations of royalty, features which assertions of their “essential and substantial” nature fail to predict. Against this approach it may be argued that all acts of communication, including all artistic acts, always, necessarily, reflect the society in which they occur, and that it is effectively meaningless and prescriptive to draw distinctions in this respect. Particular acts may reflect something which meets with the disapproval of given scholars or which lies outside their preoccupations. However, to impute to revivalism, or any other manifestation of culture, total failure to reflect anything at all is evidence of a failure not of culture but of scholarship (Rosenberg 1993, 80). Röhrich’s distinction, as stated, is of little use in identifying and understanding traditional arts revivalism.

A more extreme but more specific and plausible pessimism is articulated by Brennan Harvey (1992), who takes up the idea of aesthetic de pragmatism which Marett foresees and Bausinger describes, but invests it with overt pessimism. The relevant passage, referring to the applied folkloric presentation of traditional storytellers at Milltown Mallbay festival, is worth quoting in full.

The frame of reference that the [tradition-bearing] narrators and the [festival] audience share is some sense of the value of the old, traditional ways and the aesthetic accomplishments of generations of Irish country people, something that is part of their collective heritage and experience. But the storytellers are now [i.e., at the festival] performing for an audience whose members are almost completely unfamiliar with the narrative tradition, who cannot critically appreciate or evaluate their performances and, more than likely, will never be able to do so. Unlike the musical performances at the festival, there is nothing artistically at stake here. The majority of the narrators, to some degree, have adopted this role and are narrating in such settings because it is the *role* itself that is valued; they are not necessarily valued for the excellence of their storytelling. There is manifest self-consciousness here. It is infatuation with the past and the lack of clear standards by which to judge critically the narrative performances of the storytellers which make it possible for certain individuals in such a position to take up the mantle of “traditional storyteller” with relative ease. This, in essence, sums up the state, and the problems, of the narrative tradition in English as a whole. (44-5)

Brennan Harvey contrasts this bleak vision with the Irish language tradition, in which, as in McCarthy’s *Appalachians*, there was a clear and specific consensual standard of excellence:

Aesthetic judgements of Irish Gaelic storytelling were based on the display of linguistic virtuosity, or *crua-Ghaedhlig* (*crua-Ghaolaimn*), “hard Irish” ... Linguistic excellence and dexterity *for its own sake* was the most important yardstick by which the narrator of stories in Irish was measured (55-56)

English language storytelling, she argues, lacks a similar standard; as do the revivalistic movements.

Other scholars are more optimistic about revivalism, but they are rarely specifically more optimistic about the historical process of development leading up to it, or about the solidity or maturity of the revivalist community as a seed-bed for accomplished artistic achievement. Sobol (1994) examines US storytelling revivalism in structural and synchronic terms, arguing that personal experience narratives of involvement in the storytelling movement are themselves highly structured according to traditional patterns. These he explains in the conventional manner, as an exercise in past-oriented symbolism. For Sobol, the esoteric culture of the storytelling movement encodes renewal motifs which he labels “the archetype of the storyteller” (66, 445) and “the myth of serendipity” (66). These motifs occur in tales canonical within the revivalistic movement, and also within personal experience narratives and perceptions of revivalists elicited in fieldwork, operating like Proppian functions or the post-Jungian archetypal formulations of Campbell and Hillman (46, 249). For Sobol, they

continuously evoke a revival dialectic - basing itself on artistic and communal ideals located in an imagined past, in order to heal a present brokenness, and awaken an ideal future (71).

Sobol sees the storytelling festival as an expiatory and redemptory ritual; the analogues to religious narratives and rituals are openly developed (289-290). For him, it re-enacts a supposedly pre-industrial, pre-consumerist world construed more or less literally as pre-lapsarian, and compensates for the moral, spiritual and/or aesthetic shortcomings of contemporaneity (303). Effectively, revivalism sublimates a desire to dispense with modernity altogether. Following Turner (249 et seq.), Sobol sees this as functioning, like all ritual, as a means of

coping with change, specifically, with the emergence of a dislocated, technologised modernity. The compensatory “rhetoric of community and tradition” enters into dialogue with actual narrative source traditions, and disguises the fact that the resulting revivalistic culture is transitional, constituting “styles and contexts that are clearly ‘non-traditional’” (303-4). However, despite this fracture, there truly are “actual traditional dynamics within the [revivalistic] community” (xv). Like Pilkington, Sobol describes a revivalistic rhetoric which conceals the movement’s lack of stable traditionality. However, paradoxically, for Sobol, this rhetoric is both a mask for, and a symptom of, a new and emergent traditionality, as the developing new culture of the revivalistic movement is disseminated and preserved by tradition-like means within revivalistic communities. This process occurs within the historical context of the radical politics of the 1960s, which in the 1970s, was introverted into a discourse of personal development. Revivalistic storytelling, he argues in convincing but sobering terms, is a “sublimation” (42) of radical politics (19-24). As such, he concedes, beneath the symbolism, it is actually as modernist, as commercial and consumerist, as the order it symbolically subverts (305). Sobol’s methods are qualitative and deductive in nature. He arranges a corpus of fieldwork data at will around a skeleton of theory drawn from Jung, Campbell, Hillman, Turner, Barthes, Ong, McLuhan, and Wallace, without any attempt to test the applicability of such theories, contextualise or quantify the examples cited in the application, or otherwise demonstrate the transparency either of his own or of his authorities’ methods. Rather than a real and sustained sense of historical process, there is a largely synchronic sense of structural pattern, loosely contextualised in recent history and ultimately rather arbitrarily asserted. Nevertheless, this is a relatively full attempt to theorise, as synchronic structure, the past-centred and de pragmatizing aspects of revivalistic storytelling, relating global- and local-field social facts with coherency and detail. Sobol is celebratory about storytelling revivalism,

proceeding “unsentimentally yet tenderly” (450). He is himself a revivalist, and this has important implications which are discussed below.

Sobol’s approach is similar in some ways to that of another US folklorist, Peiffer (1994). Peiffer adopts a biographical approach, scrutinising the life and work of a single revivalistic storyteller, (pseudonymously) “Kris Porter,” as a unitary “mega-performance” (vi). Like Sobol, Peiffer imposes a deductive and etic model, in this case Hymes’ ethnography of speaking (vi), rather than inductively demonstrating an emic one in the data. The theme so pursued is liminality. Peiffer links performance with the wider sociocultural context by describing how Porter’s “mega-performance,” her life and career, is shaped by the lack of its own precedents, both enacting and defining, or redefining, the liminal term *storyteller*, imbuing it with newly appropriate connotations. This is another relatively rigorous attempt to theorise a revivalistic transition in both global and local fields, but it is limited by its apparent arbitrariness. Again, it is easier for the reader to sense than to understand the revivalistic ambience.

For Stone (Bottigheimer, 1986), subjective and synchronic aesthetic criteria allay any suspicions of unauthenticity: “It is not the material alone that makes the tradition, it is the experience” (27). She concludes that “The *Märchen* continues its emergent quality in contemporary performance.” Here, traditionality is asserted to consist of a particular subjective state (experience), cued partly by textual features (material), including genre (*Märchen*), and partly by the (emergent) totality of socially situated performance. Stone’s criterion of traditionality therefore seems to be an intense phenomenology associated with communal interaction - a heightened, rather heterodox state of altered consciousness, not unlike *communitas* in Turner’s sense (1969). Traditionality in this sense is cued by specific, diachronically stable genres of text, and having specific diachronically stable ambiances which survive the

transition from source to “revival.” Woods (1979) and Lloyd (1967), and more recently Munro (1996) have given similarly optimistic accounts of British folk music “revivals.” Munro’s approach to definition in particular is similarly aesthetic and impressionistic. Citing Sydney Carter’s detection of traditionality through “a sort of shiver,” she states that “with folk poetry, music and story one’s reaction seems somehow more immediate, almost more ... atavistic.” (ellipsis in original text) (4). This is a Childian world where a “distinction” exists between “the genuine national or popular ballads and all varieties of a base kind” which “is easier to feel than to formulate” and “the chemistry of the English and Scottish ballad seems ... as indeterminate as Greek myths.”⁸ For Child and Munro, then, text alone is sufficient; for Stone (Bottigheimer, 1986), text is necessary but not sufficient, requiring contextualised performance. For all these writers, the content or substance of traditional art is a certain mode of heightened experience, which is cued by factors such as genre, text, texture and context but which eludes exact codification, though it can be evoked.

These insights have considerable force, but they require careful treatment. Specifically, there seem to be two problematic implications. On the one hand, there is a possible risk of aesthetic or phenomenological reductivism. If tradition is primarily or wholly equated with a potent quasi-atavistic effect, simply as such, then tradition may become anything which is felt to be traditional, that is, which is successfully traditionalized in the sense discussed above. In these circumstances, traditionality as a separate, authentic, historical category disappears, and *tradition* as a concept and term might as well be abandoned. This is the logical conclusion of the synchronic and subjective definition of *tradition* after Handler and Linnekin, and the strongest argument against it. The preferable alternative is to understand tradition as an objectively

⁸ Child, quoted in Harker 1985, 119.

demonstrable continuity with the past; as such, it may under certain circumstances produce an explicit perception of ancientness, or be accompanied by an explicit assertion of ancientness, but it cannot be reduced to either. Tradition involves real diachronic continuity, or it involves nothing. However, a quasi-atavistic ambience is not in itself proof of such continuity. It may result from, and will almost certainly involve some degree of, fantasy, wishful thinking, misunderstanding, ignorance, and other slippages. If scholarly and critical comment on tradition is to involve more than opaque affirmations or denials of traditionality, then the synchronic and subjective category of authenticity must be rigorously distinguished from the diachronic and objective. As Stone suggests (Bottigheimer 1986), and as more conservative folklorists assume, the best way to do this is to fall back on structural and textual features - including, for narrative studies, such categories as genre, type and motif. These are stable through time, and display patterns of transmission which can be at least partially reconstructed. While the maintenance of diachronic stabilities through patterns of transmission need not necessarily be the central preoccupation of all monographs, it is therefore certainly a *sine qua non* of the core subject matter of academic folklore studies.

The underlying issue here for the present study is that this critical exchange on revivalism is explicitly or implicitly forensic or adversarial. It seeks explicitly to undermine, defend, or otherwise evaluate the artistic and cultural validity of revivalism, rather than describe or analyse it. This is markedly different in tenor from the scholarship of oral narrative and other traditional arts generally, which are generally more confident about the worthiness of the subject. Other studies coherently and evocatively describe and explain culture in the local field, simultaneously illuminating larger social and historical processes, without attempting to sit in artistic judgement on the culture under study. Dégh's subject is the storytelling of the Szekely of postwar Hungary (1969). She notes

a diverse oral narrative culture but concentrates on the international folktales and their tellers, reviewing the folktale as a global and historical genre and discussing its place in Szekler life, discussing issues of belief and the impact of literacy on oral culture. Storytelling was entertainment for poor audiences, indulged in spinning sessions, wakes, and house-visits; the long folktales were usually told in non-domestic, working or non-voluntary communities: the migrant labour-camp, army, or gaol. She defines tradition, following Anikin, as a “chain of collective authorship” (50), identifying three factors “equally essential to the existence of the folktale:” the “communal contribution of past bearers of tradition;” a present-day telling community; and the gifted storyteller. A living tradition depends on good storytellers, deeply appreciative listeners, a need and context for telling, here related to the lack of alternative entertainments in the sociocultural context.

The focus of her work is, unapologetically, on the tellers. She presents biographies of individual tellers, lists the number and genre of their tales, their sources and the teller’s treatment of them, and identifies their consistent themes and preoccupations. They were far from the passive memory banks formerly assumed by collectors. The contexts of tales are related to individual tellers’ uses of them to enrich, explain and improve their own lives. Competition among storytellers for status was fierce, and ownership of tales jealously guarded. Tales were extensively embroidered with individual, competitive, selfconscious artistry, which Dégh suggests may ultimately diffuse into the more general storytelling style of geographical localities.

Another contextual study of the European folktale concerns the *veglia*, an evening domestic social gathering between extended Tuscan families (Falassi 1980). Falassi prioritises the way specific tales, and also specific times and places “are endowed with significance by a community.” He asserts that

folkloristic study has tended to be anecdotal in its approach, and attempts in contrast a systematic study of the totality of what happens within the stated context (x). Falassi notes the setting of the *veglia*, which is domestic both in the spatial sense, in that it occurs at the hearth, the exact centre of concentric spatiocultural boundaries arranged around the home, permeating the landscape, and shaping the lives of participants, and in the cultural sense in that familial hierarchies are present, intact and operative. By contrast with the conventional picture of revivalism, the *veglia* is striking in its assertive anti-liminality.

The *veglia*'s function, according to Falassi, was to maintain licit social forms, by facilitating non-threatening and supervised subversion and self-expression by children and young adults, and instruction of both by the elders. "Oral literary criticism" (Dundes 1978, 38) elicited in interview from the tellers demonstrates how emic meanings correlate with the conservatism of the domestic context, prioritising the moral impact of the tales, in which, as in Tuscan life, women were regarded as property, men were not held responsible for their adultery, endogamous marriage was preferred, and good relations between in-laws were at once important and difficult to maintain.

Conversely, a wide repertoire of love-songs constituted the only form of courtship allowed to young unmarried people. The repertoire furnished at least one song for every conceivable romantic situation. A given song's extrinsic referents would be effectively cued nonverbally, and its generic formalities would depersonalise and legitimise the expression of these referents. The wider temporal features of the encounter, like the spatial features, interrelate with its textual features to generate cultural meaning. The first part of the evening comprised storytelling for a mixed audience of adults and children, including folktales. Subsequently there were riddles, catches, lullabies, and prayers, and then the children were put to bed. With the children gone, songs of courtship

followed. Thereafter there were songs and tales of married life by the older family members and general gossip. The journey home was the pretext for pranks, fights and even serious attacks, in which Falassi sees an echo of the folktale hero's journey. Falassi paints a convincing picture of ways in which the textual and contextual enactment of the *veglia* achieves a multi-levelled unitary textuality, mirroring the sociocultural and spatiotemporal organisation and ethics of everyday life. He interweaves etic psychological interpretations of folktales with oral literary criticism elicited in interview. Both Dégh's and Falassi's studies are detailed and evocative, but they are methodologically opaque and apparently deductive and sound rather impressionistic. There is no exhaustive or systematic account of research methods or guarantees of objectivity and it is difficult to distinguish Dégh's or Falassi's voices from their informants'. In the end, the reader has simply to trust that the authors have got the nuances right, or not. This does not in any way weaken the coherence and plausible evocative power of these works, but it leaves open possibilities for greater transparency and verifiability, and more precise and reliable conclusions.

Across the Atlantic, the *veillée*, etymologically and culturally cognate with the *veglia*, was the setting for folktale telling in Newfoundland. Folktale telling was a public and elaborate performance by unusually gifted individuals of consequent high status. Thomas asserts the continuing vigour of Newfoundland French-language *Märchen*-telling by identifying two parallel traditions (1993). The *veillée* had been driven to extinction by the mid-1960s, largely by television and other technological mediations, and social change brought about by the US military presence in the province. Subsequent developments in oral narrative have been in dialogue with mediated forms (Thomas 1980). However, Thomas noted a private, more informal *Märchen*-telling tradition persisting within domestic settings. Here performances were briefer, lasting up to half an

hour rather than whole evenings, less rich in formulaic language, freer for irony, parody and self-deprecation, more tolerant of hesitation and other rhetorical imperfections, more bilingual, and less gesturally exaggerated. Thomas' picture is broadly corroborated by Halpert and Widdowson (1996). Although they acknowledge the decline of this aspect of oral narrative tradition in the predominantly English-speaking outports of Newfoundland, they militate still further against the idea that this decline is absolute. They found that the absence of competing forms of entertainment was an important factor in maintaining the tradition, and that this absence no longer pertains. Over the long term, the average length of folktale performance appears to be decreasing.

Similarly concerned with contextualised performance are monographs by Crowley (1966), Bauman (1986), Mullen (1988), and Briggs (1990). However, perhaps the most extreme and therefore revealing example of opaque partisanship is, as it were by deliberate strategy, Glassie's study of rural Ulster in the 1970s (1982). Glassie declares himself at "war with academic conventions" on the grounds that

Meaning submits to no conclusive tests. It expands, escaping final proof. A subject for discourse among intellectuals and not an exercise for technicians, meaning is not beyond science, but it is beyond the nightmare of methodologists who think science is a matter of measurement, demonstration and proof, rather than disciplined understanding (153-154)

He therefore dispenses with academic methods as such, or more precisely with their explicit and transparent exposition, which he believes to be inherently destructive of their subject, "destroying experience to consolidate our [i.e., scholars'] disciplines and advance our careers" (xiv). By contrast, Glassie declares himself "at peace with the gentle wisdom of old men" (xiv), a wisdom enshrined in "sturdy, fecund totalities" and "great verities" which are "beyond

the grasp of middle-class intellectuals whose cloistered meditations can but spin endlessly in themselves” (xvi). Glassie’s insights are presented as a series of aphorisms contextualised within a particular landscape, an almost poetic strategy.⁹ “History is beyond” (109), or “Life gives us little things to work on, or it gives us emptiness” (272), or “stories are centers in wholeness” (273), or “Tea is not wine, not blood” (469), or

Faith without good works. One lives in work. Good work is defined when all the Bible’s thundering negativity is reduced by the District’s people to two positive commandments: “Love God before all things. Love your neighbor as yourself and in that you shall live.” (181)

These aphoristic insights are contextualised in a register which portentously evokes rather than informs:

... and into the minds of men waiting for the sun blew years when black frost shriveled the spuds in the ridges, years when turf lay on the spread through the summer, and winter closed down without food for the belly or fuel for the hearth. The bright, warm days expected in May and June never came. In running gray skies, in the dank sloughs of the gaps, summer broke, damp, chilled. (95)

The text begs questions similar to those begged by Falassi, Dégh, and others, but with heightened urgency. It is impossible to discern the method, to assess the unacknowledged selectivity of scrutiny, or to distinguish the voice of the scholar from the voices of the participants in the culture. It is even more necessary simply to trust the author to have got it right. Moreover, as exemplified in the above excerpts, Glassie’s authorial voice is pervasive, and consistently that of the melodramatically romanticising outsider. Even

⁹ For example, Glassie’s juxtaposition of universalising aphorisms with evocations of place seems to owe something to the *Four Quartets* of T.S. Eliot - also a North American working imaginatively with the older landscape of a European homeland.

sectarian, military and paramilitary violence is evoked in terms of the “handsome young man who has known the terror of midnight roads, the engine’s hum, the feel of a makeshift bomb in his palms,” who “stands [in a singing pub at closing time], looking at no-one, and says softly, ‘When I hear the old men sing, I love Ireland more’” (85), and the “camouflaged, frightened young men, tall West Indians and Lancashire farm lads with machine guns” (85). This is the voice of Hollywood: melodramatic, limited in range and depth, and in places jarringly incongruous. As Glassie’s argument is made by tone at least as much as by content, stylistic limitations are not trivial or superficial. Evocative description is, at most, necessary but not sufficient to understand the tensions between nationalism and sectarianism, idealism and *realpolitik*, sentiment and ruthlessness, enmity and brotherhood, exemplified in passages such as the following:

I have listened as a member of the Provisional IRA, with deaths notched on his soul, told me that the Protestant paramilitary radicals, members of the UVF and UDA, were his brothers. Their common enemy was the British army and American capitalism. In the new Ireland, for which he was game to die ... The Orange Lodges would still troop proudly on the Twelfth, he said, and Catholics would be left to their green farms and ancient, sacred culture. (299-300)

This is a highly ambivalent statement with extremely complex implications. However, it is given without comment. It is certainly fair and admissible testimony, but it is equally certainly not complete or self-explicating as it stands. The gravity of the issues, and specifically the ethical questions surrounding political violence, do not necessarily obviate the scholar’s responsibilities of understanding and empathy towards informants. However, neither do they obviate the scholar’s responsibility to interpret. Understanding must certainly be disciplined; it must also be communicated.

Glassie's work is an extreme example of the opacity of folkloristic method and the partisan nature of the folklorist's instincts regarding the folk. The worst that can be said of these is that they are more apposite to the study of genuinely marginalised and under-represented culture, such as that of sectarian rural Ulster in the troubled 1970s and early 1980s, than to the study of traditional arts revivalism. In the latter case, the informant community is usually fairly well enfranchised in economic and cultural terms, and the otherness from the scholarly community is limited in the terms outlined above. Under such circumstances, the folkloristic scholar is consequently, as indeed in the case of the present study, at least as likely to be reporting on his or her own culture as on the culture of others. As with Sobol's purposeful tenderness towards US storytelling revivalism, the folklorist's habitual partisan stance then verges on opaque self-celebration. An encomium on contemporary revivalistic storytelling would be largely uninformative as scholarship. There are two alternatives to such opaque self-celebration. On the one hand, folklorists might place all folk cultures indiscriminately under suspicion, and become, as it were, unabashed critics or *connoisseurs*. Given that traditional art is often marginalised by mainstream aesthetic standards, this is fraught with risk. On the other hand, one might simply accept the inconsistency whereby, *a priori*, folklorists hold "revivals" in greater suspicion than they do "traditions," and ratify a double standard *a priori*. However - as argued in the foregoing section using the imaginary example of Skeengles the trow - neither theory nor evidence supports such a distinction. This approach has therefore already led to apparent and serious solecisms in the handling of data on the more problematic aspects of storytelling tradition and storytelling "revival" by scholars already reviewed.

These solecisms are exemplified firstly in the discussion of transitional performers, that is, those who are born and brought up in or near a living source tradition, but go on to enjoy success in a revivalistic context; and,

secondly, and more generally, in the handling of the issue of artistic failure. A Ward-Hicks family member, Frank Proffitt, Jr., was recognised as a ballad singer but not as a storyteller within the family. Nevertheless he is now a celebrity storyteller within the revivalistic movement. In storytelling performance, he affects a non-habitual accent and dialect; he derives his repertoire from print anthologies of his relatives' tales; and by his own account he would not have attempted to achieve recognition as a storyteller had it not been for the "revival" (McCarthy 1994, 27-32). Frank Proffitt, Jr.'s storytelling thus clearly occupies an aesthetic and developmental point somewhere between the source tradition and the "revival:" it is a hybrid, transitional form. However, in McCarthy's essays Frank Proffitt, Jr. is discussed as a source storytelling tradition-bearer *tout court*, and excluded as such from the critical ambivalence reserved for revivalist storytelling. Similarly, earlier in the century, another Ward-Hicks family member, Maud Gentry Long, had attempted to sell family stories to the Disney corporation for mediation as animated feature films (100-101). It is certain that the material so mediated would have become "more dramatic and public," and been "trivialised" and "warped into a dramatic form" by cinematographers "wishing to realise their own distorted notions of its scale and grandeur," in the manner which often characterises revivalist storytellers, as Lindahl notes with anxiety (McCarthy 1994, xxi, 27; see above, p. 66). Again, Maud Gentry Long's approach to her career as an active tradition-bearer occupies a position somewhere between that of source tradition and extra-traditional mediation; but this is not noted. In both these cases, scholars are apparently blind to the fact that, in the immediate pre-"revival" period, transactions within the community of source tradition-bearers - as defined - become similar, if not effectively identical, to the ambivalent appropriations and mediations of "revival." The source tradition is defined with a misleading air of clarity, as that which is done by individual members of the tradition-bearing families, without direct consideration of the quality of the artistic or cultural

transaction as such. In these terms, the transition from source tradition to mediation in popular culture and revivalistic movement is smoother and more continuous, and individuals adapt their goals, behaviours and approaches in response to changing contexts and opportunities.

This misleadingly clear delineation of the boundary between tradition and post-traditional mediation is congruent with a more general tendency for folklorists to downplay the provisionality, slippages and momentary infelicities of traditional cultures, rather as they call heightened attention to these in the study of “revivals.” Crowley, in an otherwise sympathetic study (1966), discusses a moment of aesthetic failure in Bahamian storytelling in the 1950s:

In one case a narrator who only occasionally attended the sessions had been telling a story which had lasted nearly a half hour, and which was made up of a series of motifs not particularly well integrated with each other. The recording tape was running low, and more popular narrators had stories prepared to tell. In the lull after “Bunday!”¹⁰ the master storyteller present suggested kindly but forthrightly that the story was getting pretty long, and that the narrator should finish it. This he did, completing the motif simply, and using only one formulaic closing (21).

Bahamian audiences were “too self-sufficient, undisciplined, and restless to give their whole attention very long” (20) even to skilled storytellers, and, confronted with a poor performance they “made it a point to appear bored and irritated” (102). Nevertheless, it is clear that, on this evidence, Bahamian storytelling at times lacked aesthetic potency, and that listeners, though they would show their distaste, would nevertheless scarcely permit themselves to interrupt except with the sanction of the traditional pattern of call and response. Clearly, to a degree, then, local interactional norms at times sanctioned failure

¹⁰ A storyteller’s call, eliciting an audience response appropriate to the general level of enjoyment.

and misunderstanding of a kind which scholars associate with revivalism. Crowley, however, does not proceed to adopt a forensic attitude towards Bahamian old-story as a whole; he assumes the episode of failure related above to be a relatively trivial aberration in an otherwise healthy *milieu*. In mature tradition, failure is seen as incidental; but in the study of revivalism it is assumed to condition the nature of the whole *milieu*. Like Maud Gentry Long's attempts at commercialised mediations of the Appalachian folktale (McCarthy 1994, 100-101), these ratifications of substandard performance exemplify phenomena of a kind which, it is implied, when observed in a revivalistic setting, calls the validity of revivalism into question. However, the same thing, done within the source tradition at the personal discretion of authentic tradition-bearers, is regarded as an aberration. Similarly, evocations of pastness and historicity within revivalistic *milieux* - partly or largely historicised settings and textures for tales, assertions of the antiquity of particular stories and genres - are regarded as problematic "requisite freezing" or "mummification." However, when similar evocations of pastness recur - as they do constantly - across the spectrum of mature traditional *milieux*, scholars accept them without censure. This is done even when, as in Röhrich (Bottigheimer 1986, 1-9), this necessitates a deductive double standard, applied in order to distinguish as "tradition" and "revival" forms of artistic performance which are effectively indistinguishable on the evidence shown and by the arguments stated. This is the central problem: that this double standard has not been, and indeed cannot be, justified evidentially or logically. There is no single feature of revivalism which is not also observable in mature traditions: neither evocation of pastness for aesthetic purposes or as a form of self-legitimation; nor provisionality and artistic limitation and occasional failure; nor appropriative transition from a previous cultural state; nor anything else. The clear, Dorsonian distinction between "tradition" and "revival" appears to be largely a scholarly imposition.

There is a substantial body of post-Dorsonian scholarship on revivalism,¹¹ especially on folk music revivalism. Recent theorists are immeasurably more sympathetic to revivalism than Dorson. Nevertheless, a vestigially Dorsonian distinction continues to inform some of this work, overlain by a new, more confident sense of the independence and potential of revivalism. Livingston (1999), drawing on a wide range of references in musical “revivals” of Latvian *kokle*, Brazilian *choro*, US blues, Peruvian *sikus*, and other forms and instruments, offers a descriptive model of revivalism containing six elements. These are, firstly, an individual or small group of core revivalists; secondly, access to source traditional informants and/or recordings; thirdly, a revivalist ideology and discourse; fourthly, a group of followers forming the basis of a revivalist community; fifthly, revivalist activities such as organisations, festivals and competitions; and sixthly, commercial and non-commercial enterprises catering to the revivalistic market. She notes how the revivalistic insistence on authenticity often overlies an ideological preoccupation with ethnic and cultural identity, and/or with constructions of the folk as an anti-type of a negatively conceived modernity, but also that

Although there is a core ideology that revivalists are aware of, many choose to ignore it ... or to modify it to suit their own needs and desires. (73)

Baumann (1996) discusses conflicting tendencies within music revivalism, towards “purism” or “syncretism,” that is, respectively, towards resistance to, or acceptance of, adaptation and development. He attaches central importance to the political ideology of revival and to

¹¹ I am indebted to Chloe Wooley of the School of Scottish Studies at Edinburgh University for several references in this literature.

The conscious or unconscious entanglement in decision-making processes [which] can be understood ... as musical-political behaviour (72)

but he too notes that

... Many musicians seem to be unaware of their political statements or believe themselves to be non-political or apolitical. ... (72)

Ronström (1996), reviewing the vast literature on music revivalism, notes that

Many ... studies discuss revival as a social movement ... involved in political, economical and cultural struggles ... The traditions that are revived are discussed as symbolical expressions, sometimes as metaphors, sometimes as metonyms, of that for which the revivalists are fighting. In my view, the problem with this approach is that ... questions of style, form, genre or aesthetics seem to hold little importance for the results of the analysis. This approach is highly questionable, especially since, for many of the participants in revival movements, aesthetics is what matters above all. (6)

Having stated this important qualification, he goes on to discuss a number of revivalistic processes. He identifies a distinction between “re-enactment” (which is insulated from the actual aesthetic standards of the present and corresponds to purism in Baumann’s terms) with revival (which represents a form which is subjected to critical evaluation by the aesthetic standards of the present and corresponds to, or leads to, Baumann’s syncretism), and lists the ideological component of revivalistic struggle, against mainstream features such as modernity, commercialisation, and rationalism. Unmarked, unselfconscious, embedded processes and behaviours become objectified by the producers, controllers and distributors of knowledge as highly visible traditions; temporal, spatial and sociocultural “shifts” (15), recalling Marett’s metataxis and metalepsis, occur. Unlike Livingston, whose work is largely descriptive,

Ronström offers explanations for the emergence of revivalism: the desire for community and a sense of belonging; the expression of societal and ideological values; and aesthetic and commercial considerations.

This body of thought shows a continued, post-Dorsonian preoccupation with the ideological claims of revivalistic movements as whole, unitary entities, posited as a defining feature of revivalism. However, this aspect of revivalism is described better than it is explained. Also, its relationship with the actual experience of involvement with “revival” is not made clear, and, indeed, there is often an emerging sense that revivalistic culture itself is more preoccupied than this distinction suggests with aesthetic rather than with ideological issues. Folklorists have been more loth to attach conspicuous importance to ideological (especially nostalgic and past-centred) motivations in source traditional or pre-revivalistic *milieux*. As argued above, however, there is little *a priori* theoretical reason to regard revivalistic movements as different in this case, and the evidential basis for the distinction remains vestigial and ambiguous. Folklorists, rightly, celebrate folk culture; but there are no solid theoretical or evidential grounds for seeing “revivals” as anything other than a form of folk culture, and to celebrate “revivals” in the way folklorists often celebrate source traditions risks opaque self-celebration. The issue of ideology therefore remains central for scholars seeking to repair the problem of consistency of interest in the study of traditional arts revivalism: whether revivalists are more selfconsciously ideological than source-tradition bearers, and, if so, why. Without answers to these questions, the conflict of interest inherent in the folklorist’s study of traditional arts revivalism, and the problems caused by the necessary limitations and the inevitable partiality of the folklorist’s gaze, begin to seem insuperable. It is, however, possible, with care, to begin to work towards a solution.

The work of one further scholar requires discussion before an attempt is made to resolve these issues, if only because exceptional clarity and rigour and compendious scope make his work indispensable to any discussion of folk narrative. This is Holbek (1987). Holbek's work is a speculative reconstruction of the thought-world of Kristensen's folktale informants, rural labourers of nineteenth-century Jutland, as articulated in the collected texts of their tales. Holbek's task is to interpret the meaning of the folktale by exhaustively analysing a sample of texts (1987, 17-19). The terms of this task are refined to stipulate the marvellous elements of the tales, and specifically the meaning of these marvellous elements according to "the viewpoint of the traditional storytellers and their audiences" (187, 601). The tale tellers and their audiences are, explicitly, Holbek's theme:

... interpretation is an attempt to draw a "map" of the intangible intentions of the artist's mind ... We must ... assume that the marvellous elements of the tales meant something to the narrators themselves. It is possible, e.g., that reminiscences of contemporaneous initiation rites were once used in the composition of some fairy tales, but the 19th century Jutish narrator had no way of knowing that and did not care. Bäuml and Spielmann ... describe this "cultural amnesia" of their informants as *homeostasis*, a state of balance. We shall take this state of balance as our basis for interpretation ... We thus decide upon a synchronic approach. (190-192)

Exhaustively surveying a range of critical and interpretative approaches (187-403), and the historical and social contexts of performance (51-183), he settles on a contextualised but centrally structuralist model (404-453) which he applies to demonstrate that the marvellous constitutes a complex of coded and oblique reference to the everyday world (169, 182):

all such [i.e. marvellous] elements refer to features of the real world as experienced by the members of the storytelling communities. ... The effortlessness of the transition between "our" world and "theirs" in fairy tales (as opposed to legends ...)

ceases to be a mystery when we realise that there is no *Faerie*, hence no transition. ... the apparent "otherworld" is actually still our own world, but *seen in a different way* (italics in original) (408-409, 594)

The resulting view of the marvellous is as a cautious, tight-lipped indirection resulting from the fact that "tales deal with themes which are painful, which cannot be openly approached" in a situation in which

People, and perhaps particularly those of the lowest orders, would have to express themselves with care, to avoid giving offense; on the other hand, everybody knew how to take a hint (407).

For Holbek, folktales belong to the rural lower classes, and their disappearance from oral tradition is historically associated with the dissolution of peasant communities (602-603). Tales "offer workable strategies against real forces" at large in a "Malthusian society, in which the basic fact of life was the inexorable struggle against death," where "people fight each other, often viciously, for control of the meagre resources," using force and trickery in both folktale and real life (395). This is a more precise and highly convincing echo of Röhrich's view of the folktale as preoccupied with "paradigmatic conflicts in decisive life situations" (Böttigheimer 1986, 1). Holbek does not even mention storytelling revivalism, but his argument has gloomy implications for it, because he sees folktales as highly dependent on their traditional and sociopolitical context, meaning little outside it.

However, Holbek's argument has three apparent weaknesses. One is evidential and two are methodological. Firstly, given that Kristensen, like all folklorists of his time, "concentrated on recording tales, not opinions" (194), there is no Falassi-like or Dégh-like corroborative evidence of informants' own interpretations of tales. As with Boyes' study of folksong revivalists, this loss is

irreparable at this distance of time. The evidential foundations for Holbek's painstaking reconstruction of traditional subjectivity are therefore, inescapably, rather slim; the thought-world of tradition is, as he admits, "only accessible to us by inference" (191). Secondly, and more significantly, Holbek's exclusive identification of folktales with the lower classes, which he sees as leading to its dismissal as obnoxious by intellectual élites from Plato onwards (605), fails in itself to predict its recurrent appropriation into literary and more privileged *milieux*, a large phenomenon which prefigured storytelling revivalism for centuries, but which Holbek does not mention except briefly as a side-issue. His argument depends on a view of these appropriations as trivial, "accidental fluctuations" (605) wherein the folktale, "tamed" and "divested of its social aggressiveness," is travestied as a "mishmash of vapid nonsense" (606). He does not mention storytelling revivalism, but perhaps a similar logic would apply, given that revivalistic storytelling is the expression of the educated appropriative impulse that led to the *Kunstmärchen*, as outlined in Chapter 4. The view of *Kunstmärchen* as "vapid nonsense" is understandable from a viewpoint profoundly committed to the working-class *Volksmärchen*. However, it is not very useful in explaining the persistent endurance and widespread appeal of *Kunstmärchen* and appropriated, print-mediated folktales, which overcame the ingrained and educated contempt for "old wives' tales" (605) readily and repeatedly over many centuries, and continues to do so in the present, producing a large imaginative literature of a high order of quality and popularity. Holbek is only peripherally concerned with how this happened, and he does not offer detailed consideration of the *Kunstmärchen* in context such as that made by Zipes (1979).

This silence is related to the fact that Holbek's method is conceptually inconsistent. He explains the marvellous by explaining it away. His central concern, as noted above, is with the subjective experience of participants in the

traditions of rural working-class Jutlanders. However, this subjective experience is approached in a manner which paradoxically excludes aesthetic experience or artistic considerations simply as such:

interpretation is the effort of an individual to convey a subjective experience of some more or less pre-formed *artistic* substance to others. ... we are interested in the ways in which narrators interpret their inheritance. That is not our only task, however, nor even our main task. What we primarily aim to do is to develop a method for an *intellectual* interpretation of fairy tales, the aim of which we shall define as that of producing plausible statements about their meaning. (italics in original)
(188)

The implication is that meaning is in some sense to be distinguished from participant subjective experience. This is necessary given the paucity of direct evidence regarding participants' experiences. However, it precludes outright consideration of Kristensen's informants' direct experience, that is, their experience of the marvellous in and through engagement with particular marvellous tales. However, Holbek's stated aim is to probe exactly this: in his phrase, the "intangible intentions of the artist's mind." By limiting the scope of his study to intellectual issues, to the exclusion of artistic issues, he effectively argues that, in order to discover the experience of folktales, it is necessary to ignore the experience of folktales. Specifically, this precludes *a priori* the consideration of any subjective aesthetic impact which the marvellous might carry, over and above its allegorical functions, which are by nature most obviously recoverable by intellectual process.

2.4

Solutions

The issues raised are manifold and complex, and the problems confronted are substantial. However, the scholarship is generally of a high quality, long-

standing problems are coming to resolution, and it is possible to discern answers for the questions facing the student of storytelling revivalism. A first step in doing so is once again briefly to consider the basic terms *folk*, *lore*, *tradition* and *authenticity*. *Folk* and *lore* are quickly dealt with. Revisionist views are convincing and now generally accepted. The *folk* of folk culture is best considered as any group of persons observed for their traditions and traditional behaviour; and, while a number of relationships are theoretically conceivable between categories such as text, texture, context, and performance, there is no doubt that all are part of the process of creating, preserving and disseminating the forms of folk art. However, it is less easy to approve the folklorist's implicit or explicit preoccupation with marginality. In a word, it is unhelpful. As noted, it arises less out of observed realities of folk culture than out of a desire for a disciplinary identity and survival in an academic context in which folklore studies often seems to be outflanked by younger disciplines. The preoccupation with marginality has tended by implication to ratify the official mainstream as absolute in a way which narrows rather than expands the heuristic possibilities of the discipline. Also, it has often left folklorists blind to actual traditional behaviours which have happened to occur within contexts regarded as too mainstream for consideration. Folklorists of the older school neglected younger genres (such as photocopylore and the contemporary legend) largely because they were too close to the urban mainstream; their form and setting was seen as insufficiently marginal and thus insufficiently folkloric (Bennett 1980). Even younger genres preserved a redefined marginality relative to the official mainstream. So, in just the same way, later folklorists long failed to perceive the tradition-like quality of still more quasi-official mainstream behaviours, because even by the newer standard they similarly lacked requisite marginality. Of these, revivalistic movements, being semi-official, semi-formal, semi-marginal, and somewhat selfconscious, are a good example, and the problems of the scholarship of revivalism are

symptoms of this enduring blind spot. As a general point, given the pervasive, almost omnipresent quality of folk culture and traditional behaviour, the best way forward is for folklorists to abandon explicit or implicit preoccupations with marginality, and recognise their subject, tradition, as a vastly widespread and potentially omnipresent aspect of the human world, without explicit or implicit reference to official, unofficial, centrifugal or centripetal contexts as criteria of definition.

Tradition in this broader and more fundamental sense, however, is a complicated concept requiring careful definition. Nevertheless, the current range of understandings of the term furnish sufficient raw material for workable premises. As is now clear, folklorists generally use *tradition* to refer both to the bodies of mentifacts and practices which comprise folk culture, and to the communicative processes whereby these bodies of mentifacts are created, preserved and transmitted. This mass of content and process is understood in at least three distinct senses. The oldest is summed up in Anikin's phrase: the "chain of collective authorship" (Dégh, 1969, 50), that is, tradition as a diachronic chain, the sequence of imitative, adaptative and creative transmissions from active tradition-bearer to active tradition-bearer. This chain has long preoccupied folklorists. The second is closely related, and noted by Bausinger as above:

The binding character of tradition was not due to the long periods of transmission; on the contrary, the long periods of transmission resulted from the binding character ... (1990, 64).

This defines tradition as a synchronic bonding device, creating synchronic moments of authentic contact, and helping to define and maintain durable relationships, between individuals and within and between groups. The chain-like persistence through time noted by Anikin is here seen as a corollary or

symptom of a more synchronic process of interpersonal and social cohesion. This is tradition as *convention*, understood both as licit and precedented behaviour, and in the more basic and literal sense of *coming together*. The third currently operative sense of tradition is the traditionalisation noted most lucidly and fully by the revisionists Handler and Linnekin: the evocation of pastness as a “wholly symbolic construction,” (1989, 38) which is itself assertive and fluid, incapable of being related to objective traditionality, in the chain- or band-like senses defined by Anikin and Bausinger. Traditionalisation refers to a process of framing or labelling artefacts, mentifacts or behaviours with the sanction of apparent longevity and apparent consensus, a sanction which makes them apparently more useful or palatable for the various functions which they serve. From this perspective, by contrast with the previous two senses of the term, it is the impact and effect of the labelling itself, that is to say of the assertion of traditionality, that are seen as important, rather than the truth value (or otherwise) of such assertions. To summarise, folklorists tend to construe tradition under three aspects: as a diachronic chain (as construed by Anikin), as a synchronic bond (as by Bausinger), and/or as a synchronic label or frame (as by Handler and Linnekin).

It will be noted that, although folklorists have sometimes placed these three categories in implicit contest for the purposes of academic debate, they are not logically exclusive, and all three might co-occur inseparably within a particular traditional act or *milieu*. Indeed, it is hard to think of any traditional *milieu* in which any one of these three aspects is entirely absent. Sobol (1994) describes the US storytelling movement in exactly these terms. The self-presentation of US storytelling revivalists is self-traditionalisation in the Handlerian, labelling sense; but Sobol - not unlike Pilkington, Mackinnon, and others - takes care to identify a less selfconscious chain of traditionality within the revivalistic community, whereby small myths of “revival” are transmitted and circulated.

This chain-like traditionality operates as it were at a subterranean level, beneath the more strident and possibly fictive process of self-traditionalisation which is usually seen as more typical of revivalism. Sobol's point is that revivalists may not necessarily be the direct heirs of source traditions in the manner which they sometimes seem to claim; nevertheless, they are beneficiaries of traditional chain-authorship of culture in another form. This permeates the communal culture of revivalism unselfconsciously underneath the quasi-atavistic rhetoric, and establishes unspectacular but concrete links with the surrounding webs of culture and society. Actual tradition thus co-exists in counterpoint with rhetorical self-traditionalisation within young, revivalistic vernacular cultures. It is notable that they are seen to do so equally in mature, established vernacular cultures. In a smaller, quieter way, the etic generic category of *old-story* for the Bahamian folktale operates in a similar way to the revivalistic process of proclaiming the sanction of immemorial tradition for one's own artistic endeavours; simply to call folktale-telling *old-story* is to frame it within a laconic label-like traditionalisation. Thus, in Bahamian narrative culture, all three senses of tradition - chain, bond and label - are mutually supportive. This recalls Bausinger's description of reflexive ideas of folk culture circulating themselves as folk culture in the modern world. It also suggests that this state of affairs is not exclusive to the affluent industrialised modern world. On the contrary: it seems to be durable and spatiotemporally widespread.

If it is worth bearing in mind that all three processes can co-occur - chains of authorship, collective bonding, and traditionalising rhetoric - it is all the more important to reiterate that, as argued above, the term *tradition* is best applied strictly and solely to the first two, that is, to diachronic chains of authorship and to the communal and conventional bonding effects with which they are associated. Tradition is properly defined as a fact of history and culture, not a rhetorical stance to be deployed within a certain community, and to conflate the

two is to do the folklorist's subject a substantial disservice. The revisionist view of tradition as label-like traditionalisation simply reduces tradition to the status of a quasi-ativistic claim or ambience. This is at best of secondary relevance and interest. On the other hand, it is a frequent and significant corollary of authentic traditionality. Bahamian old-story is emically labelled in such a way as to invoke the explicit sanction of age and precedent, but old-story is a genuinely mature vernacular artistic tradition. There is thus no reason for the folklorist to ignore the process of label-like traditionalisation. It is not the actual substance of tradition (traditional genres such as photocopylore and the contemporary legend thrive without it), but it is certainly an important symptom of or strategy within traditional culture.

With these basic concepts accommodated, it is possible to see how the folklorist can approach the study of traditional arts revivalism. The central unresolved problem, as stated at the outset, is the nature of "revival," the causes of its specific characteristics, and their relationship with tradition in the broader sense. The literature hints at plausible answers, but nowhere precisely or fully states them. It is clear that there are no compelling grounds for regarding the culture of "revival" as necessarily essentially different from the culture of tradition, or for assuming any clear or rigid boundary between the two, either conceptually, or in the evidence for the historical process of development from one to the other. However, there remains a good intuitive sense that the essential similarities of young "revivals" and mature traditions co-exist with qualitative dissimilarities which scholars consistently recognise, as (perhaps) a greater novelty and/or a preoccupation with selfconscious ideology, but which have resisted precise or full statement and eluded explanation. If the present task is to describe and define "revival," this unquantified, unexplained and mysterious difference assumes central importance. It seems likely that it can be best approached by considering variations in the three aspects of

traditionality just described - the chain-, bond- and label-like senses of the term *tradition* - and in the relationships between them within specific *milieux*. Indeed, previous researchers have found the defining quality of traditional arts revivalism precisely in the consideration of these issues: in the idea of the selfconsciousness of revivalism, its label-like self-traditionalisation, its assertion of its own status as tradition, perhaps in opposition to a negatively-conceived and traditionless modernity, and also in the apparent dissolution of deeper shared insights and aesthetics, the loosening of the Bausingerian traditional bond, within new appropriative *milieux*. Self-traditionalisation in this sense is a rhetorical stand against the recent progression of social and historical development; as such, it involves what Marett defined as the use of the forms of folk culture as symbols of certain desired value systems. This is certainly the way in which Mackinnon, Pilkington and others have distinguished revivalism and described the developmental process leading up to it. However, this rather strident self-traditionalisation, as Sobol notes (1994), exists in ambiguous counterpoint to the actual submerged transmissive processes, the chain of authorship whereby, alongside technologised mediations, “revivals,” like all folk and traditional cultures, are generated and maintained. The most significant aspect of this actual, submerged traditionality, noted by the scholars reviewed above, is the fact that revivalistic communities are less strongly shaped by tradition in its binding aspect, and compensatorily more reliant on traditionalisation in its labelling aspect. That is: participants in “revival” have less of a communal sense of aesthetic standards or other deep insights to share than participants in mature tradition. Consequently, basic issues are less resolved within revivalistic movements than they are within mature traditions; but they are more obvious in their assertions of continuity with source traditions. Indeed, this has led many scholars (most especially Boyes) to posit a distinction between tradition and “revival” which sees the source tradition as relatively holistic and organic, and so to risk portraying source traditional

communities as composed of a more or less undifferentiated and immemorial peasantry.

However, this conceptual solecism is one further reason to assume that the distinction between source traditions and revivalistic movements is not fundamental or essential. The problem is resolved by assuming that mature traditions and “revivals” are, in fact, qualitatively distinct sub-categories of tradition in the larger or deeper sense. That is: just as Maris Piper and King Edward are subcategories of potato, so “revival” and mature tradition are subcategories of tradition. To ask what “revival” is is therefore to inquire after its defining characteristics as a subcategory of traditional culture in a larger sense. Even at this early stage in the study, it seems that the difference might have to do with variance in the relative degrees of reliance on the bond-like and label-like aspects of traditionality; differences which, in turn, depend on the age and longevity of the *milieu*. However, investigation of this possibility and its implications is made very difficult by the conflict of interest already discussed. Folklorists cannot yet satisfactorily scrutinise revivalism as an aspect of tradition, because of the problem of integrating the terms of this scrutiny with folklorists’ practices regarding the sister subcategory of mature tradition. Forensic and partisan stances are untenable in the case of revivalism; indeed, they are intrinsically problematic. This problem is extremely basic. The solution appears to be to exclude entirely any form of direct partisanship - whether advocacy or censure - from the methodologies of the academic folklorist: that is, to dispense with the folklorist’s direct critical or aesthetic judgement as a heuristic tool across the board. It may not be appropriate to apply this stricture indiscriminately to the study of all cultural traditions. Mature traditions, especially those which exist on the real social, political, cultural and economic margins, may, perhaps, continue to require explicitly partisan scholarship to make the case for their seriousness and substance. However, the solution

offered does not preclude such partisanship as a motive for folklore research: it merely excludes its invocation within research as a hermeneutic tool. That is to say: there is nothing to prevent folklorists from relying on their own enthusiasms and experiences in selecting *milieux* for study, or in achieving a basic intuitive sense of their validity and substance. Once this is achieved, however, direct invocations of a scholar's partisan enthusiasm are best excluded from the methodology; the scholar's task is to communicate things about a culture other than that s/he likes or dislikes it. This is partly because partisanship is representatively and methodologically opaque, and partly because the boundaries of cultural traditional are too fluid, and its relationship with the folklorist are too close and ambivalent. Recurrent traditional arts "revivals" demand a more measured view. The present study assumes the validity of storytelling revivalism as a topic of study in the terms stated in the previous chapter, but it does not therefore rely on any opinion concerning the artistic validity of traditional arts revivalism, beyond a basic assertion of its relevance as a topic for study: namely, that something about revivalistic art attracts people in large numbers consistently over time; and that this attraction and its consequences merit the scrutiny of folklorists. This implies no more than a readiness to take revivalists at their word if they claim to value their involvement, and so to value informants' testimony regarding their experience of or judgement on revivalistic storytelling as art.

To recapitulate: traditional arts revivalism has constituted a problem for folklorists. On the one hand, it is clearly qualitatively different in some way from mature tradition, but it is not essentially different from tradition in the wider sense and is rather a subcategory of it. The nature and causes of revivalism have been discussed, often plausibly, by scholars, but some confusion and mystery remains about them. This is partly because scholars have sometimes failed in their attempts to deal with the emergent quality of culture,

that is, the fact of its irreducible emergence in the global and local fields. It is also partly because of the ambivalent position of revivalism as a vernacular movement grounded in selfconscious popular scholarship and vernacular interpretation, effectively astride the boundary between folklorists and their subject. This causes folklorists a highly problematic conflict of interest. The folklorist's sympathetic interest in folk culture tends, often rightly, towards a partisan advocacy of marginalised culture; but the folklorist also has the duty to critically assess scholarly, appropriative and mediative practices. Revivalism and mature tradition alike are aspects of cultural tradition in a wider sense, so the appropriative and mediative "revival" claims the folklorist's partisan support while, at the same time, requiring the folklorist's critical scrutiny. In the present study, therefore, direct forensic or partisan judgements by the present writer regarding the artistic validity of revivalism are suspended, although testimony of such judgements by informants is admissible. Instead, the tenor of the present study is dispassionate and analytical. Its central aim - as noted in Chapter 1 - is firstly to describe and secondly to account for the features which define or distinguish appropriative traditional arts revivalism, as exemplified by the storytelling movement in England and Wales, as a category of cultural tradition.

So formulated, this central goal resolves one of the three problems noted, that of consistency of interest. Also, the present review suggests certain additional methodological strictures, confronting and hopefully evading the other two problems noted above: the problem of transparency of representation and the problem of scale of scrutiny. Both of these problems are at root the symptoms of methodological selectivity and deductivity regarding the evidence. The first, the problem of transparency of representation, involves the fallacy that the scholar can read off the meanings in particular social acts without consulting social actors. Meaning must be attributed to social and cultural activity only on

the grounds of interpretative testimony of participant informants themselves. Also, in dealing with the other problem of the scale of scrutiny, it is clear that research must incorporate both the larger, global, sociocultural and historical development of storytelling revivalism, and the smaller, local, face-to-face interactions whereby participants enact it; also, research must seek explanations in the emergent relationship between these levels. Two additional kinds of data will therefore be required: local-field data on face-to-face interaction within revivalistic storytelling *milieux*, and global data on the larger development of storytelling revivalism.

Not only must historical contexts be reconstructed, behaviours observed and participants consulted, data must be fairly and (as far as possible) transparently and unselectively represented. Dégh, Falassi and Mackinnon consulted informants directly, but they quoted selectively and a degree of opacity remained in their methods. Boyes reported on specific local-field behaviours, but selectively as they supported her *a priori* global assumptions. Participants must be observed and informants consulted, but a way must be found to avoid treating the resulting data as a shapeless mass of raw material from which selections can be made at the writer's convenience; rather, data must be treated as integrally whole, coherently, purposefully and skilfully shaped within specific contexts, with their own structures, arguments, and nuances. Scholarly conclusions must be shown to have been reached with reference to these considerations. The shape of the whole body of data must govern the shape of the scholar's conclusions, rather than the scholar's axiomatic argument governing the selection of examples. Also, to avoid deductive reasoning, interpretation must be inductive; patterns must be discerned separately in the three bodies of data, before overall conclusions are drawn regarding the emergent nature of storytelling revivalism as a whole. Primary conclusions must be drawn about the history of storytelling revivalism, and about its nature as

interaction and as reportable experience, without initial cross-reference between these categories. Only when primary conclusions are in place for the three separate bodies of data will it cease to be overbold to describe and explain the overarching emergent patterns which are the ultimate goal of the present study. In short, analysis must be exhaustive, transparent and inductive. In the following chapter, strategies are sought for the fulfilment of these requirements.

3 Methodology

... although the *result* ... is simple, its method cannot be if it is to arrive at that result.

Ludwig Wittgenstein¹

I don't know whether I can tell ya how you could believe it or not.

Ed Bell²

3.1 Preview

In the foregoing chapter the nature, aim, intellectual context, and necessary methodological strictures of the present study were stated. To recapitulate, the aim is to describe and causatively analyse the defining features of traditional arts revivalism as a subcategory of cultural tradition, using the example of the revivalistic storytelling movement in England and Wales. The pertaining methodological strictures and requirements were also described in the foregoing chapter. They are directed towards dealing with three noted problems. These are the problems of inconsistency of interest, transparency of representation and scale of scrutiny. All three exemplify a general underlying tendency towards deductive selectivity regarding the evidence. These, it was concluded, can be addressed by exhaustive, inductive and open-ended analysis of bodies of data with clearly-stated and plausibly defined boundaries. Three such bodies of data were stated to be necessary in order to ensure sufficient transparency of representation and achieve the necessary breadth of spread in

¹ Quoted in Silverman, 1997, 209.

² Quoted in Bauman 1986, 99.

the scale of scrutiny: firstly, data on the global, historical, sociocultural and socioeconomic context and development of storytelling revivalism; secondly, data on the local interactive behaviours which characterise storytelling revivalism; and, thirdly, first-hand testimony of the understandings and motivations of participants in storytelling revivalism. To avoid reductivism, these bodies of data must first be analysed separately; subsequently, the conclusions from these separate analyses may be collated, and the emergent quality of storytelling revivalism described. Analysis must be exhaustive, transparent and inductive.

The aim of the present chapter is to describe in detail the conception and execution of the fieldwork and analytical strategies adopted in fulfilment of these goals. The remainder of the chapter is divided into two sections. In the first, an account is presented of the conduct and conclusions of exploratory fieldwork into storytelling revivalism, undertaken at Sidmouth International Festival of Folk Arts in August 1994. Preliminary comments and prior intuitions are described, the conduct of fieldwork narrated, and initial findings presented. In the second, an account is presented of the research and analysis which forms the main body of the present study. The planning and conception of the main study are described in detail, then the conduct of fieldwork is narrated under the three headings specified. The analysis of data is described under the same headings. The study as a whole is evaluated, and the presentation of findings in Chapters 4 - 7 is anticipated.

3.2 The pilot study

3.2.1 Preliminary comments and prior intuitions

The pilot fieldwork study was undertaken over the summer of 1994, at the very outset of the present research, before the methodological arguments and strategies outlined in the foregoing chapter and summarised in the above paragraph had been formulated in detail. It was therefore a practical concomitant to the train of thought which eventually resulted in the arguments put forward in the foregoing chapters. Already, at this point, I had, from personal interest, been participating in revivalistic storytelling, as a listener and mostly unpaid storyteller, since 1990. My initial contact with the movement had been through attendance at storytelling events programmed within revivalistic folk festivals which I had been attending regularly since my teens in the mid-1980s. Also, when the pilot study began, I had been a regular unpaid performer for about twelve months at monthly meetings of an urban storytelling club in Sheffield. I thus had a number of participant intuitions regarding my involvement before I began academic study of the subject area. It is worth digressing momentarily in order to summarise these, as the academic approaches adopted in the present study developed ultimately from these intuitions, in part superseding them and in part refining and developing some of their preoccupations.

Revivalistic storytelling attracted and fascinated me because of the intrinsic quality of the tales, and because of their connections with traditional and oral literature and its literary offshoots, and also with folk music revivalism. Other attractions and fascinations followed in the wake of this primary engagement. My initial intuitions are expressible as a number of paradoxes. The most basic was that revivalistic storytelling seemed to violate communicative norms

while remaining basically practicable and comprehensible. My first encounter with revivalistic storytelling³ made me acutely aware of the violation of pervasive norms, which I had internalised thoroughly without ever consciously perceiving them, and certainly without questioning them until I saw them being broken. The combination of substantial traditional genre, partly spontaneous oral narration, and adult audience created a striking effect which was so at odds with my prior expectations of how adults could speak to each other that, until I actually saw it, I could hardly have conceived how it might be worthwhile, or even possible. At my first attendance I was accompanying friends on sufferance, and had in advance been uncomprehending and even dismissive of the whole undertaking. It was almost literally unthinkable, until I actually saw it done. It is worth noting in passing that I have since found this to be a general reaction. If I meet someone who is entirely unfamiliar with revivalistic storytelling, and refer to myself or to a colleague as a storyteller, or state that I am undertaking postgraduate research on storytelling, I am usually met with questions, and/or vague conversational guesses about children's literature, performance poetry, conversational anecdotes, and so forth, occasionally tempered with politely veiled surprise that such narratives attract adult listeners. It seems to be virtually impossible to explain what revivalistic storytelling is like to people who have not seen it, or for them to imagine that oral folktale telling to an adult audience might be possible or worthwhile in modern Britain. Many of the constituent elements of revivalistic storytelling are clearly already familiar to them - the idea of traditional story as for children, or the idea of oral narration as for a conversational anecdote, or the idea of partly spontaneous oral performance art - but these elements are not cognitively synthesised in any sense. Yet, once seen, revivalistic storytelling

³A storytelling session in the beer garden of the *Volunteer* inn at Sidmouth Festival in 1990, which I attended at the instigation of friends and watched a man in his forties telling a largely adult audience an Irish variant of AT953 *The Old Robber Relates Three Adventures to Free his Sons*.

seemed, to me at least, to be natural, obvious, and highly potent; the revision of my personal, internal norms and expectations of storytelling was an instantaneous subjective *fait accompli*. I was preoccupied by the question of how any communicative act which was, as it were, so unusual, and so entirely beyond anticipation, could actually be performed at all so as to be understood by first-time attenders and so come to effect such a basic cognitive shift. In Tuscany or Newfoundland, as reviewed above, the nature of the *veglia* and the *veillée* were generally well understood within the participant group, so it was not surprising that these kinds of encounter were meaningful and practicable to all participants. But in contemporary urban and suburban England - outside revivalistic storytelling events - conversational and interactive norms wholly precluded the possibility of substantial folktale performance. In illustration of this point I imagined how I might have reacted had I seen storytellers trying to tell long folktales during encounters at which mainstream oral narratives such as personal experiences or contemporary legends might be told: in conversation on a bus or train or in a car, or in a pub or living room, or in or near a workplace. Certainly from me, and I surmised from most people, a long folktale would have had not the slightest hope of a sympathetic hearing. Anyone who tried to tell one would have appeared aberrant, importunate, inconsiderate, even perhaps deranged. But, as soon as I stepped into a revivalistic storytelling event, even despite the striking cognitive dislocation involved in seeing something so new and strange, I already understood what was being done enough both to act competently as a participant in the encounter and to perceive the artistic point of the performance. I understood well enough what the storytellers were doing and why, and I was able to respond appropriately, for example by attending quietly during performance and applauding appreciatively afterwards. Therefore, clearly, something had surreptitiously happened to familiarise, and make comprehensible and practicable, a form of communication (oral folktale performance to the adult

listener) which in any other context - in all the contexts which I had ever hitherto experienced - would be wholly incomprehensible and impractical. Obviously, this had to do with the enactment of the communicative context and the nature of the whole event wherein the stories were told. The bare comprehensibility of the storytelling act seemed to be contrived not by the act itself, but by its interactive context. I became interested in how this was achieved.

There was a second basic paradox. Once introduced to the form, and despite its manifest novelty, I paradoxically, immediately and intuitively sensed, and internalised, the ideology and ambience of revivalism: the belief that the storytelling movement was not wholly new, but also old: that it was in some sense reinstating a defunct storytelling tradition. It prompted nostalgia for some unfocused object or state of being. This was certainly partly because I found myself confronted with explicable textual and textural cues: old-fashioned traditional tales, performed, in panelled or half-timbered rooms in usually rural pubs, by storytellers cultivating styles of speech (and often of dress) which seemed to be studied syntheses of the colloquially informal and the quasi-atavistic. I sensed an open appeal to a construction of the past which appeals to my temperament and which I had already found attractive in the presentation of revivalistic folk music. But there was a more personal, almost phenomenological reason why I internalised a revivalistic ideology regarding storytelling, which was that, despite its manifest strangeness, it seemed immediately and oddly familiar. Simply as an act - and unlike revivalistic folk music or song, in which I had felt a similarly strong interest since my first encounter - revivalistic storytelling generated a strong and hardly explicable sense not merely of age but specifically of *déjà vu*. With hindsight, this effect may have been due in part to the submerged influence of memories of childhood: my father would make up and tell stories to my brothers and me to

amuse us on long car journeys, and I had myself been in the habit of making up stories to tell to friends at primary school and at home; so I certainly had some submerged memories of specifically oral modes and genres of narration. But for some reason, in the revivalistic event, I had immediately begun to interpret this personal sense of rediscovery and revival in a supra-personal sense. Most significantly, as I came to find out in the subsequent months' and years' involvement, I was far from unusual in doing so. I began to wonder why storytelling seemed generally to engender, or at least accompany, a sense not merely of personal but also of cultural and historical revival.

Also, I was already aware, from talking to storytelling friends and acquaintances, that our semi-formal narrative performances were symptoms of a wider ongoing community of interest in storytelling. But I was personally aware of only one or two of the many institutions of the revivalistic storytelling movement; I was largely unacquainted with its wider history; and I had never considered my involvement either in the movement, or with traditional narrative generally, from a scholarly or analytical point of view. My academic experience of folklore comprised the undergraduate lectures in Oral Culture and Literature, and M.A. classes in Folklore: Form, Function and Analysis, which I had attended for the past academic year while registered for an M.Phil. at the Centre for English Cultural Tradition and Language (CECTAL) in what was then Sheffield University's Department of English Language and Linguistics.⁴ Here I encountered the history, theory, terminology and classifications of folklore studies, and some of its methodologies, and engaged critically with tape records and transcripts of oral narrative. Study of the mainstream oral narrative traditions of contemporary Britain, such as the contemporary legend (Bennett 1980, 1985, 1987, Bennett

⁴Now the National Centre for English Cultural Tradition, in the School of English.

and Smith 1985, 1988 (1 - 3), Bennett, Smith and Widdowson 1987), went rather against the tenor of my early intuitions as reported above, and suggested to me that storytelling revivalism was more complex than the simple reinstatement of tradition within a currently traditionless culture. Conversely, storytelling revivalism seemed to me not to be filling a void, but rather to be taking its place alongside existing traditions as one strand within a larger web of oral narrative culture, and to be distinguished within this web by certain specific qualities not shared with other strands of the web. I began to wonder why this was happening. I concluded initially that, in some sense, the specific qualities of revivalistic storytelling were meeting a need not satisfied by existing oral narrative culture. This begged the questions of what these needs were, and what were the qualities of revivalistic storytelling which met them. I no longer trusted my early intuitions - that storytelling revivalism was the restitution of tradition within a traditionless context - but I suspected that, if this idea was shown to be generally shared among storytelling revivalists, this fact might be useful as evidence in determining what revivalistic storytelling actually was, and what needs it actually met.

The aims of the pilot study developed from the above revision of intuitions in the light of scholarship. The aim was, simply, to survey revivalistic storytelling as a topic of systematic intellectual and empirical enquiry. That is to say: the aim was to obtain and analyse a sample of relevant fieldwork data, thereby to identify issues and questions relevant to the projected main programme of study. Subsidiary aims were firstly to establish and strengthen personal contacts within the movement sufficiently to constitute a starting point for further research, and secondly to survey possible methods of data processing and analysis. A number of concomitant requirements were identified for the pilot fieldwork data sample. Firstly, it had to be sufficiently representative of the kinds of storytelling and talk about story which I knew to

occur within the movement. That is to say: it had to show sufficient inclusivity and variety regarding kinds and styles of formally and semi-formally performed storytelling. As I knew from experience, participants outside events swapped stories without performing them in the fully marked sense, discussed and evaluated particular stories and storytellers, articulated and negotiated relevant interpretations and beliefs, and generally supplemented the work done in formal performances to build and maintain a culture of informed interest in storytelling. I guessed that formal performance structures alone could not sustain a revivalistic movement; it was sustained in part by informal and sociable means. It was therefore decided to record the oral subculture (so to speak) of the storytelling movement: that is, the interstitial conversational chat in which participants indulged before, after and between actual events. Secondly, therefore, in order to meet these requirements, the pilot fieldwork sample had to be reasonably substantial in volume.

The locus chosen for the pilot study was the International Festival of Folk Arts at Sidmouth in Devon. Sidmouth festival was chosen for a number of reasons. It was (and is) a very large, week-long festival, probably the largest single folk arts festival in the UK, running each August in a small east Devon coastal resort, which it effectively pervades for its duration. Although centred on folk music, song and dance, it has programmed subsidiary storytelling events at least since 1979. In 1994, 21 of over 570 festival events were partly or wholly dedicated to storytelling: a small proportion of the total events, but a high volume and concentration of performances relative to most other revivalistic storytelling gatherings. Only the few larger weekend-long UK festivals dedicated wholly to storytelling⁵ can match this volume and concentration of occasions of performance. However, Sidmouth had a number of advantages

⁵These include Festival at the Edge in Shropshire, Beyond the Border in south Wales, and some others. See below, Chapter 4.

over these alternatives as a locus for pilot fieldwork. Firstly, storytelling at Sidmouth was spread over the whole week rather than crammed into a weekend, so there was little or no overlapping of storytelling events; it was possible for a single person to attend most of the storytelling, and, also, the more leisurely pace made it more likely that interstitial chat might occur and be available for recording. Secondly, while I was personally relatively unfamiliar with the other larger festivals and their organisers or regular participants, I was already a regular attender at Sidmouth, and was acquainted with some of the storytelling participants on whom I would be relying for co-operation in pilot fieldwork, and possibly later for more detailed research. In summary, Sidmouth festival constituted an accessible series of revivalistic storytelling events at which a reasonable volume and variety of storytelling would occur, with the likelihood of general, informal milling about and chatting by participants which it would be possible for me to participate in, observe, and record. I therefore obtained a season ticket for the festival, stayed on the main campsite, and attended and made tape-recordings of as many of the storytelling events, and as many conversations between storytelling participants, as I could. By the end of the week, I had learned that several of the featured storytellers from Sidmouth were going on to perform at Whitby folk festival later in the month. Whitby is another large folk festival with a subsidiary storytelling component rather similar to Sidmouth. I attended and made a few additional recordings there; but the bulk of recording and analysis concerned storytelling at Sidmouth festival.

3.2.2 Fieldwork

Tape-recordings of events were made using a portable cassette recorder and a hand-held microphone. Permission to record was sought from the host or featured storyteller verbally in advance of the event, and I sat at the front of

the audience, or as close to the performer as possible. Informal discussion was also recorded between participants over a lunchtime coffee after daytime storytelling events in the *Balfour* pub. The main protagonists in these conversations were myself; Barbara Neville, one of the several featured storytellers at the festival; Piers Cawley, like myself a non-featured but active storyteller, and his partner Jill; with some input from others, including Mark Austin, another non-featured active storyteller. These were mostly near- or complete strangers to me, and apparently to each other, at the beginning of the week, but by the end of the festival we were on friendly terms, and I have maintained about half of these acquaintances at other folk and storytelling festivals and events. This discussion proved informative. One featured storyteller at the festival, Taffy Thomas, was also formally interviewed. The completed pilot fieldwork archive comprised recordings of fourteen events, twelve at Sidmouth, and two at Whitby, and additionally the discussions and interview (see Figure 1).

 Fig. 1. Table of pilot fieldwork recordings

No.	Date	Event type	Venue	Venue type
<i>(1) Sidmouth</i>				
1	31 - 7 - 94	Storyswap	The <i>Balfour</i>	pub
2	31 - 7 - 94	Workshop	St Teresa's	church hall
3	1 - 8 - 94	Storyswap (chat following Storyswap)	The <i>Balfour</i>	pub
4	1 - 8 - 94	Workshop	St Teresa's	church hall
5	1 - 8 - 94	Storytime	The <i>Volunteer</i>	pub garden
6	1 - 8 - 94	Steps and Stories	Manor Pavilion	arts centre
7	2 - 8 - 94	Storytime	The <i>Volunteer</i>	pub garden
8	3 - 8 - 94	Storytime	The <i>Volunteer</i>	pub garden
9	5 - 8 - 94	Workshop	The <i>Balfour</i>	pub
10	5 - 8 - 94	(chat following workshop)		
11	5 - 8 - 94	(interview with Taffy Thomas)		
12	5 - 8 - 94	Storytime	The <i>Volunteer</i>	pub garden
<i>(2) Whitby</i>				
1	nd	Short Stories	(no venue recorded)	
2	23 - 8 - 94	Story session	Rifle club	club bar

Storytelling events were listed in the festival programme with venue, timing, financial conditions of entry, and identities of major participants. Events usually lasted about two hours. A host or *compère* presided, and at each event about ten stories might be told, ranging from short jokes and squibs to international folktales lasting half an hour or more, though the number and length of stories at each event was not usually strictly regulated. The stories were generically and culturally diverse, but the majority were certainly too long, elaborately fictive, and atavistic and/or exotic in tone to fall within the possibilities of much normative conversational narrative: folktales, fairy tales, and legends predominated. In this the events were quite typical of revivalistic storytelling events as I knew them. The *Balfour* storyswaps were ticketed events, held mid-morning in the back room of a bucolic-looking pub. Typical

participant numbers were about twenty. The chairs were arranged facing inwards in concentric elliptical rows around a central space, and hosts solicited stories round-robin fashion around the circle from any who wished to tell. Though there were thus relatively tight entry restrictions, opportunities to tell stories within the event were equably and unpredictably allotted. The “Storytime” sessions were held in the *Volunteer* beer garden in the early evenings, or in the pub if it rained. There were no entry restrictions, and the audience was larger, perhaps forty or fifty people of all ages, comprising many who were there for drinks or meals. They sat on chairs or on the grass, facing the host and featured storyteller, who sat on a bench in the corner of the garden, with the performing space, a small clear area of grass, between them. Hosts arranged the running order at their own discretion, usually in advance, inviting on their own initiative single-story performances from specific individual volunteers as supplements to longer set-piece performances by featured guest storytellers. Compared with the *Balfour*, then, this space was larger, more public, and more exciting, but opportunities to tell were less formally but also less equably administered. In both, the stories were chosen by their individual tellers; only the running order of tellers was contrived by the host. The St Teresa’s events were experimental workshops on mixing dance and storytelling, run by Taffy Thomas and his wife Chrissie. The other storytelling workshop was open to ticketholders, and, at the discretion of the leader, the featured Irish storyteller Eddie Lenihan, was a discursive talk on Irish folklore and storytelling, to an audience of about thirty or more. Of the two Whitby events, “Short Stories” was a one-man lunchtime performance by the storyteller Mike Rust to twenty or thirty people in the bar of a seafront club, and the story session was a *Volunteer*-like performance to a larger audience of fifty or sixty people in the bar of Whitby’s rifle club, at which Mike Rust, acting *ad hoc* as host, arranged a number of performances by featured guests around supplementary performances invited from familiar

regular storytellers and featured guests at the festival. Again - with the exception of the St Teresa's story-dance workshops - this range of event structures and hierarchies was quite typical of revivalistic storytelling in my experience.

3.2.3 Analysis

The St Teresa's story-dance workshops were excluded from analysis, firstly because they were experimental forms, unparalleled in my experience either as a researcher or as a participant in storytelling revivalism, and secondly because the performance was largely mimed; the audible aspects of the performance consisted largely of dance music and the tape recordings were therefore lacking in content. The interview with Taffy Thomas also proved rather uninformative, owing to my inexperience as an interviewer at this early stage of research, and the short story session at Whitby suffered from technical and recording problems, and these were also excluded. This left the *Balfour* storyswaps and the *Volunteer* storytime events, one similar event at Whitby, the Sidmouth workshop, and the discussion. Overall, therefore, breadth was sacrificed for depth and precision of focus on participatory adult storytelling.

At first full verbatim transcripts were attempted. These were unsatisfactory for three reasons. Firstly, they were very time-consuming to prepare. Secondly, as I was rapidly discovering, even the most detailed transcript could never fully represent recorded speech. Thirdly, they were at best simply reiterative, not in any way expediting the understanding of the underlying processes. Full transcription was therefore abandoned very early on. Instead, a technique was borrowed and adapted from the summary sheet in use at Edinburgh University's School of Scottish Studies (see Appendix 1). The summary sheet is, in origin, a device for extracting and marking the significant content of an

audiotape recording of performance and/or testimony. It notes relevant or significant passages from an audiotape recording as a series of numbered items, omitting extraneous material. The summary sheet is arranged in a grid of six columns, listing respectively item number, name and location of informant, title or first line of item, item type or index reference, duration, and summary (with fieldworker's and/or informant's comments). This basic template was simplified to a grid of four columns. The first column numbered items from the beginning of the tape or cassette side, proceeding down the column, as A1, A2, B1; the second recorded a title or heading for the convenience of labelling; the third recorded verbatim quotes marking the beginning and end of the item, and a brief summary of content; and the fourth is for proto-analytical comment and evaluation. Figure 1 gives an example, a short joke told by the featured guest Taffy Thomas at the conclusion of one of the storyswaps at the *Balfour*. The first two columns give basic cataloguing information as stated; the third summarises the content of the story; and the fourth describes the way in which the story, which came after a series of longer and more serious tales, is chosen by Taffy to create a sense of winding down the event and returning to a normative mainstream interactive atmosphere - that is, shorter conversational genres and less demanding content.

*Fig. 2. Example of summary sheet item (with numbered columns)
(SCSA/P/3b8)⁶*

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Taffy Thomas Story: joke (How Old do You Think I Am?)	“You know how if you meet old people you sometimes get old men who come up to you and say, go on how OLD do you reckon I am” One such man accosts a woman. She can’t guess so he tells her, 78. He accosts another. She unzips his trousers and weighs his gonads in her hand and accurately tells his age. He asks, how can she tell? She says, “I heard you talking to that woman over there.”	A story to unwind at the end of the session - a familiar genre from contemporary oral tradition. Temporally and generically an overlap between revivalism and mainstream oral narrative culture.	

In preparing the summary sheets, it was decided not to list the stories alone. As described above, the interest of the subject lay as much in the interactive contextualisation of stories within whole events as in the stories for their own sake. Therefore, from the first, the aim was to dispense with the doubtful intuition that the stories themselves were the only performed items in the event. Rather, all the utterances at a given event were listed as performed items, including the introductory and epilogic statements by hosts, storytellers and others, which were clearly performed items in that they were part of the formal event addressed by performers purposefully to listeners. They were also the means whereby the identity and nature of the whole event was established, and whereby the stories themselves initially became comprehensible as units of talk. For example, the item immediately prior to

⁶For details of fieldwork audiotape cataloguing and citation, see below, p. 211.

the above was Taffy Thomas' introduction to the story itself, analysed, like the story itself, in the four columns as follows:

Fig. 3. Summary sheet item (SCSA/P/3b7)

B7	Taffy Thomas Story intro	“Now - I suppose one of the questions I, I quite often get asked if I ever do, interviews or whatever” is what is the difference between stories and jokes - to which Taffy replies that all good jokes are stories but not all good stories are jokes. “We’ve had several that aren’t, so I’ll tell you one that is.” Heard from Blaster Bates at the “Edge storytelling festival” (Festival at the Edge) Will tell it here and at the Volunteer by which time it should have gone round the whole festival.	Taffy seems to have an eye to me and my tape recorder at this point. See note below on genre and tradition-revival overlap.
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All formal performance events under analysis were exhaustively itemised and summarised in this way. It will be noted that this involved adapting the summary sheet away from a content-centred use and towards a structure-centred use: from being a way of extracting valued items from a mass of testimony without especial regard for structure, they became a way of describing the overall structure of the total recorded interaction. The conversational chat was less easily demarcated into discrete items, but the detailed structure of conversations was less important than its content, and here analysis was content-based and retained the conventional use of the summary sheets.

3.2.4 Findings

This mode of analysis yielded two sets of findings of relevance to the developing preoccupations of research. Firstly, the structural itemisation of the record of intra-event performance revealed much about the nature of events, but even with adjustments this raised analytical and epistemological issues which were fundamental and difficult to resolve. Secondly, insights were gained into participants' intuitions regarding their involvement in the storytelling movement, but the representation and interpretation of these intuitions led to further epistemological problems, early intimations of the problem of transparency of representation noted in the foregoing chapter. Both of these sets of issues therefore contributed to the formulation of the main fieldwork and analytical strategies, but both eventually necessitated further reading, reflection and refinement before they could be applied to a substantial study. Initial findings are now presented under two headings: firstly, the formal structure and nature of whole events, and, secondly, the guiding intuitions and interpretations of participants.

3.2.4.1 The nature of storytelling events

Clearly, as intuition suggested, the stories themselves were in all cases the dependent outcome of preconditional modifications to the structure and texture of interaction. All events served the primary practical function of curtailing informal chat (including the relation of conversational narratives) and refocusing participants' attention on creating a different kind of storytelling space as a preliminary to longer revivalistic narrative performances. Event interaction was therefore seen to establish various interactive constraints as a harbour-bar against the inhospitable conversational mainstream; normative

patterns of interaction were suspended, so that unusual narrative genres could get a hearing.

Events were examined structurally, considering roles, personnel, units, sequences, and recurrent patterns. Storytelling event roles comprised an audience, a number of storytellers, perhaps a featured storyteller, and usually a host. The basic format of events was the pattern, widely known in a number of performance contexts (from cabaret and variety theatre to the folksong or stand-up comedy club), of a series of “turns” or discrete performances, with the transitions between these negotiated by a figure sometimes referred to as a *host*, who, like Chaucer’s host in the *Canterbury Tales*, made shorter linking announcements and contrived the running of the event in the manner of a master of ceremonies. Basic units of interaction were stories, single or run together into longer sets, that is, sustained performances by a single storyteller comprising several successive stories with linking introductory and epilogic comment as appropriate. None of this was surprising or difficult to understand and, once these basic generalisations were understood, it was expected that the boundaries and nature of specific roles and structural subunits of talk would be discrete and self-evident. It was expected that it would be clear at all times, for example, who was taking the roles of host, storyteller, and audience; and that each recorded utterance would be self-evidently either a story or a linking utterance, without ambiguity. These expectations were intuitions arising from my own prior participation in storytelling revivalism: they therefore codified an intuitive understanding of what events involved. However, these expectations predicted observed interaction only imprecisely. Problems lurked in the details of interaction.

To take an example at random: the Tuesday storytime at the *Volunteer*, hosted by the professional storyteller Taffy Thomas, and featuring the visiting Irish

storyteller Eddie Lenihan, supported by floor tellers at Taffy's discretion (SCSA/P/Za). Taffy and Eddie were both featured guests at the festival and enjoyed commensurately high status; other participants were mostly ordinary festival-goers. Owing to rain, the event was held in a bar in the *Volunteer* itself, but this did not apparently effect the interactive structure. The storytime sessions were popular and the room was crowded. The audience faced towards a small, clear performing space near one corner of the room. On the far side of this space, in the corner, sat the host and guest, facing the audience. A few listeners sat at their side on either hand. Several children sat on the floor immediately before this space, near the room's centre. The bulk of the audience stood or sat behind these, with the hindmost listeners jammed against the bar in the opposite corner. These arrangements of participants resembled the normal arrangement outdoors.

The first half-hour of this event consisted of six single-story performances negotiated by Taffy, as host. According to the intuitive expectations as described above, the event format might have approximated to Figure 4, which is a hypothetical but not implausible template for purposes of comparison. This template is the most straightforward codification of the assumptions stated: namely, that events consist of a series of separate story-performances by separate tellers, sequentially managed and contextualised with introductory and epilogic comments by a presiding host or *compère*.

Fig. 4. Hypothetical storytelling event structure

<i>Utterance</i>	<i>Role</i>	<i>Content</i>
1	<i>host</i>	announce event opening, introduce storyteller 1
2	storyteller 1	introduce story 1, tell story 1
3	<i>host</i>	thank storyteller 1, introduce storyteller 2
4	storyteller 2	introduce story 2, tell story 2
5	<i>host</i>	thank storyteller 2, ... introduce storyteller n
n	storyteller n	introduce story n, tell story n
n+1	<i>host</i>	thank storyteller n ... (etc.)

To compare this hypothetical template with the reality: audiotape recording began a few seconds after Taffy began to address the audience, who gave him their full attention, creating an expectant air. Taffy, sitting facing the audience, began by introducing Eddie as the “featured guest for the evening,” described Eddie’s origins and called him a “gentleman, and I use the word advisedly,” raising a general chuckle. He then introduced a story of his own, stating that “I’ve often left groups of people leaning on the wall outside a pub at going-home time arguing about this, because, you see, there were three friends ...” He had now begun the story, a five-minute brain-teaser in which he invited the audience to chorus the answers to the sums involved. Three friends split a thirty-pound hotel bill equally, paying ten pounds each. The manager notices that the bill is too high, and sends the waiter back with a five pound refund. But the waiter slyly pockets two pounds, and refunds the friends one pound each. Each friend had therefore paid nine pounds, totalling twenty-seven; which, added to the waiter’s stolen two, makes twenty-nine, one less than the

thirty paid originally. Taffy asked where the missing pound was, and concluded, "It's lost in the story, and so are you." (cf. J1241 *clever dividing which favours the divider*).⁷ The audience laughed, hesitated, and then applauded. As an epilogue Taffy then mentioned being threatened with violence over the missing pound, and then introduced Eddie, ironically warning the tightly-packed crowd about Eddie's habitual extravagant gesticulations, and addressing him directly *sotto voce*, "Are you fit?" Eddie responded "Mm-hm." The audience applauded, and Eddie stood. He began with a five-minute general discussion on the political and national context of his own storytelling, including several memorates and reflections on his travels as an Irish storyteller, working round to the Cromwellian occupation of Ireland and its folklore, and the difficulty the Irish had, particularly Irish women, in retaining the ownership of land. He named his heroine, *Máire Rua* (Red Mary), and told the twenty-minute story of her exploits securing her patrimony against the English by marrying and murdering a series of English officer husbands (cf. *K2213 *Treacherous Wife*), and her eventual death, caught, Absalom-like, in the branches of a tree under which she had ridden (cf. *D2061.2.4 *death by cursing*, H583.3.2 ... *between heaven and earth*). Eddie concluded by observing that her ghost haunts the fatal tree, and neither he nor any of the locals interfere with it, and then gave a general evaluative coda to the effect that politics and stories in Ireland can both be fatal. After a brief pause, he said "Thank you," and sat down. The audience applauded. Taffy praised Eddie, "remarkable as ever," then said that he would tell a story and "call on a few friends from the floor" before calling on Eddie again; then stated his intention to move slightly within the crowded room, and that he would follow Eddie in telling a historical story, a placename legend, and a monster story, especially for the children, who, sitting on the floor at the edge

⁷The final sum omits the three-pound refund altogether, misleadingly counting the two-pound theft twice instead: once from the diners' standpoint, raising the twenty-five pound bill to twenty-seven; and again, from the waiter's, as the two in his pocket.

of the storytelling space, were “almost decapitated” by Eddie’s extravagant gesticulations. He then launched into a Durham aetiological legend of Pollard and the Brawn (AT300 *The Dragon Slayer*: H1154.3.3.1 *measuring (killing) wild boar*; H105.1 *dragon-tongue proof*, H105.1.1 *False dragon-head proof*), which picked up several themes from Eddie’s story: the supernatural manifestation, the local setting, supported by reference to the older people of the area and a topographical description which began “if you go” The event was now about half an hour old. Taffy went on to call on two floor tellers, including Dan Keding, a featured storyteller at other festival events, and told another himself, before returning to Eddie.

If the actual event up to this point is compared with the hypothetical structure in Figure 3 above, it will be seen that there is approximate fit on several counts. Participants are role-differentiated into host, storyteller, and listener; turn-taking alternates between host and storyteller, and interactional units between stories and links. It is clear from Taffy’s comments that he is thinking of the event in terms of the sequence of discrete turns or story-performances by different tellers, and is managing proceedings accordingly. However, detailed comparison reveals a mass of inconsistencies between the hypothetical structure tabulated above and the actual sequence of utterances recorded on audiotape. As argued below, these inconsistencies are evidence of a major epistemological problem and are thus worthy of detailed consideration.

The first observed anomaly concerns role and utterance type. Had proceedings conformed exactly to the template in Figure 3, the host, Taffy, would have introduced and ceded the floor to the first storyteller; but he actually tells the first story himself, and then tells a third story after Eddie. For the duration of these performances, Taffy’s precise role and the precise status of his utterance

are alike ambiguous. His precise role lies somewhere between that of host and storyteller; and, similarly, the quality of his utterances lies somewhere between that of introductory link and story. The possibility of substantial utterances of such intermediate status gives the whole event a very different quality. There are other anomalies regarding both role and utterance type. Firstly, introductory and epilogic links do not always relate to the adjacent item. The referents of Taffy's introductory links are widely scattered: in a single introductory utterance he will look forward to the next few stories and back to the previous one extempore. Also, Taffy's and particularly Eddie's introductory links are themselves noticeably narrative in content. Eddie's introduction to the story of Red Mary is certainly sustained and substantial to a degree almost comparable with his story. They have a story-like quality and effect but, within the context of the event, these serve the function of, and are apparently understood as, links rather than stories. Secondly, it is not obvious what the precise status is of a host or storyteller while listening to another speaker. In the moments when he is listening to Eddie's story, Taffy clearly behaves as an ordinary listener, but his presence and physical position in the room retain the aura of host, and his own experience is (presumably) conditioned partly by his awareness of his responsibility for the subsequent aspects of the event. Similar but more ambiguous still is the status of Dan Keding, who appears in this extract as an ordinary supportive volunteer storyteller, deployed at the host's discretion to supplement the main performance of the featured guest; this is because Dan is in fact a prestigious professional storyteller, a featured guest appearing at other events at the festival, who has dropped in to the event out of general interest and goodwill. Participants' treatment of Dan - including Taffy's invitation to him to perform - is conditioned partly by his personal status, which is not directly related to the mechanics of the event and is thus not recordable on the template given in Figure 3. Overall, then, the forward movement of the event relies heavily on

structurally ambiguous categories of role and utterance; and yet roles and utterances must be distinguished in some sense. The storytelling event is not a complete free for all. The forward movement through the event is, as it were, a sinuous interweaving of implicatures rather than a succession of rigidly demarcated segments. The final point to be made is that a number of utterances were not merely anomalous but were entirely outside the hypothetical structure given in Figure 3. These included the brief, direct exchanges between Taffy and Eddie, ascertaining his readiness to perform, while the audience waits. However, the most important anomaly was the listeners' overall active contribution, the applause and less substantial chuckles and chorused or individual answers to questions. Sequentially and structurally, these were clearly necessary to the enactment of the event; but they were not included in the template, largely because they were excluded from my own intuitive sense of the essential constituents of the storytelling event. They were actually necessary but, to me at least, they had hitherto felt incidental. In the main study, as will be seen, these contributions were better recognised, but their subsidiary, slightly extraneous quality had still to be assumed.

Clearly, then, the hypothetical template in Figure 3 is incomplete: it does not do justice to the complexity of the forces shaping the event or to the subtlety of the interaction recorded. It represents my own intuitive sense of how the storytelling event works, built up by accretion over several years' unsystematic participant observation, but this intuitive sense is ambiguous and highly selective as regards the actual structures of behaviour. The aberrations and anomalies noted were more than trivial, because they were pervasive and moreover pointed to an underlying problem. This was that the epistemological process relied on intuition; specifically, it assumed that collective actions have a unitary structure which codified participants' collective understandings as

well as my own, and could be abstracted as self-evident from the tape recording. For example, to assert that Taffy's presence in the room, even while listening, retains something of the aura of host is exactly to say that his presence is understood and experienced as such collectively by the participant group (including himself). It is obvious that no audiotape recording of an event could possibly furnish evidence for this assumption by itself; I had therefore been forced to rely on my own participant intuition as representative of that of the whole group, enacting a form of the Frazerian fallacy described in the foregoing chapter. But it was already becoming clear that my intuitions would remain inadequate as an exhaustive explanatory device in the terms sought. Firstly, they might simply not match those of other participants: I might be wrong in my reading of, for example, Taffy's effective presence while listening to Eddie telling. Secondly, they were highly selective, excluding, for example, necessary aspects of interaction such as rounds of applause; indeed, they even appeared to rely on a degree of selectivity in order to make good sense of a complex and ambiguous form of communication. Thirdly, they were already beginning to fluctuate as I began to direct a greater degree of conscious consideration towards the issue, and apply intuition in focused, exhaustive ways which were quite at odds with the ambiguities and slippages of my pristine participant understanding. Even if it had been desirable or sufficient to rely on my own participant intuition, it was no longer possible, because my own participant intuitions no longer existed. In conclusion, it was clear that the structure and enactment of whole events was an ambiguous and fascinating issue, broader in scope and implication than the telling of stories simply in itself, and of at least equal significance to the present study. It was clear that events had a structure of some sort and that participants collectively understood this, well enough for events to work as channels of communication and to be in some sense analysable; and the structuring of whole events manifestly pervaded the operations of storytelling revivalism in the local field.

But the precise nature of this structure was uncertain: indeed, *prima facie*, it seemed by nature to be intrinsically imprecise, reliant on vagueness of intuition and fluidity of practice. A workable epistemology for its analysis was therefore necessary, but care would be needed in establishing it. The full complexity of the living event was constantly receding from and eluding the attempt to fix and analyse it. In the end, these problems proved incapable of absolute resolution: part of what was learned was to be less ambitious in the analysis of interactive talk.

3.2.4.2 Participant understandings

The second category of data recovered in the pilot study related to participants' own understandings of what their activity involved. The primary evidence for these was obtained in the interstitial conversational chat between myself and the participants named above, but evidence was also obtained from the events themselves, chiefly Eddie Lenihan's storytelling workshop, which took the form of a talk and discussion chaired by Eddie. In analysis, written summaries of the content of all audiotape recordings were prepared, which incorporated preliminary comments and interpretative observations. A number of recurrent themes, codifying a certain general attitude towards storytelling, were impressionistically identified as recurrent in the annotated summaries. These may be stated under numbered headings, as follows.

- 1) *Mainstream culture and contemporary society are deficient in ways which (revivalistic) storytelling can make good.*

During the storytelling workshop, the featured guest Eddie Lenihan, a rural Irishman, discussed the urban English disinclination to be sociable with strangers in public places. This critique was a response to a comment by Brian Swain, a festival storytelling regular. (Italics indicate emphasis by speaker.)

- BS I was going to say I do it [i.e., revivalistic storytelling] simply because I enjoy meeting people. ...
- EL ... I think that's a very, very worthy reason for the revival in storytelling, and maybe that is *the* reason for the revival in storytelling. Maybe English people are sick of this impersonal society. It would be a great thing if that were so! [murmurs of vehement agreement] It makes your surroundings more human, and I think that's one of the main reasons that storytelling always was popular before television took over a function that television isn't capable of fulfilling [murmurs of agreement throughout intermittently]. Because it's a one way thing, television. It talks to *you*; *you* are presumed to be the fool. And that is the reason why so many producers of so many programmes produce so much drivel. Because you can't answer back. (SCSA/P7a, 20:43ff)

Later, he explained the lost effective context of local legends:

There are *few, few* people, now living in industrial societies, who know what darkness *is*. Darkness. Real darkness. (*murmurs of assent*) (SCSA/P/7a, 55:34ff)

These disconnected comments draw unusually positive general responses from the listeners which, taken together, seem to articulate a pervasive sense of what modern life has forfeited: a sense of connection with one's neighbours and a freedom from domineering technologies. Similar ideas surfaced rather differently in the post-storyswap discussion between Piers and Barbara of *The Wife of Bath's Tale* (H1388.1 *Question: what is it women most desire?*). Barbara posited a contemporary-sounding feminist variant of the answer, and Piers immediately rejected the Chaucerian version⁸ as "yesterday's" tradition and credited Barbara's version as "older, more historical, more substantial" in exactly the way predicted by Bausinger (1990, 71) (*Italics indicate emphasis by speaker; underline added in transcript to denote significant passages*):

⁸ *Wommen desiren to have sovereyntee
As wel over hir housbond as hir love,
And for to been in maistrie hym above.*
The Wife of Bath's Tale, 1038 - 40 (Chaucer 1957, 86)

- BN [Lady Ragnell is] this hideous woman ... and she's given him the answer to the [riddle] ...
- PC Ah, "Dominion over men," yep, right.
- BN No, *not* "Dominion over the men;" "*Control* of their own *destiny*."
- PC Right. Ah, cause Chaucer pinched [it] and turned it into "Dominion over men." (SCSA/P4a30)

This came off the cuff during an animated discussion, and may not be a considered opinion, but it exemplifies that revivalistic ideas are current at the very least as provisional preferences or *a priori* assumptions. Elsewhere (SCSA/P/10b, 40:35), the pre-Christian elements of the Grail legend are said to be more fun, more real, and older than the later Christian elements, which are by implication dominant in present day understandings of the legend.⁹ What links these very different examples is the devolutionary assumption that the modern is lacking relative to the archaic. This recalls the revivalistic preference for intellectual rationales, and fits both Bausinger's and Mackinnon's views of revivalism as mentioned above (Bausinger 1990, 71, Mackinnon 1993, 131, McLeish 1990, 640). It suggests *prima facie* that the idea of revival is central to the identity of the storytelling movement.

- 2) *Tradition is a reified, unitary, suprapersonal domain. The structural and emotive content of traditional story is central, universally applicable, shared, and transculturally transferable.*

One participant stated in Eddie Lenihan's workshop:

I think, for me ... it crystallises - you're crystallising a lot of vague thoughts that people have in their heads when I tell stories ... what stories are all *about*. (SCSA/P/7a, 20:43ff.)

⁹ A conclusion congruent with popular scholarship, but quite at odds with academic Grail scholarship; see Wood 2000.

The marked and formal quality of revivalistic storytelling accompanied a more reified sense of what storytelling is. This accompanied a sense of the effective universality of story which Eddie Lenihan asserted in his workshop:

The old stories do not age, because - one of the questions I've put here for myself [i.e., in his notes] is, "The world has to go on. We can't tell peasant stories in an urban culture." But of course you can! ... You can adapt those stories to your culture, for the simple reason that those stories were never about farmers anyway! ... They are stories that told about people's emotions. ... love, hatred, fear, greed ... (SCSA/P/7a, 50:11ff.)

Revivalistic discourse such as this is remarkable in that it treats story, as a thing in itself, as a noticeable and effectively universal property of culture. This expresses a sense of what may be termed the commonwealth of tradition: that is, a belief that the realm of traditional story has a unity and universality which makes it both suprapersonal and supracultural. In the post-storyswap discussion, I mentioned a story which I considered too private for public performance. Barbara agreed, but qualified the point:

If it is *true* traditional material it really does *not* belong to *anyone*, and the way it lives *is* for people to pass it on and use it. So in a way I feel less constrained about that. (SCSA/P/4a28)

Although participants probably do not know or care, this sense of tradition as a reified, public, and transcultural domain recalls, and may partly derive from, the universalising tendencies of early folk and mythic narrative scholarship. It also tends against strong anti-universalising assumptions in present-day scholarship of folklore and culture. Moreover, the same sense of universality is maintained against the fragmenting and contested claims of individual and cultural or collective ownership within source traditions, and indeed within various factions of revivalism (Dégh 1969, Haggarty 1995; see below, Chapter

4). It relates closely to the revivalistic habit of appropriating stories from extrinsic cultural traditions. Revivalistic repertoires eclectically combined stories from Ireland (SCSA/P/1a, 10a10), Scotland (SCSA/P/3a14), Wales (SCSA/P/10b1), continental Europe including ancient Greece (SCSA/P/10a13, 10b4), the Middle East (SCSA/P/1a), the Jewish diaspora (SCSA/P/1b), the Caribbean (SCSA/P/6a19), India (SCSA/P/3a18), and indigenous and immigrant North American culture (SCSA/P/8a11, 9b5). Even this is to discount the performances of non-English guest and other storytellers at the festival. In the discussion, Barbara credits as sources the Grimms, the *Arabian Nights*, Provençal folktales, and rabbinical tradition, and Piers adapts an Indian tale to a more apposite setting (SCSA/P4a, SCSA/P3a18). As Eddie Lenihan remarked in his workshop:

I was surprised here, this weekend ... judging the storytelling competition ... to find that there were so few English stories told! ... Now, I couldn't imagine in Ireland, Irish stories not being told at the same, the equivalent, kind of competition
(SCSA/P/7a, 36:02ff)

The immediate rejoinder from an English participant was

You got more *of* 'em! (SCSA/P/7a, 36:02ff)

Thus, the sense of cultural deficiency extends to English views of their indigenous storytelling traditions. Set against the perceived (and reified) commonwealth of tradition, this sense of cultural deficiency prompts a search for supplements in other cultures which is vitalistic in Wallace's sense (Wallace 1956). This eclecticism contrasts with the virtually complete absence, noted by Eddie, of non-white faces in the festival crowds (SCSA/P/7a, 36:02ff). The result is an odd paradox, that participants experience a sense of selfdiscovery in and through highly unfamiliar forms.

One participant at Eddie Lenihan's workshop (denoted in the quotation below as (p)) was surprised to "learn" of that which is paradoxically already within him:

- (p) What I've learned if anything is that it's [i.e., storytelling is] mostly inside me ...
- EL Yes! and so it should be!
- (p) Not outside. Inside. (SCSA/P/7a, 20:43 ff.)

The only mention of a class of story which seemed to resist appropriation was by Barbara, discussing Provençal folktales during the post-storyswap chat:

They're very different. They don't seem to fit the genre, and they're nearly all depressing at the end. ... There is no glimmer of light ... [mimes her own perplexity] "What the hell am I going to do with that?" ... One day it'll come in, but I find it very strange. (SCSA/P/4a31)

The underlying philosophy of story was therefore complex, but congruent with the larger ideology of revivalism described under the previous heading. Traditional material was available for appropriation across a wide spatiotemporal spectrum; a number of beliefs were articulated legislating for this appropriation, including a general tendency towards a more reified awareness of the nature of storytelling simply as such. But the deeper belief was that traditional material, despite superficially exotic qualities, was of universal significance and immediate, intimate personal relevance. Appropriation was not, however, understood quite as a total free-for-all. This leads directly to the third axiom, related, like the above quotation, to the issue of identity.

- 3) *Source settings and narrative structures may be appropriated without loss of authenticity, but source dialects may not.*

The topic of dialect emerged in the discussion and in Eddie Lenihan's workshop:

SH ... It's like you're saying about the Caribbean stuff. Now it's very difficult -

BN I feel it would be patronising for me to tell it in that accent, and if I did it wouldn't have the same resonance. It won't work. (SCSA/P/4a28)

EL If somebody here, if anybody here, chose to tell stories in the way I tell them, it wouldn't work. ... In the last analysis you have to be yourself. And if you have anything worthwhile saying, you'll say it *as yourself*. (SCSA/P7a, 0:10ff)

EL You are better off to tell the Irish stories in your own dialect, whatever that be. Tell them in *English* English, if you're telling them at all. (SCSA/P7a, 11:43ff)

In the discussion, Piers made a similar point about an absent storyteller with a particularly effective style based on her accent. I prompted further discussion. In response, Barbara generalised about the process of adaptation, and Piers gave a specific example (SCSA/P/3a18, cf. H3T6 *Suitor's test: apple thrown indicates princess's choice*) (underline added for emphasis):

PC Yes. I mean, she told me this story; and, and it's great the way she tells it, lovely. There's no way I can tell it like that!

SH That's it. I mean - what do you do? 'Cause you're getting all these stories, and so many of them are so tied in with the dialect and the accent ...

BN [decisively] You save the pieces and the essence, and you wait until you find one from another culture which is nearer to what you can use, and then you blend the two together. You don't have to, but that's often a w[ay]. You just put them on the back burner, and they'll come when their time is ready.

- PC Yes. Yes ... *The Fruit of Eternal Life* then was transplanted to England. It was set in India, as I heard it; and I thought, “Hang on, no, I can’t do this with a sort of imam coming out the desert, or anything like that, um, hang on a second, now, how do I get ... ?” ... The thing I was thinking was, “Now, where do I go back for the thing of eternal life?” [pauses, mimes deep thought and sudden realisation] Ah ha! (laughs)
- BN [agreeing; referring to the finished story] Garden of Eden! I liked the idea of the second fruit. (SCSA/P/4a31)

Barbara described allowing the essence of stories to permeate the subconscious until, with organised, conscious research, they fall into place, a combination of schematic and intuitive methods. Elsewhere (SCSA/P/10b, 40:50) Barbara compares stories to jigsaws; once cobbled together, a story “falls into place,” which is what “energises” her. Rather like the more pro-revivalistic scholars reviewed in the previous chapter, then, revivalists countered the anxieties of transition by invoking authentic “essence,” for example by preserving the quasi-archetypal “thing of eternal life.” Piers here adapts the setting of the story, but he was rather unusual in doing so. There is something of a paradox here between the fact that festival storytellers, on the one hand, construed authenticity in personal terms (as a quality of performance which inhered in not falsifying one’s own persona or nature) but, on the other, usually appropriated exoteric settings along with exoteric plots. Local detail and colour in ancient or foreign folktales were preserved more or less as immutable textual features. Tellers retained exoteric environmental, social and theological settings, such as sultans (SCSA/P/1a), leopards (SCSA/P/6a14), and the Caribbean Papa God (SCSA/P/6a19), in stories explicitly glossed as originating in the Arabian Nights, Cameroon, and Jamaica. At this level the texture of festival storytelling overall was therefore highly eclectic. In this it contrasted sharply with transcultural similarities in the material at the levels of genre, type and motif, with the actual ethnic

homogeneity of the audience, and with the background sense of the unity of tradition; and it also contrasted sharply with the general habit of not assuming false accents or dialects to perform. Only at the level of individual speech persona and dialect was direct appropriation and imitation tabooed.

Jill confronted similar issues in appropriation of personal stories, a topic raised by the telling of a memorate by a participant in the *Balfour* session (SCSA/P/8b11, cf. N339.8.1 *father accidentally falls in fire* See below, p. 152):

If you do have a story that's personal, but that you like, or that you'd like to tell, I think it's permissible to change it. ...
[murmurs of agreement] (SCSA/P/7a28)

I was interested in change and adaptation, and encouraged this discussion. The others took the cue readily. Discussion went as follows:

J Like the lady's story about her father.
BN Mm.
J Which is - which she told so well. It's a really slight story. She did a beautiful job of telling it.
BN Yes I know, lovely. I know ... the timing was right, too.
J That's right, absolutely lovely. I mean it's a nice story, but if I wanted to tell it, I'd tell it a completely different way. (SCSA/P/4a28)

To summarise, then, the maintenance of plausible, roughly everyday dialect and persona seemed (once again) to be absolutely paramount. Specific settings could be retained for local colour if originating in the traditions of other cultures, or altered if originating in the remembered experience of other individuals. But even in transcultural appropriations, maintenance in performance of a personally congruent situated talk persona was the paramount guarantee of authenticity. Given that they consciously eschewed non-habitual or assumed accents and dialects, on coherently argued grounds,

the Sidmouth storytelling participants might perhaps have been expected to strive during performance towards a wholly normal and unremarkably conversational persona. This was not quite the case. A number of rather different beliefs and expectations came into play, summarised under the two linked headings below.

- 5) *Length and elaboration are good in themselves and distinguish serious from non-serious genres, performers, performances and styles of storytelling.*

- 6) *Stories should always be received in respectful quiet.*

Unlike Bahamian old-story as reviewed in the previous chapter, Sidmouth festival storytelling during the pilot study was apparently wholly unrestrained by displays of audiences' disapproval. If listeners suffered, then they did so in a conventionally courteous or deferential silence. Echoing the developments noted in the previous chapter in the work of Ed Bell, Stanley Robertson and others, features of performance such as length and elaboration were concomitantly widely cultivated. If an individual stood high in the festival hierarchy - if, most obviously, they were a featured guest - they were more likely to tell generically long, elaborate tales, international folktales, *cante-fables*, animal stories, and legends, and to use a more heightened and elaborate performative style generally. Ordinary participants remained closer to mainstream oral narrative culture, telling shorter legends, personal experience stories, and jokes, but all showed a purposeful shift towards prosodic elaboration. The most telling illustration of the purposefulness of this shift is a small infelicity by a professional storyteller,¹⁰ attending as an ordinary festivalgoer and performing as a supplementary or floor storyteller during a

¹⁰Individuals are not identified where the argument could be understood to imply criticism of their actions.

Volunteer session. Here the storyteller introduces his hero, a lone white settler in colonial New Zealand. (Underline added for emphasis.)

He knew that he could fish in the ocean for his proteins and eat the potatoes for his [hesitates momentarily] sustenance; he sat down and the first thing he built, was a potato pit ... (SCSA/P/2a10, cf. *J218 *Enemies make peace rather than slay each other*)

Here, several minutes into a long unbroken prose narrative monologue, the storyteller, hesitating slightly, and perhaps searching for the right word, finally added the sense-redundant *sustenance*, apparently to make up a couplet on the template __ (in) the __ for his __. The resulting register was slightly more portentous than conversation normally allows. The general point is that the prosody of talk is here shaped expansively, independently of sense, and apparently for its own sake. Above all, as here, it can be striven for unsuccessfully. This suggests that it is not incidental but purposeful; that it is not a by-product but a goal of performance. This was a general tendency, causing individual stylistic variation between formal events and conversation. A second example may also be given, comparing oral narrative styles of a single participant in informal conversational narrative and in formal storytelling performance. During informal discussion, Mark Austin told an anecdote about two women campers, successfully managing our conversationally normative supportive or digressive interruptions. Square brackets indicate editorial clarifications, including expansions of elisions caused by rapid speech; italics indicate stress; commas indicate brief pauses; ellipsis (...) indicates a longer pause, and a dash indicates a break in syntax:

- MA And they were putting up this [t]en[t] and s - got all these *bits* ou[t] s - a big frame tent got all these *bits* out and they were *arguing* on *which* bit fitted on *which* bit.
 PC Oh god *yes*.
 MA [inaud] falling *apart*.

- BN God I've been *there*.
- PC We finally managed to get our tent up *properly* for the first time ever.
- MA [talking over the interruptions] this this this *guy* ... on ... th[e] other side of the *row*, who had just ... wh wh[o] who had, just finished putting up *his* tent wandered over and said "You've obviously got problems would you like to g- would you like a *hand*?" And they turned round to him and said, "*We* don't want a *hand* from any *man*!" And he said "Okay you won't mind if I take photographs then" and he watched them for two and a half hours
- PC, BN [beginning to laugh]
- MA putting this tent up taking photographs of every mistake! [laughs] (SCSA/P/4a6, cf. J80.1.1 *Solomon proves inferiority of women's wisdom*)

Mark's Scots speech was charged with nervous energy, quick, laconic, and effective. His prosody seemed tightly correlated with plot elements: the broken syntax and repetitive lexis of the initial shambles, the staccato of the women's angry rejection, and the ambling rhythm of the man's insouciantly veiled ill will. However, in the storytelling event, free from the threat of interruptions, Mark's style was rather different:

... well her father had spoilt her and her mother had petted her, and they'd made so much of a fuss of her and all the people in the castle made so much of a fuss of this girl, that it was a wonder, that she had not grown up spoilt, [inaud: out of?] all recognition of all youth ... and she thought, set her heart upon him said, "*That's* the man that I would like to marry." (SCSA/P/10a1)

In this story (L161 *Lowly hero marries princess*), his tone was smoother and his manner less charged. His style was lexically more repetitive and parallelistic, and syntactically more complex and loaded with lengthy subordinate clauses. The action in places slower, vaguer and larger in scope, and less dependent on direct speech. As with the story of the New Zealand settler, a slight hesitation and redundancy of sense suggests the purposeful elaboration of prosody for its own sake. Where it occurs, direct speech

correlates rhythmically with plot and motive, but overall this correlation is less pronounced, and the even filting tone continues throughout the whole story. This shift of register was general. Examples include a humorous floor telling at the *Volunteer* storytime (perhaps a bucolic and climactically scatological echo of cf. K671 *Captive throws his hat to lions who fight over it while he escapes*) by Malcolm Speake, in his native west midlands accent, using a disingenuously droll, slow, and apparently meandering style:

And, so one Monday morning, this feller Geo- I think, he said his name was George actually, George, is pedalling up to the farm you see; and, as he's on his way up to the farm he's thinking to himself, "You know, I'd be better off getting the sack!" So when he gets there he puts the, bike up against, against the wall, and goes in and the farmer says, says "George" he says, "Well i wa-" yeah, he was George - he says [listeners chuckle at the digressive play on "George"] "George, I tell you what I want you to do," he says ... (SCSA/P/1a)

Here Malcolm's supra-conversational repetitiveness ended by making a joke simply of the anti-hero's bare name. The humour was less gentle in Eddie Lenihan's very long tale of an oafish smith and his son (cf. AT753 *Christ and the Smith*), told in his south-western Irish accent at the last *Volunteer* storytime on Friday (F1068 *Realistic dream*, D 1865.1 *Beautification by decapitation and replacement of head*, J2411.1 *Imitation of magic rejuvenation unsuccessful*). Eddie in performance is convulsed with energy, almost frenzied but always controlled, so the pace was breathlessly fast, the tone very heightened, almost incantatory, with gestures close to whole-body mimetic enactment of the violent action (commas indicate very brief pauses; semicolons indicate longer pauses; exclamation marks indicate abrupt emphasis; square brackets indicate explanatory interpolations made during editing; other punctuation is typographic):

He [the smith] walked across the yard; he went in at the door; and there was the poor woman [the smith's wife] inside, stirring a stew or something at the fire, and, heh! she was [3 syllables inaud], because she turned around, just when he was two steps from her, and without any class of warning at all, he rose the hammer, and *bang!* "That might improve you," says he. But, he wasn't happy with that, he did exactly what he saw the big man doing, "And take *that!* and *that!* and *that!*" All the frustrations of years of marriage took out there [Eddie continues talking over audience laughter; several syllables inaud] on that poor woman. He wallpapered the kitchen with her [audience laugh], and he splattered her under the table, the bones brains and the rest of it, and he stood back ... (SCSA/P/6b9)

These were focussed and controlled examples of elaboration which drew energetic responses from the audience; but elaboration could also be very discursive and not observably directed towards a response from listeners, as in one performance by a featured guest storyteller of T461A *The Journey to the Deity for Advice or Repayment*:

It got so bad, that he couldn't sleep. He would toss and turn all night, he probably catnapped because nobody can go without sleep entirely, you'd be dead in a week, but, he was not, happy he was not comfortable ...

... all the children who are born during that time, will die, by the noose, either, convicted or, killed by, bandits or whatever but, that is their fate.

And it was as though, a great, knapsack for those of you who are backpacking this week, was lifted from his back, a weight was lifted from him, and he knew that he could relax and be happy and get on with his life ... (SCSA/P/3a2)

5) *There is a storytelling élite.*

The festival engages featured guests and hosts in advance to preside at events. Other participants, audience members, never challenged this élite's authority,

and limited their own active contribution usually to applause, laughter and other conventional audience responses. Individuals showed surprise, even discomfort, when invited or impelled into the limelight (SCSA/P/7a, 0:06ff., 1:24ff., 4:01ff.). At one of the *Volunteer* sessions, Eddie Lenihan told the story of St Patrick's conversion of the O'Connors, commercially recorded by Eddie (Lenihan 1993) as *The Three Useless Things* (SCSA/P/2b9, F960.4 *Extraordinary phenomena at anger of saint*). As an introduction, he asked if there were any O'Connors present. In response, a woman shyly admitted that her daughter was going to marry one, and Eddie directed the story more or less to her. She was clearly rather less than fully at ease with, though not perhaps resentful of, the attention (SCSA/P/2b8). In his workshop - which of course generically enacted the assumption of one person's special expertise - Eddie was addressed deferentially by participants:

I'm only just started in storytelling and I thought if I heard other people doing it I'd get some ideas on how to do it better. It's really all I came for. (SCSA/P/7a, 20:43ff.)

I was just going to say could you give perhaps one or two pointers in the storytelling point of view, to people who would like to use stories to improve ... (SCSA/P/7a, 36:02ff.)

If participants deferred to storytellers, storytellers at times indulged submerged jockeying for status. This seemed undeniable partly because, to my embarrassment, I caught myself doing it. I was a middle-ranking festival storyteller, an ordinary festivalgoer, but well enough known to be invited to tell at the *Volunteer*, for example. I had recently heard some striking and excellent stories via another fellow doctoral student¹¹ from her relatives and friends in the travelling fairground community, on which I remarked in passing in the discussion:

¹¹Now Dr. Vanessa Toulmin.

- SH I've heard a couple of stories I mean again off Vanessa
 - I get quite a bit of stuff off her, by the by -
 BN She sounds like a good source actually.
 SH - and they're absolutely amazing, but that's another
 story! [laughs] (SCSA/P/4a28)

Listening to the tape-recording of this exchange afterwards, I was struck by my own manifest vicarious pique. I had not admitted it to myself when I spoke, and it was mildly embarrassing to listen to on tape, but with hindsight it was undeniably part of my motivation for speaking. Stories and sources transmit their glamour to the storyteller, and can be invoked as indirect, perhaps compensatory assertions of status. Perhaps similarly, following a highly successful performance by another featured teller, the host at a *Volunteer* session introduced a story by recalling previous successes telling it, and claiming to have heard no-one else "in the tradition" tell it and that "it's a real *find*" (SCSA/P/2b10). More seriously, on at least one occasion, the status gap defining the élite seemed to overflow into condescension towards the rank and file. Here the example is the above-mentioned anecdote (SCSA/P/10a4, cf. N339.8.1 *father accidentally falls in fire* ..., see above, p.145). When, at the Monday lunchtime storyswap at the *Balfour*, the host came round to offer her a turn, the teller, a woman in her late fifties who was apparently quite new to formal revivalistic storytelling, responded (underline added for emphasis):

Well, this is something I can't believe! I wouldn't call myself a storyteller, but I've been called on three times ...
 (SCSA/P/8b10)

She then told the memorate. Her father was a political activist, and one day, during a fierce electoral campaign, he stepped out of the half-redecorated party headquarters, past the housepainters, and into the street. He was immediately attacked by a large mob. But this was not political violence: he had brushed a

housepainter's blowtorch, and his suit had caught fire. The host responded by invoking a commonplace revivalistic image:

Thank you ... There is said to be metaphorically a ladder of stories, and at the very top there's metaphysical stories that you get about the dreamtime, the aborigines, the creation myths, but the first rungs are the rungs that most of us, I think, start on, perhaps we aspire to the higher rungs ... (SCSA/P/10a5).

Here the selfconsciousness of revivalistic storytelling has clear hierarchical implications. This participant clearly tells stories very well, as we remarked in the discussion, but her disinclination, in contrast to the *élite*, to reify this aspect of herself, that is, "call herself a storyteller," placed her, like the previous participant who feels that he is only starting out, in a subordinate position from which she was repeatedly "called on" to tell. Ambiguously, revivalism subordinated and then re-elevated its rank and file. The host's comments were certainly in good faith, but they put tellers of memorates at the bottom of the ladder; crucially, not on the basis of relative ability but purely on the basis of genre, and disenfranchising actual mainstream oral narrative practice in a way that the high quality of the performance (commented on in the interstitial chat) did not warrant.

8) *There is no storytelling élite.*

This deliberate antithesis of the previous axiom records the paradox that, like the folk musicians studied by Mackinnon (1993), the revivalistic storytelling *élite* consistently disavowed and disguised their own status. In his workshop, Eddie Lenihan habitually qualified, if not entirely rejected, the deference which met him:

There is no gospel of storytelling, as I said at the start. ... [ironically] God knows maybe when the thing is growing, I'd

better sit down quickly and write a handbook of “How to ...”! [laughter] If I did I would hope that people would quickly read it and throw it away! Because you have to start somewhere, and then you’ve got to go your own road. (SCSA/P/7a, 20:43ff)

Between stories at Monday night’s *Volunteer* session, Pat Ryan, the host, addressed the listeners about two absent Irish storytellers, Packie Byrne and George Sheridan:

If you want to come and scribble something on the postcard [to Packie Byrne] tonight, after we’re finished, you’re welcome to, those of you who know him and want to say hello. ... He sends everyone his love. ...

... my friend George Sheridan, ... he does get regularly to the Ulster storytelling festival and a couple of other festivals in Ireland, so if you’re ever over there, be sure to look him up (SCSA/P/1a).

To address a large audience composed of members of the general public as if its members were on social terms with a major festival personality disguises the fact that most audience members were strangers to the featured guests.

In summary, these eight axioms seemed to work in two ways. Firstly, they defined a certain relationship between revivalists and stories. This relationship was characterised by a sense of a submerged but universal and reified commonwealth of tradition subsuming the world’s folk narrative cultures, which circumvented a perceived paucity of extant mainstream culture, was reinstated in the institutions of the revivalistic movement, and connected through them directly and intimately with participants’ personal lives, despite the cultural distance involved and the appropriations and adaptations which this necessitated. This sense of submerged connection justified vitalistic appropriation, and explained and sanctioned the necessary transitions by asserting continued authenticity. Also, it accompanied a taste for longer genres

and elaborate styles, and a suspension of the interactive norms obstructing these. Secondly, the axioms ambivalently defined relationships between revivalists. On the one hand, they sanctioned the primacy of a festival élite. This élite was distinguished by their greater reliance on exotic genres of story, heightened public performance idioms, and greater confidence in invoking reified concepts of storytelling. These habits were in contrast with those of the ordinary participant at festival storytelling events, which were closer to the norms of mainstream oral narrative culture. There were, however, successful and unsuccessful performances both among the élite and among ordinary participants. The élite was defined not (or not only) by its greater knowledge or competence, but by its cultivation of a certain exoteric approach simply as such. Paradoxically, too, the existence of a storytelling élite, eased by denials of overt status, had a liberating effect on participants generally. It allowed participants to connect with the otherworldly ambience which pertained within events, as it were ring-fenced by the reified definitions and formal constraints which the events involved; it gave a precedent for experimentation with repertoire, genre, and performative register, and to cultivate a heightened awareness of narrative generally and its possibilities. In conclusion, it is possible to discern in these eight axioms something of the systems of belief and understanding which enabled participants in Sidmouth festival storytelling to negotiate the various transitions involved and make sense of their activity. Also, they begin to reveal connections to the global context, in the sense of dissatisfaction with modern urban living. They are, however, only a beginning.

3.2.5 Conclusions

The pilot study was inconclusive. The eight axioms itemised are rather crude and impressionistic. They are based on the subjective judgements of one participant, namely myself, expanded but not significantly challenged by a

rather selective collection, analysis and presentation of fieldwork data. They are plausible and at best preliminary comments which suggested ways in which future research might be conducted. Three specific issues may be noted. Firstly, pilot fieldwork practically foreshadowed the approach stated at the outset of the present study and in the previous chapter. That is to say: it suggested that storytelling revivalism was, indeed, more complex than the simple reinstatement of tradition within traditionless culture: it was not filling a void, but, rather, taking its place alongside existing traditions: that is, alongside both the exoteric source traditions from which its élites appropriated texts, and the esoteric oral narrative culture (based on personal experience narratives and anecdotes) of the indigenous mainstream. However, it was distinguished from these by certain specific qualities, and these seemed *prima facie* to be of two kinds. On the one hand there was a certain approach to the whole storytelling event: a particular structure of interaction which created interactive space for revivalistic storytelling, and a particular way of presenting and understanding the hierarchies involved. On the other, there was a certain attitude towards or set of beliefs about story. This attitude seemed congruent with the ambience within which revivalistic storytelling occurred. It also seemed to be causatively related to the wider sociocultural context, and it was coherent and common to participants to some degree. It was a loose belief system of the kind which scholars have often described when considering traditional arts revivalism. The second point to be made is that the pilot study offered a practical prospectus of the sorts of methods which might be of use in investigating these issues in greater depth: direct observation of events and consultation with participants about their background beliefs and cognitions. The third issue, however, is that these methods would require considerable refinement before they could sustain a large-scale original study. The use of evidence in the pilot study was selective and unsystematic. Storytelling events eluded simple structural analysis, and storytelling beliefs and cognitions were

impossible to interpret without opaque, Hebdigean impressionism. Also, there was as yet no detailed knowledge of the wider history and sociocultural context of storytelling revivalism. Conclusions were therefore impressionistic and rather speculative.

This was potentially a very far-reaching problem. In adapting the summary sheet to the structural analysis of storytelling event interaction, the pilot study had (initially unwittingly) attempted to reinstate a longstanding and still unsuccessful scholarly endeavour: the search for the rules and units structuring the use of language above the level of the sentence, and particularly the forces governing the negotiated structure of dialogic speech, as formulated in terms of “particular sorts of interactional units, such as speech acts, or moves, or turns” existing at the supra-sentential level (Taylor and Cameron 1987, 1). The pilot study had sought something like a grammar of the revivalistic storytelling event at this level. The basic objects of this grammar would have been types of utterance (such as stories or links) rather than parts of speech (such as nouns and verbs). The grammar would have been expressed as syntactic rules comprehensive enough to predict the sequence of utterance types at all recorded events, rather as grammatical rules predict the formation of well-formed sentences. It will be noted that this method presupposed that the storytelling event was a purely linguistic structure, composed of discrete units of utterance, that is, of language: that the requirements of analysis were linguistic requirements, such as identifying the boundaries of the units of utterance, sorting them taxonomically by content and structure, and achieving reliable generalisations about sequential patterns of combination; and that all non-linguistic aspects of the event could effectively be disregarded. It has been stated that this attempt was unsuccessful, but the manner of the failure suggested that this failure was absolute, or at least beyond repair within the scope of the present study. That is to say, it would not be practically possible

to achieve an exhaustive, purely language-based structural analysis of a sample of revivalistic storytelling events. The volume of data required and the complexity of the interaction recorded would be too great. Beneath these misgivings lay a deeper problem of a rather familiar kind: at the purely linguistic level, the revivalistic storytelling event was bafflingly insubstantial as an entity. That is to say: rather like “revival” as distinct from tradition in the larger discussion reviewed above, it displayed no obviously unique structural or linguistic features. Revivalistic stories were substructures within larger interactive structures; they advertised themselves in the language of their presentation as separate units having a special claim on the listeners’ attention; they were often framed by interactive passages during which participants (including both the storyteller and one or more of the listeners) worked collectively towards and through oral narrative performances, marking the opening and closing of a story by talking about the story as an entity in itself, requesting, soliciting, evaluating and assessing it as such; and the performance of stories, though possibly met with vocalised supportive and responsive interjections by listeners, was accompanied by a momentary suspension of other conversations and interactions by actants in order to form a larger audience for the story. The revivalistic storytelling event was partly structured as it were in advance by various conventions, but turn-taking and the selection of repertoire for performance were both spontaneous to a degree, and potentially dependent on actants’ expectations and also on the dominance of individuals enjoying high personal status within the terms of the interaction. These statements, however, are equally true of conversations, and of some conversational narratives. To return to the earlier thought-experiment, it was possible to imagine Skeengles the trow returning to the mortal world having familiarised himself with the interdisciplinary study of supra-sentential language surveyed below, under such headings as discourse studies or conversation analysis. Still lacking the holistic intuition which most human

beings take for granted, Skeengles could attend a revivalistic storytelling event, and even analyse it in some detail, without noticing that anything was happening other than an unremarkable everyday conversation. This conversation might happen to involve an unusually large number of unusually long stories, cued by one particularly dominant personality who happened to be unusually successful at cajoling other people into speaking (that is, as we would recognise, the host), but Skeengles would not perceive anything essentially distinctive about the resulting patterns of interaction simply as such, and, again, this failure would have no intellectual consequences. In short, consideration of the purely linguistic and interactive features of storytelling revivalism had failed to uncover an essential answer to the basic question of what constituted the necessary interactive preconditions of the revivalistic story performance. Again, the answer seemed to be that, at the linguistic or interactive levels, the revivalistic storytelling event was essentially similar to everyday conversation. Both were sister subcategories of a larger category of improvised narrative talk. What was required was a sufficiently concise but also sufficiently transparent methodology for capturing the basic qualitative nature of the revivalistic event as a subcategory of narrative talk: a way of understanding why Skeengles' intuitions are, once again, incomplete.

3.3 The main study

3.3.1 Ontology and epistemology

With the findings of pilot fieldwork codified and the scholarly literature reviewed, it became possible to formulate a strategy for the main research project. The nature of the data sought was by now clear. Global descriptive and historical data were needed on the development of storytelling revivalism,

but data were also needed on the enactment of storytelling events as whole episodes, and specifically on the ways in which they assumed a manifest character and facilitated the innovative practice of telling longer traditional narratives. Additionally, testimony was required from participants regarding their understandings and interpretations of this activity. There were a number of methodological strictures. These bodies of data needed to be discrete and clearly bounded, and decided in advance of any interpretation, to avoid problems of selectivity. Analytical methods had to be transparent, that is, clearly stated in advance and consistently applied without anticipation of result, to avoid problems of opacity. Analysis had to be inductive, that is, working from patterns within the data as a whole, open-endedly upwards towards general conclusions.

The next step was to return to the literature in search of precedents and models for a study of this kind. Surveys were made of contextualist folklore (Bauman 1986, Ben Amos 1971, Briggs 1990, Crowley 1966, Dégh 1969, Dundes 1978, Falassi 1980, Glassie 1982, Mullen 1981, 1988, Paredes and Bauman 1972), ethnography, including ethnography of speaking and communication (Savile-Troike 1989, Silverman 1996, van Dijk 1997); sociolinguistics, including speech act theory (Giglioli 1972, Gumperz and Hymes 1972), Gricean pragmatics (van Dijk 1997 (2), Taylor and Cameron 1987), discourse analysis (van Dijk 1997), and ethnomethodology, including conversation analysis (Benson and Hughes 1983, Button 1991, Mehan and Wood 1975, Rogers 1983). The diversity of possibly applicable approaches precludes exhaustively detailed treatment of these disciplinary fields. Relevant common underlying issues can, however, be sufficiently treated. In fact, fairly accessible analytical methods were discovered which answered the current purposes.

3.3.1.1 Storytelling events: ontology and epistemology

The first topic area to consider was the analysis of the storytelling event. Specifically, the aim was to discover how the larger structures of the storytelling event assumed a discrete character and created an interactive context wherein the oral narration of longer traditional tales became intelligible and practicable to a participant group whose familiarity with the form could not be assumed. The establishment of discrete boundaries for this corpus of data would be a relatively straightforward task: it was necessary only to observe and record a sample of whole events, including all the interactions which could be considered as part of those events, before any interpretative work was attempted. The only issue requiring a degree of consideration was the selection of the sample, which is discussed below. The establishment of sufficiently exhaustive, transparent and inductive analytical methods was more painstaking. A way needed to be found to analyse the totality of the event which was at once broad enough to claim exhaustivity, coherent and open-ended enough to generate revealing conclusions, and concise enough for inclusion in a project of the scale of the present research. Secondly, for the sake of requisite inductivity, it was required that as little as possible be assumed *a priori* about the nature of storytelling event interaction. With reference to this last, only one distinguishing feature of the storytelling events in the pilot study was taken as a premise for analysis. This is the quality, not always shared with the surrounding informal conversational chat, of being largely a single, linear sequence of utterances. Often, in a room full of people, *ceteris paribus*, multiple conversations occur simultaneously, and a single conversing group splits into smaller subgroups and/or amalgamates with other groups to form a larger conversing group according to chance and negotiated preference (Bennett 1980, MacDonald 1996). Storytelling events were perceptible partly or chiefly because they did not have this protean

quality. Once a group had convened in order to enact a storytelling event, the dialogic sequence of utterances and communicative acts was predictably linear, unitary, and unbroken (except for the special case of intervals during events, discussed below). No matter what the size of the group, there was a single, sustained interactive focus, of which the precise object may have varied over time, but which was never bifurcated or amalgamated with other extraneous foci. This very basic characterisation allowed a focus of research to be identified without making any further assumptions about the nature of the interaction involved, and so leaving the central *explanandum* - the nature of the event and its role in facilitating substantial folktale performance - available for genuinely open-ended and inductive appraisal. It remains to consider how such appraisal could be conducted, which necessitates a further brief excursion into theory.

As stated, it is commonsensical that the enactment of a storytelling event as a sequence of utterances should be a linguistic accomplishment, but the storytelling event seems *prima facie* to have no unique features at the sentential and immediately supra-sentential levels. At these levels, despite the conspicuous and striking effect of formal revivalistic folktale performance, the storytelling event seems to be deeply and essentially like any other kind of interactive talk involving narrative episodes. Its component sentences and small-scale interactive strategies are those of everyday conversation: statements, questions and answers, invitations, acknowledgments, introductions, hesitations, and the like. What distinguishes the storytelling event as a unitary, linear sequence of utterances, and makes the longer folktale tellable within it, must therefore be something larger and more general: something in the context and purpose with which these basic sentences and strategies are combined, and/or glossed, and/or interpreted, and/or meant by speakers. This raised consideration beyond the bare propositional or

locutionary content and sequence of utterances within the event, which is a relatively straightforward issue. Instead, consideration is directed towards the more general motivations and purposes of interactive talk, which is a far from straightforward issue, as a review of the literature reveals. The literature reviewed legislates for the analysis of talk in its wider social and situational contexts, usually in terms of the content and boundaries of units of utterance and the rules governing their sequential combination, which appears at first sight to be a promising direction for the analysis of storytelling event enactment (Button 1991, 217, 218, van Dijk 1997 (1), 3, (2), 17ff). These analytical approaches are based on the common-sense assumption that the intelligibility of interactive talk results partly from interactants' conscious or unconscious cognitions; specifically, from their interpretations of each other's unstated illocutionary intentions regarding the suprasentential structures of talk. In successful interaction, it is usually necessary to have, but usually not preferable to state in so many words, familiarity with basic organisational issues: the relevant roles of other interlocutors, basic conventions for turn-taking, and the facts that a question is a question, that an answer to a question is an answer, and so forth.¹² To achieve this competence, it is practically necessary for interlocutors to draw tacit inferences about each other's unspoken intentions in speaking. Questioners need not explicitly request that answerers answer. Answerers usually recognise the nature of the question well enough to respond competently. Usually, these interpretations refer to some understanding of the larger structures and motives for talk, as when, for example, the idea that a given utterance is an answer to a question presupposes that a preceding utterance is a question motivated by the desire for an answer,

¹²Indeed, it is logically impossible for the illocutionary status of all utterances to be explicitly stated. Firstly, a single utterance may have multiple status: the answer to Samson's riddle (Judges 14:18) is simultaneously an answer, a question, and a hint. Secondly, to state the illocutionary status of one utterance requires making another utterance, also requiring illocutionary explication by means of a third utterance, and so on to infinity; by such rules, nothing could ever be said.

and may also imply that the larger interactive context is that of an interview or interrogation. Interlocutors' shared, tacit intuitive competences are therefore necessary in the management of talk. They work on the larger interactive structures within which utterances are fitted, and through them interlocutors strive to interpret each others' purposes in speaking, and so to make sense of what is said, with reference to a loosely shared set of intuitions and rules obtaining within specific interactive contexts. Scholars have extensively schematised the organisational principles underlying this achievement. To give one well noted example of targetedness, that is, the practice whereby interlocutors make and act on surmises about the implied addressee of a given utterance, Sacks cites an exchange between an airline passenger and a stewardess:

- P: Do you have a cigarette?
 S: No, we don't provide them any more. (Button, 1991, 216)

Sacks notes that the stewardess "treats it [i.e., the passenger's request] as an address which is oriented to her status as the airline representative," and that her reply "displays that she has conducted such an analysis - note her use of 'we' - and used it to formulate her reply," such that "co-participants make available and visible the nature of their activities in the very course of their production" (216). Like Sacks, analysts extrapolate from the perceived implications in the data, choosing between a large number of plausible but mutually incompatible analytical schemata, such as Gricean maxims or the ethnomethodological "*moral inferential logic*" (Button 1991, 241). The result is schemata and models of the larger structures and motivations - the rules and units - governing talk, which go unstated in actual conversations.

Attention has been drawn to a problem very similar to that encountered in the previous chapter at a larger scale of scrutiny: the fact that these underlying schemata, as extrapolated from data by scholars, are always ultimately speculative and opaque. Because interlocutors do not and cannot fully state them, they must be read into the record of talk, by scholars working in ultimately Frazerian or Hebdigean fashion. Some, indeed, make a virtue of this necessity. To ethnomethodologists (for example, Benson and Hughes 1983, Button 1991, Mehan and Wood 1975, Rogers 1983), the systems governing talk are self-evidently “*publicly available*” (Button 1991, 243) as “natural settings” for talk, “the ‘natural’ hearing” of an utterance, or in Sharrock and Anderson’s words “the ‘natural attitude’” which applies scepticism selectively “within the assumption of the givenness of the external world as a whole” (Benson and Hughes 1983, 157, Button 1991, 45, 55, 239). For example, Sacks asserts the self-evidence of membership categorisations by such arguments as “*I would not, and I take it that you would not ... see that ‘a male cried’ if we could see that ‘a baby cried’*” (emphasis added) (Button 1991, 45; Gumperz and Hymes 1972, 338). Not all analytical approaches are as explicit as ethnomethodology about the claim that their conclusions are self-evident. It is, however, impossible to draw conclusions about the larger structures of talk which do not rely on the assumption of the self-evidence of the unspoken. Certainly, in an absolute sense these approaches reveal the problem of transparency of representation: that is, they derive, in Frazerian and Hebdigean fashion, from the understandings of scholars, rather than those of the interlocutors themselves. As Bittner warned:

if the fieldworker’s claim[s] to realism ... are to be given serious credence, then it will have to be made clear when they are a function of the natural attitude of the actor but [*sic*] of a deliberately appropriated “natural attitude” of the observer. (Button 1991, 68)

This is a general difficulty: that scholarly interpretations of social acts are interpretations made directly by the scholar; they are not discoveries of interpretations made by social actors as part of the process of social action, which they must be if they are to have any real content or value as scholarship. To circumvent this problem, some scholars suggesting particular schemata for the structure of talk often categorically deny that these are based on surmises about interlocutors' "attitude," that is, their inner lives and motives, at all. Scholars concede that "analyses of the structure of conversation do not in themselves disclose the experience of conversing" (Rogers 1983, 122), and ethnomethodologists agree that "analyses of social reality are properly descriptive rather than explanatory" (Rogers 1983, 103). If, however, these analyses are not explanations - that is, if they reveal nothing about the causes of particular utterances - they are presumably simply imprecise and rather tautological *précis*. As such they reveal nothing and are of no use. As if to corroborate this pessimism, the various analytical schemata suggested are incomplete and in mutual disagreement. Just as Frazer and Hebdige express widely differing worldviews on the same epistemological basis, so, for example, Gricean maxims differ in content and implication from ethnomethodological moral inferential logics. They disagree, and both systems as stated are regularly flouted in actual recorded conversations. Another equally unsuccessful tactic for circumventing the basic epistemological problem is to build necessary, not contingent, indeterminacy into all schemata, in the form of caveats such as that specific principles "don't provide for their *own* application," that actual behaviour cannot be "recovered by attempts ... to specify an examinable practice" (Button 1991, 13 - 14, 16, 244), that maxims "apply variably to different contexts" and "to variable degrees," that they "can conflict" and "be contravened" (Taylor and Cameron 1987, 93), or, in summary, that "rules theorists have not provided us with any coherent accounts as to why persons choose to follow one rule rather than another"

(Taylor and Cameron, 1987, 12). This, however, is in itself ineffectual because, when it is impossible to know when a rule does not apply, it is impossible to know when it does. Necessary indeterminacy therefore logically undermines the case-by-case applicability of all such analytical systems. Indeed, much of Grice's early work on his hypothetical maxims was dedicated exactly to explaining why interlocutors violated them. Scholars and social scientists still therefore ultimately lack concrete methodological or intellectual authority for the whole enterprise; they rely ultimately on introspection, that is, on their own intuitive interactive competence as ordinary language users, able to empathise with and so interpret interlocutors' interactive aims and predicaments, and also calling on a matching empathy among fellow scholars. In an absolute, philosophical sense these considerations entirely undermine the analysis of talk as a whole, separate enterprise. They reveal that, by itself, it ceases to be barrenly recapitulative only at the point where it becomes arbitrarily speculative.

This may be frankly admitted because it does not necessarily follow that analytical techniques of this kind have no practical application at all. From the folklorist's point of view, within limited parameters of context and inference, the intuitive leap of faith required to acknowledge the existence of certain basic structuring motivations for talk is manageably small. To see the problem in proportion it may be reflected that, ultimately, any language use - the perception of meaning in sequences of phonemes or written characters - requires an intuitive leap of faith in learned systems of representation. These systems are inherently dialogic; they would not exist without senders and recipients, and they are thus governed by tacit mutual acknowledgement of unspoken illocutionary routines. To know that the morpheme *dog* can mean a dog requires a leap of faith in a social system of meaning which is quantitatively less but qualitatively as absolute as that required to believe in

the doctrine of the Assumption. A second similarly absolute leap of faith is required to know that people can use this morpheme to refer to dogs in ways which other people can recognise and for reasons to which they can meaningfully respond. The first leap achieves bare semantic intelligibility; the second gives access to the knowledge that the exchange between the stewardess and the airline passenger consists of a question and an answer. A third leap, almost as basic, is needed to acknowledge that it consists of a request and a refusal. Although these leaps of faith are logically opaque, they are reliable for all practical purposes. It is logically and linguistically possible to dispute their reliability, but this objection is answered by the example of its own intelligibility. Sacks' speculations about the targetedness of the stewardess's answer are conceptually still more sophisticated; possibly they are more tendentious in their nuances; but by the same logic they still have a residual degree of plausibility. They are not to be rejected out of hand. It is only at the level of complex, sophisticated, overarching generative schemata that the intuitive and speculative nature of the analysis of talk becomes more seriously controversial. But such overarching schemata are arguably superfluous to the present practical purpose. It is permissible to make assumptions about the illocutionary functions and structures of talk at the level required to identify questions, answers, requests, refusals, and other utterances of like kind; and if a method can be found which relies on nothing more tendentious than these, then requisite transparency will have been maintained.

Further reassurance may be found in the consideration of the relationship between talk and its wider sociocultural contexts. Direct appeals to intuition of the "natural" or of "hearability" are ultimately governed by culturally specific norms, such that they effectively lack independent force or absolute philosophical content. This is to miss the point that contextualised applications of such analyses, while rather more provisional, are quite congruent with the

nature and character of cultural tradition and with the folklorist's attempts to scrutinise it. Specifically, they answer the requirements of the present study for an integrated, inductive scrutiny of the emergent global and local operations of culture. The analysis of talk appears implausible or speculative to the precise extent to which it is treated as a self-sufficient enterprise. This is because it depends on unspoken, tacit, mutual acknowledgements of illocutionary routines. These routines are socioculturally and ethnically specific, and depend in turn, in Garfinkel's words, on "a vast array of features of the social order" (Rogers 1983, 97). To return to the examples stated above, Sacks is silent about what the stewardess and the passenger think or intend (Taylor and Cameron 1987, 13). What is recoverable is precisely the manifestation, not the experience, of targetedness. Noting this manifestation in isolation reveals very little of concrete substance; attempting to relate it directly to the inner lives of interlocutors reveals less. It is, however, the expression not only of inner experience, but also of the external social and commercial structures within which the interlocutors operate. These might be evidentially recoverable through such data as the stewardess' contract or other administrative documentation. With such evidence, the stewardess' words would appear something like a small enactment of capitalist alienation: the airline buys her skills, including her facility for courteous affability and tactful adherence to organisational policy. Its proprietorship might be seen to be expressed generally in her role as stewardess, in such facts as that, during work hours, her behaviour, location, manner and dress are not of her own choosing. The same proprietorship is expressed grammatically in her talk: she answers the question as "we," the airline, as if the company has appropriated her very identity - which it has, by the economic institution of wage employment. Sacks cannot reveal interlocutors' inner states; but the excerpt given is informative about the wider global context. The point is that the global social order has its own being, and is itself available to separate

scrutiny without loss of rigour. It is possible to render an account of the global shape, scope and contexts of storytelling revivalism, by using, for example, the methods of the historian, the social scientist, or the folklorist. Equally, it is possible to render an intuitive but systematic account of the routines governing talk at the local scale and in local contexts. Indeed, this is precisely what the present study aims to do. If the global shape of the social order can be correlated with the local routines governing talk, then, practically speaking, the analysis of talk does not require the absolute linguistic or philosophical certitude which scholarly controversialists have often demanded.¹³ It can be informative in conjunction with the larger contexts.

Nevertheless, two conditions must therefore be met for requisite transparency to be maintained. Firstly, the relevant culturally specific interactive idioms must be shown to be equally familiar to the scholar, the scholarly audience of the presentation, and the subjects under scholarly discussion, such that they can be relied on by all involved parties as mutually and tacitly accepted. This is clearly not a problem in the present case. Storytelling revivalism exists largely within the same middle-class, affluent-world anglophone culture as the present writer and the immediate academic community. A shared basic understanding of the relevant idiomatic context may reasonably be assumed. It is not claimed that the same argument could be made in the study of all ethnic or sociocultural *milieux*. Secondly, further interpretation, above this low illocutionary level of meaning, must not appeal to intuition or opacity beyond a very low level of surmise; ideally, about that level at which attributions of *request* and *refusal* in the stewardess/passenger exchange become apparent (Benson and Hughes 1983, 181ff). If the enactment of the storytelling event can be codified at this very low level of intuitively grasped illocutionary

¹³This seems not to have been attempted by the scholars cited, who, again, have apparently maintained the US disinclination to theorise socioeconomic and historical contexts, noted by Kodish (1993, 195; see above, p. 36).

implication, it can be said to have been transparently codified for all practical purposes.

These considerations narrow the epistemological gap to the point where analysis seems feasible; the next step is to find a specific analytical technique which is applicable consistently to the enactment of the storytelling event within this low level of intuitive surmise. The pilot study revealed that, contrary to original expectations, neatly demarcated structural units of interaction were unlikely to be discovered. As stated, storytelling events unfold as a sinuous interweaving of implicatures rather than a succession of rigidly demarcated segments. As reflection on the present writer's personal participant experience had revealed, it was entirely practicable - perhaps necessary - to ignore or disregard the precise sequence of communicative interactions in order to make sense of the event. It was therefore a safe assumption that a degree of indeterminacy regarding structural features such as roles or units of interaction was a necessary part of the communicative cognition necessary to events. The search for rigidly demarcated segments was therefore likely to prove futile. Subsequent reflection after the pilot study, however, had suggested another approach. This still required that storytelling events be seen as sequences of communicative acts, but it obviated the need to furnish rigidly demarcated taxonomies and analyses of sequenced units. It had already been assumed that events were unitary, linear, loosely segmented sequences of communicative acts. If it was asked specifically what each part of the sequence contributed, formally and publicly, to the forward progression of the sequence as a whole, the answers lay within a very reasonable level of illocutionary inference and opened out onto the wider social, economic and cultural landscape while preserving the necessary sense of structural looseness. That is to say: it had already been conceded that it was admissible to rely on introspection to the extent required to categorise the utterances in

Sacks' airline dialogue as request and refusal. Now it seemed apparent that every communicative act in a storytelling event could be so categorised accordingly as it contributed to the forward flow of the event -by, for example, telling a story, introducing a story, announcing an interval, and so forth - without necessarily needing to ascribe absolutely rigid boundaries or establishing absolutely rigid, prescriptive taxonomies of utterance types.

The most relevant existing theoretical underpinnings for this enterprise were pragmatics or speech act theory (van Dijk 1997 (2), 38ff, Taylor and Cameron 1987, 81). The focus of pragmatics is illocutionary: on how utterances fall "within the class ... which includes making statements, asking questions, issuing commands, giving reports, greeting and warning" (Giglioli 1972, 136); rather than what they communicate propositionally. Grice's initial premise was that conversations are formed by rational cooperation towards illocutionary ends rather than convention or experience (85 - 6) according to a number of maxims, namely, that speakers should be as informative as required and not more so (maxims of quantity), and avoid falsehood or unevidenced assertions (maxims of quality), irrelevance (maxim of relation), obscurity, ambiguity, unnecessary prolixity, and disorderliness (maxims of manner). Additionally, listeners interpret speakers' violations of maxims as purposeful, conveying unstated meanings as implicatures (van Dijk 1997 (2), 41). It is worth noting in passing that the revivalist storytelling gathering - centred as it is around fictional stories which are strictly unevidenced, irrelevant, prolix and disorderly utterances - seems to violate Grice's original maxims so systematically that it is tempting to construe it exactly as a sustained, carnivalesque implicature in Gricean terms. The sustained abandonment of everyday pragmatic constraints may have a meaning in itself.¹⁴ Later

¹⁴Possibly, it echoes the global commonwealth of tradition, which revivalists perceive to lie outside the everyday interaction of their own groups.

rationalist scholars, however, have revised Grice's basic model (Taylor and Cameron, 1987, 87ff), and understand conversation as directed towards illocutionary goals, chiefly the preservation of face in the Goffmanian sense. The speech act is a concept of sociolinguistics, which typically asks rather global questions about social relationships and status of whole speech communities (Giglioli 1972, Gumperz and Hymes 1972, 213ff, 465ff). This is certainly relevant to storytelling revivalism, wherein, although many if not most participants speak standard or near-standard English, dialect is a conscious consideration, and non-standard speaking source traditional storytellers enjoy high status. In a more local focus, the revivalistic movement might be analysed sociolinguistically as a speech community or a domain in Fishman's sense; the individual event as a social situation in Fishman's sense or a "neglected situation" in Goffman's; that is, "anywhere within which an individual will find himself accessible to the naked senses of all others who are "present," and similarly find them accessible to him," shaping speech in ways not reducible to global sociolinguistic concerns (Giglioli 1972, 61ff, 63, Gumperz and Hymes 1972, 435ff). In fact, Goffman provides an adequate vocabulary for understanding storytelling events as such, in concepts such as the gathering, or total number of those physically present, and the encounter, or the number of those sharing a joint interactive focus. Gatherings have clear, organised rules for turn-taking, and

clear rules for the initiation and termination of encounters, the entrance and departure of particular participants, the demands that an encounter can make upon its sustainers, and the decorum of space and sound it must observe relative to excluded participants ... (64)

This basic, long-established conceptual vocabulary is adequate for the specific heuristic goals. The storytelling event can be considered as a gathering, a group of people sharing a certain physical space, consisting of a single

encounter in which the whole group is oriented towards the same goal. This goal is the enactment of a sufficient, loosely subdivided sequence of communicative acts from start to finish. This loose sequence includes stories and expository links, but for the present purposes the whole sequence can be considered as a unitary, coherent, dialogic progression. The aim of analysis is to understand how the coherence of this dialogue is enacted and maintained, by considering the illocutionary purpose served by each communicative act specifically in the maintenance of the forward progression of the total sequence through time. There is no need to consider further illocutionary effects of communicative acts, which in total will presumably be complex enough to defy full analysis. All that concerns the present study is simply what each achieves in terms of expediting the forward movement of the event: how it serves to maintain the focused, unitary, linear quality that, *a priori*, distinguishes the storytelling event from background chat and renders it as an entity available for public perception and participation.

Concentration on what utterances achieve in terms of expediting the forward movement of the event fulfils the primary requirements for the study of the storytelling event, but certain secondary requirements were also acknowledged, largely for the sake of thoroughness, but also because they bore directly on the central preoccupations of research and analysis, that is the maintenance within a certain social and performative context of unitary dialogic sequence by pragmatic and illocutionary means. As argued, the storytelling event is not a purely linguistic phenomenon, and indeed has no unique features at a purely linguistic level. Like other manifestation of language, it is situated within physical, interactive, social, cultural, historical and other contexts. These considerations necessitated the elicitation of wider ethnographic data regarding the storytelling event over and above the basic series of illocutionarily charged utterances which constituted their core.

Ethnography involves the total observation and representation of a given community or setting, and aims to resolve the paradoxical needs for openness with the need for a structured experimental method (Silverman 1997, 8ff.). For the folkloristic study of talk, the obvious starting point is with the work of Hymes (Savile-Troike 1989), who categorises ethnographic information under a number of headings: participants including senders and receivers, channels, codes, settings, message forms, topics, and whole events (Giglioli, 1972, 22 - 3). Elsewhere, he develops an “etic, heuristic input to descriptions” based around the mnemonic SPEAKING (van Dijk 1997, 240, Gumperz and Hymes 1986, 58). Its elements, in order, are as follows: *setting* comprises the physical setting and the subjectively defined scene; *participants* comprises speaker, addressor, hearer, and addressee; *ends* comprises goals and outcomes of the event; *act sequence* comprises message form and content; *key* comprises tone and manner; *instrumentalities* comprises verbal, nonverbal and physical channels, and the form and varieties of speech; *norms* comprises norms of interaction and of interpretation; and *genres* is self-explanatory. This covers a range of relevant information, but the sheer volume and scope of inquiry is too large to allow clear boundaries to be set to data, and, indeed, Hymes himself regards the schema as a practical, *ad hoc* descriptive tool (58). Finally, and largely for the sake of completeness, some separate attention would have to be given to the textual and textural features of the storytelling performances themselves. As argued hitherto, the main focus of research lay less in the internal minutiae of storytelling performance than in the wider forces making it desirable and possible; but it is clearly impossible to achieve these goals, or conduct a thorough or exhaustive survey of any oral narrative *milieu*, without giving some indication of the type of stories told and the manner of their telling.

3.3.1.2 Interviews: ontology and epistemology

The second body of data required was testimony about how informants experienced, understood and categorised revivalistic storytelling. Here, again, the establishment of a clearly bounded body of data was a reasonably straightforward matter, requiring the conduct and recording of a representative sample of interviews. The selection of a sample required consideration, as described below. However, the most painstaking task was to find a suitable analytical technique. This task was complicated by the methodological strictures already acknowledged, and the origins and nature of the interview itself. Storytelling events are, so to speak, found interaction, in that they are not directly generated by the research process and their general nature is therefore more or less an observed phenomenon of the field. By contrast, the interview is directly generated by the research process, and its general nature is not so much an observed phenomenon of the field so much as a dialogue of a type and structure which will not occur outside the research process. Storytelling revivalists may talk and discuss their involvement and experience, but they do not usually interview each other as such, and when they do (as for an article in a newsletter or other publication) the interview is a rather different undertaking from the interview of academic research. This implies two facts. Firstly, the precise ways in which informants think and express themselves in an academic fieldwork interview will always necessarily be *etic*. It will be achieved in response to a questioner inescapably expressing or implying his/her own academic preoccupations, and cannot be assumed to be exactly like the ways informants would ever prefer to think and express themselves in any other context. What informants say in interview is, inescapably, a *rapprochement* between the expressed worldview of the informant and the expressed (or implied) worldview of the researcher. Secondly, and

concomitantly, the construction and conduct of the interview is not preliminary to the analytical process but an early stage of it, and the researcher must therefore take responsibility for it and apply to it all pertaining analytical strictures regarding transparency, exhaustivity, open-endedness and inductivity. Indeed, as outlined in previous chapters, the interview testimony cited by previous folklorists on participant interpretations and cognitions, though persuasive and evocative, is opaque and more than necessarily provisional precisely because it fails to take these issues openly into account. The conduct of interviews and the subsequent processing and presentation of data were therefore conceived and executed throughout as aspects of a single analytical process governed by the stated strictures relating to transparency, exhaustivity, open-endedness and inductivity.

Therefore it was necessary to bear in mind throughout this analytical process that the interview, like the storytelling event, would be a whole, negotiated, dialogue. All its constituent interactions, including the researcher's questions and the informant's responses, would be mutually influencing and interdependent. It has already been seen that, in the study of the storytelling event, a similar inclusivity redirected attention partly away from the apparent core of the proceedings - the stories themselves - and some way towards the indispensable but apparently peripheral contextualising utterances which make up the structure of the whole event. It was now apparent that, in interview, the same consideration similarly demanded that detailed attention be paid not merely to informants' testimony, but also to the apparently peripheral context within which it was uttered: the general tenor of conversation, and the implications of the researcher's specific questions. It therefore became clear that the content and tenor of questioning should be precisely nuanced and monitored, and also explicitly incorporated into the analytical method. For obvious reasons, it was impossible to exclude the researcher's agenda either

from the tenor of questions or from the interview situation. Therefore, rather than engage in the ultimately futile exercise of trying to mitigate it in interview and compensate for it in analysis, it was decided to make the research agenda as unambiguously central to questioning in interview as it would be in the study as a whole, and to use this focus itself as a heuristic tool. That is to say, questioning was to be structured unambiguously around the preoccupations so far presented, and pitched to informants as such, in a direct but controlled and monitored manner, and the analytical focus would be on how they responded to this stimulus. Care would need to be taken to ensure that informants would feel sufficiently at ease to respond freely and honestly, by, for example, accepting or rejecting the tenor or implications of questioning if they disagreed with them; the focus of analysis would be, precisely, on the ways in which they achieved this negotiation, and so expressed or implied their own worldview. Testimony would then be interpreted not as a transparent profession of emic understandings, which it could never be, but as a situated dialogic performance which emerged from these understandings. In short, interviewing was approached basically as monitored dialectic. The ultimate aim was to infer the emic worldview of informants; the means in analysis was to make as explicit and as monitored as possible, in all testimony, the shaping effects of both worldviews, the etic and the emic, the better to distinguish the two, and isolate the effects of the emic worldview on the analysed interaction. Once this was decided as the basic approach, two obligations were acknowledged. The first was to decide what, exactly, the researcher's own expressed worldview was to be; the second was to preserve the equal freedom of informants to express their own worldview as freely as possible in response; that is, to make the sociable and interpersonal context of the interview dialectic as easy and free as possible, in spite of the anxieties of potential disagreement which might result from the dialectical process. These issues will now be considered.

The best viewpoint from which to conduct interviewing was, obviously, the overall perspective of the study: the interest in defining the storytelling movement as a form of revivalism and in explaining why it is of a certain character. A return was made to first principles. There were two issues to consider. Firstly, as was already clear from the literature review and the pilot study, storytelling revivalism tends to be accompanied by certain general beliefs about the nature of traditional stories. Specifically, the tensions and issues of revivalistic appropriation are negotiated by means of ideological implications or assertions. What revivalists believe about stories is related by implication to the context-specific uses to which they seek to put them. For example, in the pilot study, the idea of the submerged commonwealth of tradition - the assumption that traditional stories are transcultural entities - legislates specifically for the possibility of appropriating tales from remote ages and foreign cultures. The content, function and context of revivalistic belief therefore required further investigation. Secondly, although it does not fully explain the fact, the existing scholarship is mostly in agreement on the point that revivalism involves an increased selfconsciousness of understanding and belief on the part of participants: a tendency to explicate and rely on ideological manifestos, to "have an intellectual rationale" rather than to be "simply stylistic" (McLeish 1993, 640). It was discovered in the pilot study that the Sidmouth storytellers acted consciously on the basis of stated intellectual rationales. These were abstracted and codified in analysis as described above. It was, however, also noted that a large degree of selective editing, rearrangement, and interpretation on the analyst's part was necessary to reduce participants' observed behaviour and expressed beliefs to neatly listable axioms. The axioms abstracted from analysis were, precisely, tangential to, embedded in and implied by the observed behaviours and interaction: they were not as structurally central in the field as they were in academic presentation. Certainly, then, as argued above, the coherent ideology

presented in the pilot study was, especially in its nuances and extended interpretations, a scholarly construct. As stated, it does not wholly reflect the actual, less systematic, more situated expressions of cognition by participants. Here, then, was significant methodological slippage, resulting in manifest ambiguity on an issue of cardinal importance. The selfconsciousness which is often held to define revivalism seemed in this case to be a scholarly imposition rather than a real feature of culture in the field.

Moreover, such slippages are widespread in the scholarship on traditional arts revivalism. In essence, they relate to tenacious methodological problems of transparency. Also, they result in the idea, plausible but rather nebulously conceived and applied, that revivalism involves a form of de pragmatism, in Marett's sense, occurring in the realm of the aesthetic - that is, the retention of a form beyond its artistic usefulness as imagined by Bausinger and Brennan Harvey. To recapitulate, this aesthetic de pragmatism is stated to result in forms being valued and cultivated not because they have intrinsic aesthetic impact, but primarily because their enactment symbolises certain extrinsic ideals which they do not directly express; usually, Herderian fantasies. This results (to speak in basic terms) in performances in which revivalists enact enjoyment as a symbolic show of support for extrinsic Herderian ideologies. As argued, this implies that revivalists primarily enjoy the selfconscious re-enactment of a desired sociocultural state, and it is the possibility for such re-enactment which primarily constitutes the attraction of revivalism, and motivates individuals to involve themselves in it. As argued above, no monograph has yet supported this general view with actual testimonial evidence about the relationship between these motives and cognitions within the phenomenology - the lived experience - of traditional arts revivalism. That is, no folklorist has yet asked a revivalist to act as an informant on this aspect of their involvement. Even recent scholars like Sobol, who take positive views

of it as a process, assume its self-evidence. The interview situation was therefore designed to test this assumption as if it were a hypothesis about the emic systems of understanding and belief which obtain in the cognitions of revivalists. It was hypothesised that storytelling was valued and cultivated by revivalists at least partly because it symbolised certain extrinsic ideals, which were capable of being expressed as intellectual rationales. As such, they possibly existed in participant's minds in some form of relationship with other engagements with the content of storytelling performances. Interviewing therefore aimed to explore the relationship between these modes of meaning coherently and accountably, and to work inductively from patterns in the resulting testimony towards a reconstruction of what may be termed the revivalistic interpretative phenomenology: the way in which revivalists experience particular situated performances, and particularly the ways in which they understand their content.

There are thus two issues. On the one hand, there is the issue of basic propositional content of revivalists' wider beliefs and understandings regarding storytelling and the whole business of participation in a storytelling movement: what they see as the larger place of storytelling within the wider weave of history and culture. This, however, is not in itself what is meant when scholars distinguish revivalism as unusually selfconscious or rationalised. As has already been seen, any tradition might, and many narrative traditions palpably do, articulate some such implicit or vestigial sense of their own place in history and culture. As noted, the generic Bahamian term *old-story* is an example. So is the widespread tendency noted by Thompson and Röhrich (Bottigheimer 1986) for Indo-European folktales to preserve a discernible (though not precisely conceived) atavistic ambience, or otherwise to claim or imply the sanction of age. What exercises scholars is rather that, as Bausinger states, "revivals" are folk culture in which a certain selfconscious

ideal of folk culture itself is a shaping force operating with unusual strength and fundamental defining significance. In crude terms, the idea of depragmatisation suggested by Bausinger, Brennan Harvey, Marett and other scholars specifically imagines revivalists investing their self-locations in history and culture with greater perceived significance than source tradition-bearers invest theirs. This implies that revivalists attach a high degree of importance to abstract values and ideologies of the place of the “revived” art-form in the world at large. In basic terms, revivalists are distinguished from source tradition-bearers by Pilkington’s example (1989, 365 - 6): they care less whether or not traditional art is seen to be good, as long as it is seen to be old - or traditional, or pure, rural, oral, or otherwise validated without reference to aesthetic criteria. If this distinction is applied to analysis, it becomes clear that the bare content of emic beliefs about the wider nature of tradition must certainly be noted. But, also, the manner in which this content is internalised and structured, and specifically the emic value accorded it, is a separate and more significant variable.

An example of research directed towards eliciting testimony about informants’ understandings is Luria’s research in semi-literate peasant communities in Uzbekistan and Kirghizia in the 1930s, cited in Ong (1982, 53ff):

In Luria’s fieldwork, requests for definitions of even the most concrete objects met with resistance. ‘Try to explain to me what a tree is.’ ‘Why should I? Everyone knows what a tree is, they don’t need me telling them,’ replied one illiterate peasant, aged 22. ... ‘Say you go to a place where there are no cars. What will you tell people [a car is]?’ ‘If I go, I’ll tell them that buses have four legs, chairs in front for people to sit on, a roof for shade and an engine. But when you get right down to it, I’d say: “If you get in a car and go for a drive, you’ll find out.”’ The respondent enumerates some features but turns back ultimately to personal, situational experience ... By contrast, a literate collective-farm worker, aged 30: ‘It’s made in a factory ... It uses fire and steam ...’ Although he was not well-informed, he did make an attempt to define a car.

To illustrate: taking as an example the last informant, the 30-year-old farm worker: this testimony reveals at least two things about his understanding of cars. Firstly, there is its bare propositional content: he considers that it is made in a factory and uses fire and steam, and so forth; and these statements certainly approximate to attributes of a motor vehicle. Secondly, however, there is a quality relating to the organisation and expression of content, which is revealed by contrasting the underlying assumptions of the informant's answer with those of the researcher's question. This quality which may be termed the modality of testimony. This is what really interested Luria, and also Ong. It is the quality which results from the informant's understanding the mere point of the question, and agreeing to list the perceived characteristics of a car, without simply deferring to concrete experience. For Ong, this willingness to attempt abstracted lexical definitions demonstrates literate organisation and expression of cognition, contrasting with the oral mind's preference for concrete experience which, in the quoted extract, leads others simply to refuse to define trees. For Ong, the analytical value of the interview therefore lies not in its bare content, but rather in its modality: he is less interested in what peasants believe about cars than he is about the way in which these beliefs are understood and expressed. Ong concludes not that these subjects were well or ill informed about motor cars, but that their thinking and argumentation about cars have a mixture of literate and oral modalities which varies from individual to individual. Ong's wider theories about orality and literacy are not now under discussion, but the distinction between the content and modality of testimony, and the analytical value of this distinction, is directly applicable to the present study.

In the present study, questioning aimed to cover both issues. One intention was to solicit the propositional content of revivalists' wider ideals and understandings regarding storytelling and the storytelling movement. The

second, more important intention was to assess the modality of this testimony in the sense exemplified: the extent to which wider ideals were directly and selfconsciously expressible, and by extension the extent to which they were central to participants' motivations for involvement. This sense, if found, would correspond to what scholars have previously assumed of traditional arts revivalists' attitudes to their involvement. If revivalist informants happily and fluently described wider rationalisations as the primary motive for involvement, this would justify the assumption that revivalism is rationalised and selfconscious in the ways described. In either case, something would be learned about the relationship between direct experience and abstract, selfconscious rationalisation within the phenomenology of participants in revivalism.

Questions were therefore constructed so as to prompt specific approaches regarding the content and modality of response. As regards modality, it was relatively clear and easy to formulate questions implying abstract, selfconscious, distanced rationale, rather than direct experience or unexamined reminiscence. This was accordingly done. As regards content, however, there was nothing to be gained by prompting or suggesting specific ideas more than was necessary. The most revealing testimony on the content of specific beliefs or ideas would be that of which the content was not directly solicited in questioning, and it was best to maximise the freedom of informants to respond in whatever way they thought fit. The general tenor of questions was therefore to be pointed with regard to modality, but rather more open with regard to content. Questions would openly imply that storytelling could be discussed and rationalised, but they would not suggest what the content or conclusions of such discussion might be, beyond the minimum necessary to prompt a response. The informant who would be most comfortable with the interview would be the informant who had consciously reflected on the nature and value

of the storytelling movement in the wider weave of culture and history, and was interested in discussing it in abstract, discursive, loosely analytical terms which departed from direct evocations of experience. It is worth mentioning in passing that I myself, as a participant in storytelling revivalism, was interested in these more abstract questions, comfortable with a rationalised modality of expression, and also aware of the artistic weaknesses which it might be used to palliate or excuse. I was familiar with the reflective interstitial chat of the kind recorded in the pilot study, and the interviewing strategy adopted seemed to me to be a fairly seamless extension of this habit of mind. I expected that informants would feel similarly at home with a degree of abstracted, rationalised discussion; the only new ground I expected to break was to fix more precisely the relationship between direct experience and rationalised abstraction in the way informants expressed themselves on these issues.

An interview schedule (see Appendix 2) was drafted, in three sections. The first was simply biographical. The second covered informants' current repertoire and involvement, if any. The third section was the central test, a series of thirteen loosely conceived topic areas. These were derived from the axioms of the pilot study, but they were deliberately phrased in a rather open-ended way. However, a number of questions were rather more pointed, for specific reasons as stated below. Questions in the third section therefore generally resembled Luria's to some extent, being relatively open regarding propositional content, and relatively closed regarding modality in the terms stated. The topic areas, with their constituent questions, are now described; they are arranged thematically, rather than in the order in which they occur and are numbered in the schedule.

Section 1: Basic definitions

- (1a) *What is storytelling for you?*
- (1b) *In what basic ways, if any, does storytelling stand apart from other ways of communicating?*
- (1c) *Do you think about it in general terms, or do you just do it?*

Section 9: Basic definitions (continued)

- (9) *Is storytelling new?*

Questions 1(a) and (b) were deliberately very plainly phrased, giving little clue as to the possible terms of any answer. Underlying them was an awareness of the distinction between abstract and experiential modalities of definition noted by Luria, and presented by Ong in the quotation above. The aim was to see how informants chose to define this central term: if they would dialectically present it as a reified, rationalised, abstract entity in the terms which the revivalistic context would seem to suggest. Section 1 was open regarding content, but pointed regarding modality: that is, no specific qualities were suggested, but the idea that storytelling could be discussed as an abstract, reified entity was clearly implied. Similarly, question 1(c) invited informants to reflect on their own propensity towards selfconscious rationales or theorisation.

The aim of section 9 was to test the boundaries of informants' basic conceptualisations of storytelling and the perceived strength of the conscious links between "revival" and the traditions of the immemorial past. Clearly, as would be generally known, the revivalistic movement is a recent historical

development, and also it is discovered by most informants in adult life. In these senses, revivalistic storytelling is new. However, informants might assume and argue something effectively like a basic, Bausingerian ideology of revival. That is, they might understand revivalistic storytelling rather as the present writer's own early experience and the pilot study had suggested it might be understood: as the immemorial commonwealth of tradition resurfacing through a fractured veneer of modernity, in unbroken underlying continuity with ancient and global narrative traditions. If so, they would tend to understand storytelling, simply as such, as old. The question was deliberately phrased in plain, unexplicated terms, so as to test the strength of response and bring out the basic cognitions at work without directly prompting any answer.

Section 2: The point of storytelling

- (2) *What ought storytelling to achieve?*
- (2a) *What can it do?*
- (2b) *What are its strengths?*
- (2c) *What is the point of storytelling*
- (2ci) *Generally?*
- (2cii) *In the here and now, i.e. in late 20th century Britain?*

Section 3: The point of storytelling (continued)

- (3) *What are the ethics of storytelling?*
- (3a) *What are the storyteller's responsibilities:*
- (3ai) *To him/herself?*
- (3aii) *To the listener?*
- (3aiii) *To the story?*
- (3aiv) *To the source of the story, the individual and/or culture from which it originally comes?*

Section 8: Storytelling in contemporary culture and society

- (8) *How does storytelling fit into contemporary culture and society?*
 (8a) *What can storytelling offer society?*
 (8b) *What can contemporary culture contribute to storytelling?*

The aim of these sections was directly to solicit general intellectual rationales. Again, many of the questions were open regarding content, and pointed regarding modality: the possible content of such rationales was not hinted at, but the questions clearly suggest that they exist: that storytelling can in some way be explicitly rationalised and justified in sociocultural terms. In section 3, questions were more explicitly pointed towards the sense of responsibility uncovered in the pilot study: the storyteller's duty to maintain personal integrity, for example, by not adopting fictive personas or dialects during performance. Sections 2 and 8 were less pointed, but nevertheless oriented generally towards the wider sociocultural context to which revivalistic rationales usually refer.

Section 4: The ethics of appropriation

- (4) *When and how far is or isn't it permissible to copy or adopt someone else's stories, style of storytelling, or ideas?*
 (4a) *To what extent is it possible for an individual or group or culture to "own" a story, or a style?*

Section 7: The ethics of appropriation (continued)

- (7) *How ought a storyteller to approach stories from a different culture?*
 (7a) *Do stories go beyond cultural boundaries, or boundaries of time?*
 (7b) *Is it ever possible to faithfully tell a story from a different culture?*

(7bi) *How can it be done?*

(7c) *How would you deal with unacceptable features, such as sexism or racism, in stories from other times and cultures?*

These sections again were rather more pointed in content as well as in modality. They were designed to explore the ethics of appropriation. Appropriation of repertoire items is a widespread and necessary but potentially problematic feature of traditional arts revivalism. From the later 1950s, folk music revivalism was divided by controversy surrounding Ewan MacColl's insistence that singers should sing material only from their own culture of national origin. From earlier participation, it was known that later storytelling revivalists were similarly aware of problems regarding appropriation, both within revivalism (as by storytellers appropriating material from professional colleagues; see Haggarty 1995) and by revivalists from source traditions. The Sidmouth storytellers of the pilot study had displayed some sense that stories had to be appropriated from source traditions and adapted in some way, that this involved mediation between individuals, groups and cultures, and that there was a right and wrong way to do this. These questions suggested that this was the case, and that the issues were available for general, abstract discussion.

Clearly, the slippages and barriers of transcultural appropriation would be particularly difficult in questions of ethical and moral conviction. Just as Edwardian librarian storytellers sought to awaken the moral conscience of their young charges (Shedlock 1951, 125; see below, Chapter 4), so the later history of storytelling revivalism has been influenced by liberal disquiet and even censorship of the perceived sexism and racism of traditional tales in their

unmediated form (Mellor, Hemming and Leggett 1984; see below, Chapter 4), and something of this attitude has been recovered in the pilot study (see above, p. 139). Indeed, the twentieth-century liberalisation and secularisation of the educated story-appropriator's conscience - ideological shifts from female passivity to female empowerment, or from Christian pedagogy to depth psychology - has not affected the underlying consistency with which source-traditional texts continue to be adapted in appropriation to conform with middle-class preoccupations. This question was intended to show whether the fragmentary evidence so far recovered was readily to be expressed as a selfconscious rationale.

Section 5: Obligations

(5) *What MUST a storyteller do?*

Section 6: Obligations (continued)

(6) *What must a storyteller NOT do?*

(6a) *Read aloud from a book?*

(6b) *Memorise a set text from writing?*

(6c) *Plagiarise?*

(6d) *Fail to credit or otherwise respect his/her sources?*

These sections, like section 1, were designed to be as open as possible in content, but fairly pointed in modality. They suggested that storytellers had certain obligations which were available for abstracted discussion. The basic question was open; subsidiary questions prompted a sense of what these might be. These were, firstly, attitudes to source traditions, appropriation and

adaptation of the stories of other individuals and cultures, and secondly, performative practices which, as a participant, I personally understood many storytellers to frown on, such as reading aloud from text or reciting from rote memory. The intention was, again, to see how readily such norms and idioms were available to informants to be expressed as selfconscious rationales.

Section 10: Hierarchy and organisation

- (10) *Does storytelling need to be taught?*
 (10a) *By whom?*

Section 11: Hierarchy and organisation (continued)

- (11) *Is it okay for a storyteller to want to be a "superstar"?*
 (11a) *In what ways can the storyteller's ego affect his/her storytelling?*
 (11b) *In what ways can egoism affect the storytelling scene?*
 (11bi) *Is this good, or bad, or "good in parts"?*

These sections were designed to explore the implications of the hierarchies of revivalistic storytelling observed in the pilot study. As the evidence has already hinted, hierarchical modes of organisation are of great practical significance in storytelling revivalism. Revivalistic storytelling is conducted and taught through clubs, workshops and other semi-formal structures dependent on hierarchies. There are other status hierarchies within storytelling which are less functional in nature. There are fully professional, semi-professional and non-professional storytellers. Within the professional body, some storytellers have more experience, command larger fees, perform longer and more ambitious tales in more prestigious and conducive settings, and/or are more admired and emulated than others. These sections were designed to explore responses to these facts. Section 10 was additionally designed to

explore preferences regarding the formality or informality of transmission of the content and skills of revivalistic storytelling culture. Section 11 explored whether informants would directly espouse the tendency to mitigate the open expression of status which Mackinnon noted in folk music revivalists. Also, like all questions, these presupposed and suggested that these issues were available for abstracted discussion, and thus encouraged the formulation of conscious and selfconscious rationales.

Section 12: Disagreements and dissatisfactions

- (12) *Consider for a moment your ideal for a perfect storytelling scene. In what ways does the contemporary scene match up to your ideals?*
- (12a) *In what ways does it fail?*
- (12b) *Is anything being done to cure its failings?*
- (12c) *How successful or influential are these attempts?*
- (12d) *Do you think most people share a common viewpoint and hopes for storytelling in Britain in the future, or is there widespread disagreement on the way it should go?*
- (12e) *Do you think storytelling events could be structured better?*
- (12ei) *Do you ever find storytellers or storytelling events offputting, intimidating or discouraging?*
- (12eii) *What could be done about this?*
- (12eii(1)) *Do you think about it in general terms, or do you just do it?*

Apart from prompting abstracted rationales in the normal way, this section was simply designed to probe disagreements and dissonances in the storytelling scene. It is clear from the history of revivalistic storytelling (see Chapter 4) that there have been larger disagreements and tensions within the movement. It is also possible that existing storytelling institutions might also incubate disagreements within participant groups. The hierarchical structures observed could lead to the marginalisation of the wishes of subgroups in order to preserve the observed coherence of the larger group.

This methodology assumes that informants are capable of self-reporting accurately and reliably on these issues; that, when questioned about their primary motivations for involvement in revivalism, they can be trusted to know and state this. In other words, the methodology places a high degree of trust in informants' own judgements, opinions, and introspections, and in their ability and willingness to express these. Before proceeding, an objection to this assumption must be considered. It is possible that the meanings of narrative culture in this case are either unconscious, or implied, or otherwise resistant to direct or open expression. Indeed, many mostly allegorical readings of narrative and narrative culture depend on similar assumptions. Imaginative fictions - including persons, places and events within tale-worlds, but including also, in the present case, romantic nostalgic ideologies - are often explained not as primarily imaginative constructs with fictive referents but as indirect expressions of socioeconomic relationships, psychological states, and other extraneous realities which resist direct expression. This is the basic premise of a great deal of scholarship. There are four possibilities to consider. Either informants are capable of self-reporting reliably on their own inner understandings and beliefs; or these beliefs and interpretations are held and applied unconsciously, preventing their direct, conscious expression; or informants will purposefully misrepresent the situation, out of a desire to preserve face or to avoid the violation of taboos; or they are simply insufficiently articulate to accurately express the reality of the situation. In choosing between these possibilities, it should be borne in mind that, to the folklorist, the folk should have the benefit of any doubt that cannot be excluded. If folklorists' populist and centrifugal instincts have anything to contribute, this contribution consists in a principled respect and trust for the culture, insights and experiences of the folk themselves. There is no reason to suspend this vocational habit in the present case. However, there remain three possible grounds for not taking informants' testimony at face value in the

manner required by the modality of questioning outlined above: informants' own ignorance and unconsciousness; informants' duplicity; and limits on informants' linguistic and expressive capabilities. These are certainly possibilities which must be taken as realities if positive evidence can be adduced. These objections are reconsidered in the light of the evidence in Chapter 7 below.

3.3.1.3 Historical development of storytelling revivalism: ontology and epistemology

The third and final body of data required was information relating to the global sociocultural and historical quality and development of the storytelling movement in England and Wales. This topic area was too large for concepts of bounded data sets, transparency and exhaustive analysis to be realistically applicable. Instead, the task was approached as a historian: to obtain from influential individuals and institutions as large a body as possible of documentary evidence and testimony about the development of the movement, and to hope to collate these data inductively into a coherent and accurate narrative. The methodology of the main research project was now conceptually complete. There were to be two bounded, exhaustively analysed corpora of audiotape recorded talk. Firstly, there would be data relating to the analysis of events, that is, tapes of storytelling events, analysed as illocutionary structures. Secondly, there would be data relating to the analysis of interviews as monitored dialectic exchanges between a questioner and informant. Also, these data were to be contextualised within necessarily more loosely bounded ethnographic observation at storytelling events, and descriptive and historical data relating to the global sociocultural, economic and historical background. This yielded three broad research agendas: the analysis of events, the analysis of interviews, and the descriptive and historical

agenda.¹⁵ The next task is to narrate how this three-part plan was put into practice.

3.3.2 Fieldwork

3.3.2.1 Descriptive and historical agenda: fieldwork

Research was planned and begun early in 1995. The first step was additional exploratory fieldwork, undertaken to ascertain the scale, extent and history of storytelling revivalism and plan the scope of analytical research. This line of research quickly grew to encompass the whole descriptive and historical research agenda. Personal contacts and known storytelling institutions were listed, from participant experience and pilot fieldwork, including storytellers and institutions in (working broadly southwards and eastwards) Cumbria, Newcastle, Manchester, West Yorkshire, Sheffield, Lincolnshire, Birmingham, Nottingham, Leicester, Norfolk, Cardiff, Shropshire, Gloucestershire, Worcestershire, Devon, London, Essex, Rochester, as well as Scotland, Ireland and south Wales. The next step was to work from this towards a more complete picture. Initial contacts were made with storytellers in Shropshire and London, the two major centres of public adult participatory storytelling: the monthly club and annual festival on Wenlock Edge, whose members I personally knew from Sidmouth festival, and the London Crick Crack Club, known from its 1993 countrywide storytelling tour and its annual storytelling festival at St Donat's Arts Centre in south Wales. Through interviews and correspondence, documents were sought relating to the history of revivalist storytelling, publicity, correspondence, and so forth, and personal testimony of involvement and narratives of wider developments. From January to April 1995, Sheffield storytelling events were recorded, and four Sheffield-

¹⁵ These headings were used in cataloguing fieldwork holdings. See p. 211.

based storytellers and a number of professional storytellers interviewed. These included the late Richard Walker, a founder of Shropshire's Tales at the Edge and the Festival at the Edge; and Ben Haggarty, of London's Crick Crack Club; Michael Dacre of Devon; and Pat Ryan, a professional storyteller of US origin, based in Northern Ireland.

The initial intention had been to pursue descriptive and historical fieldwork as an adjunct to analytical fieldwork, but this aim was revised because the scope of the subject and the volume of descriptive and historical material were too great. Revivalistic storytelling proved to be much older and much more widespread than had originally been anticipated. To complicate matters, participants' awareness of the history of the movement was generally fragmented and decentralised. Tales at the Edge, for example, was a highly significant institution, whose impact was evident to me personally, but significant practitioners elsewhere in the UK might never have heard of it. The gaps in one person's testimony were disguised, because each informant would tend not to express awareness of the fragmentary nature of their own knowledge; testimony of the movement's historical development would seem complete in individual accounts, but would in fact be fragmented and partial. Therefore, from April 1995, fieldwork attended exclusively to historical research.

Data collection began with the Crick Crack Club archive. Here copies were obtained of the listings diaries for the storytelling newsletter *Facts and Fiction* quarterly, published from 1991. These listed dates, times, and contact details for storytelling events throughout the British Isles, mainly in England and Wales, throughout the early 1990s, and provided promoters' names and telephone contacts. All these promoters were contacted by telephone. The nature and scope of the research was briefly explained, and a postal address

and permission to write obtained. To each a letter was sent requesting written accounts of correspondents' personal involvement in storytelling and their own projects, and of wider developments as they perceived them, with copies of any relevant supplementary documentation. The intention was also to continue tape recorded interviewing. Intuitive decisions were made, as research progressed, as to whether a particular individual's career in storytelling seemed significant enough to warrant a tape recorded interview. Interviews with thirteen individuals were arranged personally or by telephone in this way, and conducted in person at the informants' home or workplace, or, in one case, a Sheffield pub.

To organise data as it was collected, a system of geographically defined research areas was created, covering the entire United Kingdom. Most research areas corresponded roughly to the post-1974 counties of England, with single areas for Scotland, Ireland, and Wales, and a single research area combining Northumberland and Tyne and Wear. Initially, data on each research area comprised a list of all storytelling events known to have occurred in the area, abstracted from the *Facts and Fiction* listings and from other sources as they were obtained through correspondence and in interview. The volume of data obtained was substantial, and, therefore, descriptive and historical research continued early into 1996, largely to the exclusion of other research priorities.

Interviewing and telephone and postal correspondence were conducted largely between March 1995 and April 1996. Forty-six letters were written, to professional, semi-professional and amateur storytellers, promoters, arts administrators, academics and other storytelling activists. Forty-one of these responded positively, some very generously. Fourteen individuals were interviewed: Eileen Colwell and Grace Hallworth, librarians who had

pioneered proto-revivalistic and revivalistic library storytelling from the early and mid-twentieth century onwards; Ben Haggarty, Jenny Pearson, Mary Medlicott, Jennie Ingham, and Hugh Lupton, pioneers of revivalistic storytelling in London and southern England in the 1980s; Steve Dearden and Bill Paton, local arts funding officers who had given grant aid to storytelling in the Sheffield area; Susie Doncaster, founder of a storytelling club in the West Midlands; David Ambrose, director of St Donat's Arts Centre, venue of the annual Beyond the Border storytelling festival; Ashley Ramsden, head of drama at Emerson College in Surrey, a Steiner adult education centre which ran annual summer schools and symposia for storytellers; and Tony Bennett, an Irish architect based in Manchester who had supported Irish bands on the London live music scene as a storyteller during the 1970s. By January 1996 a document archive of 461 items was collected, including directories of storytellers, publicity for storytellers and events, programmes for events, mailings, newsletters, magazines, press clippings, reports, discussion papers and publications, private correspondence, and other miscellaneous and often ephemeral documents. 161 items related to London and south east England. A further 151 related to events, groups and institutions with which I personally had some contact. The archive therefore seemed slightly biased towards the metropolitan centre and/or towards my own personal sphere of movement, so a second circular letter was sent to all contributors pointing this out, and soliciting further contributions. But little more was forthcoming, apart from some extra material from Shropshire. It seemed that historical research had achieved as much as it could.

3.3.2.2 Event observation and analysis: fieldwork

Here three categories of data were required. The first was a record of storytelling events as linear sequences of communicative acts. The second was

ethnographic data regarding the settings of these sequences. The third was data regarding wider socioeconomic and sociocultural contexts influencing the personnel and conduct of the event. Analytical event observation required a sample of sufficient volume and workable scale. By late 1995, descriptive and historical research had yielded a fairly comprehensive awareness of revivalist storytelling institutions and settings in England and Wales. These included varying types of settings: formal performance storytelling in a range of public, civic and theatrical contexts; more informal participatory vernacular performance, and more nebulously, but significantly for professional storytellers' workloads, a range of private and institutional contexts, in education between primary and postgraduate, and in other services to groups of all ages, in therapy, healing and alternative spirituality. All of these had to be considered in descriptive and historical terms. However, the analytical focus continued to be restricted to participatory storytelling clubs, for three reasons. Firstly, and most importantly, these seemed to be the central institution of revivalistic storytelling in the mid-1990s in terms of volume and scale of activity: over thirty clubs were identified, meeting at least monthly, and involving substantial participatory groups. Formal theatrical storytelling performance at festivals and other performing arts venues was not occurring on this sustained scale. Secondly, of all the relevant institutions, participatory clubs most preserved a sense of group culture, and a sociable, vernacular ambience; thus, they were most directly concerned with the incipient folk culture of storytelling revivalism in its collective and socially cohesive aspects, insofar as this existed. Thirdly, storytelling club events were most like the events observed in the pilot study and were most likely to yield answers to the questions raised.

It was now necessary to consider in detail how the storytelling club event could best be observed and recorded. Clearly, to adopt Fine (1984), the most

important sensory channels involved in revivalistic storytelling performance were the auditory and the visual, in that order. The centrepiece of proceedings was speech, accompanied by applause, laughter, and some music and song. For this, auditory recording equipment was readily available. Co-occurring alongside this was more problematic visual input: movement, gesture, facial expression, dress, and the selection and modification of dedicated performing space. The use of a video camera was briefly considered, but was deemed to be too intrusive. Instead, it was decided to restrict electronic recording to audiotape, and instead to make written records of visual aspects of the interaction. It seemed logical to incorporate into these written records an initial survey of data on global and demographic issues such as age, gender and ethnicity. An event observation sheet was drafted (see Appendix 3) and tested in one meeting of the monthly Shropshire storytelling club Tales at the Edge, two meetings of the Sheffield club Yarns, Tales and Lies, and one other Sheffield event. The draft was unsatisfactory in minor respects: section 2, "The Audience," was too small, and notes on the size and composition of the audience were rather cramped, and section 3, "Event Structure," reduplicated information that would have been apparent from the audiotape. These faults were corrected, and the redesigned event observation sheet was used in the main fieldwork project (see Appendix 4). The revised sheet covered three topic areas: the design and layout of the room; the basic ethnographic record of the visual and other inaudible aspects of the storytelling event; and an impressionistic survey of demographic and sociocultural variables in the participant group. This survey was later correlated with the questionnaire returns in search of quantitative data on the participant body.

It remained to consider the socioeconomic and cultural contexts of revivalistic storytelling in greater depth. It was decided to distribute a questionnaire to event participants to obtain basic demographic and socioeconomic data.

Again, this seemed a useful opportunity to obtain other data, so the final version of the questionnaire was drafted with three aims. The primary aim was to establish an approximately accurate quantitative demographic and sociocultural profile of the participant groups at the events under observation: to examine extrinsic variables such as age, gender, ethnicity, religious, political and ideological affiliation, hobbies and interests, and educational and socioeconomic status. A secondary aim was to obtain data on variables such as the frequency of individual attendance at different types of storytelling events, the relative incidence of performance as opposed to listening in the individual participant's pattern of behaviour, and the resulting patterns in the behaviour of the participant body as a whole. The third aim was something of an afterthought, rather incidental to the main purpose of the questionnaire. It was to obtain brief written testimonials canvassing participants' underlying cognitive, subjective and biographical experience, by asking fairly open questions and leaving space for responses up to the length of a short paragraph. This would permit a more general survey of the kind of issues which interviewing would cover with greater focus and depth (see Appendix 5). The overall result was a three-element analytical event observation strategy, comprising the audiotape recordings, the event observation sheet and the questionnaire.

The total number of clubs discovered was forty, forming a network spreading across all parts of England, from Kent and the West Country to Newcastle and Carlisle and into south Wales. This had apparently grown rapidly during the early 1990s from centres in Shropshire and London. Twenty-eight of these clubs were active in 1995 - 96. Mackinnon's ethnographic research had involved single visits to thirty folk clubs. One shortcoming of this method was that it did not yield a view of individual clubs over time, or of the patterns of stability and change which characterised their meetings month by month.

Rather than visit a large number of clubs once, it was therefore decided to visit a sample of smaller clubs repeatedly over several months. The final figure decided on was four gatherings each of four clubs, totalling sixteen separate events. Four clubs was a small enough number for a manageable volume of data and research workload, but large enough to contain a representative spread. It now remained to determine a representative sample of storytelling clubs for observation and analysis.

For purposes of selection, three variables were considered in the character and quality of the clubs. The first was age: the aim was to compare long established clubs with new ones, to detect any relationship between the age of the club and the norms and idioms which it observed. The second was the setting, considered largely as urban or rural. The third was the club's regional location regarding the country as a whole; it seemed, for example, that there were differences in approach and ambience between the London and the regional scene. It was worthwhile obtaining data to see if this was the case, and to incorporate as wide a variation as possible of regional location and character. London storytelling was the core from which the scene had largely developed, as it were the ur-form of storytelling revivalism, and had to be represented. Otherwise, of the thirty active clubs, nine others were identified within reasonable distance of Sheffield, which representatively covered the spread of variables identified. These are given in the following Figure 5.

Fig. 5. Table of storytelling clubs considered for event observation

<i>Research Area (1995)</i>	<i>Club</i>	<i>Setting</i>	<i>Age of club</i>
South Yorks. (Sheffield)	Yarns, Tales and Lies	Urban	3 years
West Midlands (B'ham)	Brummagem Blarney	Urban	3 years
Shropshire	Tales at the Edge	Rural	6 years
Tyneside (Newcastle)	A Bit Crack	Urban	4 years
London	The Camden Ceilidh	Urban	3 years
Nottingham	Tall Tales at the Trip	Urban	6 months
Leicester	Lies and Legends	Urban	3 years
Greater Manchester	Stories at the 8th Day	Urban	6 months
W. Yorks. (Hebden Bridge)	Tales at the Wharf	Small town	6 months

A shortlist of five clubs was drawn from these nine, so that the requisite number of four would remain even if one club declined to participate. The four clubs selected were those in Shropshire, Tyneside, London, Nottingham, and West Yorkshire. This sample contained clubs which had been in existence for periods ranging from six months to six years, in a variety of locations including cities, the countryside, and a small town, within a regional spread from London to northern England, and from the Welsh borders to the east coast. The club organisers were contacted either by telephone or in person. The three-part event observation strategy was explained (audiotape recording, note-taking, questionnaire distribution), and co-operation requested. Through research and socially, I was now personally acquainted with most of the club organisers: Richard Walker and Mike Rust of Shropshire's Tales at the Edge, Roy Dyson of Nottingham's Tall Tales at the Trip, Alan Sparkes of Hebden Bridge's Tales at the Wharf, and Jenny Pearson of London's Camden Ceilidh. All of these readily offered their co-operation. I was not personally acquainted with anybody at the Newcastle club A Bit Crack, and the organiser, Chris Bostock, expressed some reservations about the research strategy over the

phone. I rested content with the four remaining clubs. Event observation was planned for the period from February to May 1996 inclusive, for four visits to each monthly club. At each event an audiotape recording and an event observation sheet would be completed, and questionnaires would be distributed at two successive events at each club.

I attended but did not record Tall Tales at the Trip in February 1996, and was unable to attend Tales at the Wharf. The other two events were attended and recorded as intended. Fieldwork in March went smoothly, and there was an extra event at Tall Tales at the Trip, a special long performance by the visiting Devon-based storytellers Michael and Wendy Dacre. Similarly, in April, there was an extra event at the Camden Ceilidh for April Fool's day, featuring a special performance by the veteran professional storyteller Roberto Lagnado. Otherwise, all went as expected. Finally, to make up the event missed at the beginning of fieldwork, I attended an additional gathering of Tales at the Wharf in June. Events were therefore recorded as in Figure 6.

Fig. 6. Analytical event observation calendar

February 1996

12th	Tales at the Edge	Shropshire
19th	The Camden Ceilidh	London

March 1996

11th	Tales at the Edge	Shropshire
12th	Tall Tales at the Trip	Nottingham
18th	The Camden Ceilidh	London
19th	Tall Tales at the Trip	Nottingham (extra event)
29th	Tales at the Wharf	Hebden Bridge, West Yorkshire

April 1996

1st	The Camden Ceilidh	London	(extra event)
9th	Tall Tales at the Trip	Nottingham	
15th	Tales at the Edge	Shropshire	
26th	Tales at the Wharf	Hebden Bridge	
29th	The Camden Ceilidh	London	

May 1996

13th	Tales at the Edge	Shropshire	
14th	Tall Tales at the Trip	Nottingham	
20th	The Camden Ceilidh	London	
31st	Tales at the Wharf	Hebden Bridge	

June 1996

28th	Tales at the Wharf	Hebden Bridge	
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Event observation covered seventeen events: four for each club, and an extra for the Camden Ceilidh. However, technical difficulties prevented adequate tape recording of the March meeting of Tales at the Edge. The fragmentary tape recording of this event was therefore excluded from the audiotape archive. This left a sample of sixteen events. The final list was rather different from that originally envisaged, but not substantially different for analytical purposes.

During fieldwork, a number of strategies were adopted to mitigate the effects of the presence of a researcher with a live microphone. Firstly, each club was visited in advance and, with the organiser's co-operation, an announcement

was made to the participant group explaining the nature and scope of research, and a similar announcement was made during early visits. Permission was sought to record proceedings and it was made clear that I would switch the tape off if any storyteller felt nervous about being recorded.¹⁶ Also, I told a story at each event, with the audiotape recorder running, to offset the voyeuristic implications of a researcher with notebook and tape recorder. In fact, most participants seemed to have no difficulty at all with the presence of a researcher, and I was personally surprised, and pleased, by the lack of effect which audio recording made either to performers or to listeners. As far as I could sense, there was effectively no difference in tone or ambience between the events recorded and ordinary events at the same club. There were various announcements caused by and relating to the research, but the general sense of occasion seemed entirely to subsume any tension resulting from the live microphone.

The bulk of questionnaires were distributed at each club in March and April. In March I stood at the door at the end of each event and handed out copies to all participants as they left, with a stamped envelope. In April I did the same, but gave copies only to those who stated that they had not received them the previous month. In this way 166 copies were handed out. Exactly 100 were returned in the following months, mostly through the post, but some in person, a response rate of 60.2%. The largest number of responses, 40, was from Nottingham's Tall Tales at the Trip, followed by Tales from the Edge at 27 and Tales at the Wharf at 18, with the Camden Ceilidh returning the fewest copies at 13, and two returns with the provenance unmarked. This per club

¹⁶ This happened twice. At event 8, the Camden Ceilidh meeting on 1st April 1996 (SCSA/AE/13), the featured guest, Roberto Lagnado, did not wish to be tape-recorded. The whole second half of the event was therefore recorded by notes only. On the other, a floor performer who was reciting a poem of her own composition preferred not to be taped. This occurred at event 17, the meeting of Tales at the Wharf on 28th June 1996 (SCSA/AE/32a).

return rate was proportional to the relative participant group sizes for each club.

3.3.2.3 Analytical interviews: fieldwork

Test interviews were conducted with several storytelling colleagues in Sheffield. It proved an impractically large task to cover the whole interview schedule exhaustively with each informant; with one test informant it took three complete evenings (SCSA/P/31, 32, 40, 41, 42). It was also found that some questions, although not apparently difficult for test interviewees to understand as such, gave pause for thought, and it seemed possible that the interview format might seem intimidatingly inquisitorial. This was the first intimation that the interview schedule sometimes prompted informants away from their habitual or preferred modality of thought about the issues, and, without prejudice to the basic fieldwork strategy, this needed to be taken into account methodologically. Several options were considered. An attempt was made to conduct the interview without a copy of the schedule in my hand, but maintaining coherence within and between interviews proved impossible under these circumstances. In response to these discoveries, the interviewing approach was modified in a number of ways. The schedule was treated not as an exhaustive list of questions but as a rough guide for topic areas, and the speed of progress through the schedule was increased. Similar or reiterative questions were omitted, and less time was spent exploring and reflecting on individual answers. A copy of the schedule was visible to the interviewer at all times, but not to the informant. Also - after considering that Luria had presented his cognitive tests, quoted above, as tea-house riddles (Ong 1982, 49 - 56) - it was decided to present the more cognitive and abstract questions in a more playful spirit, like an intellectual game or puzzle, an invitation to perform in risk-free space, in a speculative spirit. Finally, it was decided to

preserve informants' anonymity in the final presentation. It seemed unfair to risk driving informants into unfamiliar cognitive territory, and then publicly attributing their improvised and probably contingent responses.

The next task was to establish a representative informant sample of appropriate size. The method chosen did not suggest any particular figure, except that a reasonably large sample seemed logical for corroborative and comparative purposes. Initially, a sample of about twenty informants was aimed for. It was intended that each of the four clubs should yield about five informants, and that the interview sample would be representative of the whole storytelling community regarding age, gender, ethnicity and longevity of experience within the movement, but data on these variables could not be obtained until the questionnaires were returned and the results analysed. It was therefore decided not to begin interviewing until event observation and demographic data collection were under way. Interviewees were solicited at events, by informal networking and also by making formal solicitations to the audience. A space was included in the questionnaire for respondents to indicate willingness to be interviewed, and leave contact details.

In mid-March four regular participants at Nottingham's Tall Tales at the Trip were contacted and interviewed. In mid-April five regular participants at Shropshire's Tales at the Edge were interviewed. Also, in April I interviewed one regular participant at the Hebden Bridge club and one at the Camden Ceilidh. Interviews were conducted one to one, except in two cases. Two informants at Tall Tales at the Trip were a married couple whom I interviewed in turn in the living room of their home. Each listened in and interjected or commented somewhat during the other's interview. This was not deliberately planned, but in the event it was not noticeably deleterious. Indeed, as the objective was to encourage informants to respond dialectically to questioning,

it was quite reasonable to allow them to outnumber the interviewer and so encourage each other to articulate an emic viewpoint with greater freedom. Similar logic was allowed to govern interviewing for *Tales at the Edge*. Three of the informants here were close friends, and interviewing occurred during a weekend house-party where they and I were staying under the same roof. While their personal and biographical details were sought individually in private, the general analytical questions were put to group discussion among the three. The aim was, similarly, to enfranchise emic viewpoints by allowing informants to outnumber the interviewer, dominate the discussion, and set its tone; and also to measure the difference between the modality of testimony expressed in group as opposed to individual interviews.

By early May, most of the questionnaires were returned and eleven analytical interviews had been conducted. At this juncture, the interviewee group was compared with the questionnaire respondent body according to a number of variables. These included gender and age, and also duration, scale and capacity of involvement in revivalistic storytelling. So considered, interviewee group was broadly representative of the whole group in terms of age and mostly of gender, though there was a slight bias in favour of men. On other criteria, however - duration, scale and capacity of involvement - a number of apparent biases had crept into the selection of informants towards the minority of relatively committed and involved revivalists, favouring those whose involvement was on a similar footing to my own. All interviewees were frequent attenders at storytelling events, and had told stories at such events. Over half had at some point in their careers been a featured storyteller at an event. By contrast, only half of questionnaire respondents were regular attenders, and of these most were only listeners. The interviewee group was manifestly biased towards the more committed and experienced participants. This seemed to result from the informal ways in which interviewees had been

contacted. To eliminate this bias in the sample, it was decided to concentrate for the remainder of analytical interviewing on relative newcomers, infrequent attenders, and those who preferred not to tell stories at storytelling clubs, but simply to listen. Questionnaire respondents were listed who matched this profile, telephone contacts were made, and a number of interviews arranged. Only two of these had been completed when research was curtailed by an unexpected spell in hospital, and much of the remainder of the year was given over to further treatment and convalescence. As a result, there was little time left to complete further interviews, and, in fact, the thirteen interviews so far completed yielded an adequate volume and quality of data. The only outstanding issue was that the bias in the interview sample towards experienced regular active participants was never corrected. However, this was not negative in its results. It certainly ensured that the interviewee group had well formed opinions and sufficient confidence to engage fully and freely with the dialectical interviewing process: I was interviewing storytellers with substantial experience of storytelling, who knew their own minds, and were unlikely to be browbeaten, particularly by an interviewer whom many already knew as an ordinary and not conspicuously proficient or prestigious fellow participant.

The experience of interviewing was itself informative. The aim was to create a sufficiently relaxed atmosphere for questions to elicit honest and forthright answers, while ensuring consistency of content across the interview sample. As interviewing progressed, a number of slight changes were introduced into the interviewing technique, and others happened naturally. The first two biographical and developmental sections merged into one, and the interview became a two-stage process. The first section of the interviews came to cover all biographical and developmental issues. The second covered the inquiry into generalised rationales which was the main focus of analysis. This merging of

three sections into two was not resisted: it was congruent both with my own and with informants' intuitions that the interview was somewhat repetitive, and this intuition was borne out in the subsequent analysis and presentation of data. Secondly, as a result of the looser, semi-structured format, the interviews became much shorter, varying between about forty minutes and a little under two hours. Generally, my concern as interviewer was to ensure that the interview flowed comfortably. The order in which topics was addressed was allowed to vary if the conversation tended that way, and the second, more discursive section of the interview was always prefaced with encouragement to the effect that informants could respond however they chose. Interviewing, and, with it the main fieldwork project, was concluded in mid-June 1996. The next task was the processing and analysis of the data obtained.

3.3.3 Data processing and analysis

All references for citations from fieldwork holdings in the present study take the following form. Total fieldwork holdings are designated the Sheffield Contemporary Storytelling Archive (SCSA). The archive is subdivided into a number of sections by study or research agenda: the pilot study (P), the descriptive and historical agenda (DH), analytical event observation (AE), and analytical interviewing (AI). Individual tapes within each section are numbered in order of accession. If greater precision is needed, citations from particular tapes give the appropriate side of the cassette, a or b. This is followed either by an item number (in the case of fully analysed passages); by approximate timer references (in the case of partly analysed passages). A full catalogue of fieldwork holdings is given in Appendix 8.

3.3.3.1 Descriptive and historical agenda: data processing and analysis

The initial task in processing the descriptive and historical data was to organise it by research areas. There were two aspects to this task. Firstly, the document archive was catalogued by origin, according to research areas. Also, to accommodate the unexpectedly large volume of data, new research areas were created which were defined by institution rather than by geographic area. One covered the National Oracy Project and the National Community Folktale Centre (see Chapter 4). Another covered the quarterly newsletter *Facts and Fiction* with the listings *Diary*; another, the other storytelling newsletter *The Crack*, published at irregular intervals. A fourth new area was established for information relating to the Society for Storytelling. Individual items were filed by geographical area or institution of origin under the appropriate research area and numbered in order of accession. Subsequently, these discrete accounts were integrated directly into a single, coherent prose narrative. Ultimately, the skeleton of this was the first descriptive/historical interview, with Ben Haggarty of the Crick Crack Club. This, while incomplete in the terms described, was full, lucid and structured enough to serve as a starting point. Other accounts and information from other research areas were built around this basic skeleton, until it was as it were effectively subsumed within the larger picture, and this narrative was then edited and re-edited for length and coherence. A version was published by the Society for Storytelling as part of their *Papyrus* series (Heywood 1998),¹⁷ and forms the basis for Chapter 4 below.

¹⁷ Reprinted as Heywood (1999, 2000).

3.3.3.2 Event observation: data processing and analysis

The audiotape recordings of storytelling event interaction constituted a bounded body of data available for exhaustive, transparent and inductive analysis. Additionally, there was quantitative data in the questionnaires, the impressionistic audience survey undertaken during event observation, and the more qualitative ethnographic notes on the visual aspects of events. Ethnographic observation and the analysis of talk could yield an evidentially supported sense of the qualitative world which the imposition of statistical categories might have disguised (Silverman 1997). Conversely, statistical data about the demographics and internal structure of the participant group could concretely confirm subjective and ethnographic impressions about the ambience of events.

As argued above, the premise was that the storytelling event was a linear sequence of communicative acts forming a single encounter in the Goffmanian sense. Part of the illocutionary function of each act in the sequence was simply to keep this whole sequence going through time. Given this premise, it was practically possible to circumvent the absolute opacity of attempts to analyse talk. That is to say: these specific functions could be inferred by intuitive means without sacrificing transparency in any practical sense. Or, put another way: there is nothing seriously tendentious about identifying particular utterances as stories, for example, or introductions or epilogues to stories, responses to particular stories, and so forth. This approach was now applied to the audiotape recordings of storytelling events. It did not furnish a complete taxonomy of all possible revivalistic storytelling club events, but it was comprehensive and accurate enough for basic interactive patterns to emerge. Above all, it remained within a reasonable degree of inference as argued above. Of itself, in absolute terms, this method could do little but describe in

intuitive terms the larger external workings of the storytelling event; but this is just what analysis required. The value of the exercise lay in inducing broad patterns of behaviour, which could then be correlated with the wider global and cognitive context, and certain very striking patterns did indeed emerge from the application, as described below in Chapter 6. As regards the questionnaires, considerations of time and space precluded detailed treatment of questions relating to religious, political and ideological affiliation, hobbies and interests. In the final presentation, the analysis of questionnaire responses was therefore limited to a survey of socioeconomic and demographic variables and patterns of individual participation in storytelling revivalism. This furnished sufficient contextual data for the task in hand.

3.3.3.3 Analytical interviews: data processing and analysis

The interview strategy demanded scrutiny of answers not as propositional accounts of inner states but as situated, contingent, pragmatic responses from one standpoint to questions asked from another. As conducted, interviews comprised a first section of general biographical testimony, and a second more analytical section. The first section or sections were summarised in transcript, as they were important largely for informational purposes. By contrast, the analytical approach to the second section placed importance on the precise form and wording of the answer. The original intention was to make very full, precise transcripts of the second section of each interview, including annotations of paralinguistic features such as filled pauses, pause lengths, hesitations, false starts, stutters, intonational contours, pitch, volume and stress, as these were all informative about such relevant factors as the mood of informants and the degree of confidence and ease with which they were expressing themselves. In the end this was abandoned simply because the scale of the task was impossibly large. Instead, in order to preserve a sufficient

measure of transparency, full verbal transcripts of the final section of interview were prepared, including repetitions, stammers, filled pauses, and some indication as to length of pauses, but no further attempt was made to reproduce stress, pitch or intonational contour. These transcripts were then line-numbered and taken with the audiotape recordings of paralinguistic features as the raw material for further analysis.

3.3.4 The main study: evaluation and conclusion

The end product of these processes was a large, heterogeneous body of data spanning the gap between the global and the local level. At the global level there was the historical and developmental narrative, supplemented by demographic and socioeconomic evidence of event observation and the questionnaires, and also by brief biographical and developmental summaries from the questionnaires, and more detailed testimony from the first part of interviews. At the local level there were the audiotape recordings of event interaction relating to the actual performance of storytelling revivalism. Also, completing the tripartite research agenda, there was interview testimony relating to the emic experiences and understandings of storytelling revivalism. Before proceeding, it is useful to pause and evaluate the extent to which the methods adopted fulfilled the requirements stated. As far as was practicable, data had been collected within stated boundaries. Data had been analysed exhaustively within stated conceptual boundaries, according to transparently stated criteria, and without deductive selectivity. The stated aims had been fulfilled, although not without cost. Firstly, for practical reasons, it was not possible for the larger descriptive and historical research to state conceptual boundaries or maintain exhaustivity within them; the scale of the subject was too great and the obtainable kinds of data inappropriate. Secondly, in setting workable boundaries to the other data sets, it had been necessary not merely to

research samples of storytelling clubs and their participant groups, but also to set precise and narrow conceptual boundaries. That is, it was necessary to state in advance not only what data was to be collected, but also, very specifically, what ontology was to be applied. Storytelling events were to be seen specifically as linear illocutionary sequences, and interviews specifically as monitored dialectic exchanges. These ontological assumptions clearly preclude many forms of valid comment on and analysis of the data. Also, it was difficult to achieve this specificity of boundary while maintaining inductivity. That is, it was difficult to state the boundaries of data and method in advance, and to apply them consistently, working from patterns within the data as a whole, open-endedly upwards towards general conclusions, without presupposing the final result. Thirdly, and despite this specificity, the volume of data obtained is still large. For exhaustivity's sake, it covers many aspects of research and interaction that have often evaded detailed attention in folklore scholarship, such as the apparently peripheral trivialities of event interaction; also, it has not paid especially detailed attention to the normally central preoccupations of folklore research, such as genre and performative style. The analytical attention available has had to be spread thinly to cover the ground, and it has been necessary, so to speak, to apply the broad brush. The result is likely to reveal more about the larger and wider patterns of revivalistic culture than about its fine details. This, however, was the aim: to avoid opacity and selectivity, to perceive the larger patterns, proportions and entities which these distort, and so to resolve the central intractable problems which the existence of educated, largely middle-class revivalism poses for the educated, largely middle-class folklorist.

There therefore remains sufficient open-endedness for an informative conclusion. Nothing in the methods so far explicated predicts the content of interview responses, or the modalities which informants will bring to bear on

questions which openly solicit abstract, reflective rationalisation of their own activity. Similarly, although something has already necessarily been said about the way storytelling events proceed, there is as yet no way of knowing precisely how participants choose to span the interactive gulf between normal, everyday chat and the monologic revivalistic story. Less is known about how storytelling movements began and developed historically. Still less is known about any overarching emergent patterns which may become discernible when these three topic areas, having been individually surveyed, are then compared.

This chapter therefore concludes on an anticipatory note, with a survey of findings presented in the remainder of the study. In the following Chapter 4, descriptive and historical findings are presented as a narrative history of the storytelling movement in England and Wales. Chapters 5 and 6 presents the findings of event observation. In Chapter 5, the four clubs and their storytelling are described ethnographically and the demographic and structural features of the participant groups are presented. Genre, repertoire and performative style are surveyed, relatively briefly. The purpose of Chapter 6 is to give a detailed picture of the interactive means whereby events are enacted in the terms described, and to assess the implications and quality of the public dialogic contexts wherein revivalistic stories are always told. Chapter 7 describes the responses of participants to the interview situation. As a preliminary, biographical and developmental issues will be summarised. In the main body of the chapter the results of the analysis of interviews will be presented in the terms outlined above. The final Chapter 8 compares the findings of the three foregoing chapters, and identifies larger emergent patterns in the comparison by working up and down between the levels. Within these patterns are discerned answers to the basic questions regarding the defining quality of storytelling revivalism as an example of traditional arts revivalism, and, thus, as a manifestation of vernacular cultural tradition.

4 **The history of revivalistic storytelling in England and Wales**

There are those who challenge the notion that storytelling in fact needed to be revived ... There is substance in all of these objections, but the fact remains that ... Things changed somehow or other.

Rob Parkinson¹

4.1 **The wider context: revivalism and the mediation of vernacular and oral narrative culture**

Story is as universal as language. It is effectively a universal given of human nature to understand, remember and relate the various orders of reality and unreality in terms of temporal sequences of related events (Rosen 1988, 167, Toolan 1988, xiii, Ochs 1997, 185, Haviland 1990, 386 - 396). All transmission, including traditional transmission, is mediation of a kind. Stories vary over time, and from place to place, in content, in form, in function, in medium of transmission, and in the significance accorded them, but they are never absent, and never static. Accordingly, the absolute extent of the analogues and antecedents of storytelling revivalism pervades recorded history and recedes far beyond immediate relevance. However, the source traditions of storytelling revivalism can be considered in three classes: Indo-European vernacular oral narrative traditions of presumed immemorial origin; upper-class and literary narrative traditions, particularly those with roots or analogues in vernacular tradition, flourishing in Indo-European and neighbouring culture areas from the classical and particularly the medieval periods; and the oral and

¹ Parkinson 1996, 7.

folk narratives collected from cultures throughout the world largely by scholars of the nineteenth century and afterwards. These may now be briefly surveyed.

It is practically inconceivable that ordinary people from earliest times have not continuously told stories, and the origins of the *Märchen* have been traced speculatively even to the Stone Age (Zipes 1979, 5). Given the extraordinary diachronic stability and wide geographical spread of wonder-tale motifs (Aarne 1964 (1928), Krappe 1930, Thompson 1955 - 8), the scholarly consensus that the immemorial and submerged webs of tradition have always involved myth, epic, and folktale, or something like them, is congruent with common sense and with the fragmentary evidence. The oft-cited ancient Egyptian tale *The Two Brothers*, dating from about 1250 BC (Thompson 1946, 275), is replete with *Märchen*-like ambience and motifs.² Mythic and other narratives of oral origin have been mediated through writing since the earliest literate societies of the Bronze Age: Mesopotamian (Dalley 1991), Egyptian, Assyro-Babylonian, Hebrew, Persian, Greek and Roman (Guirand 1974 (1959)). The blinding of Polyphemus by Odysseus,³ and the tale of Cupid and Psyche in the second-century *Golden Ass* of Apuleius (1984 (c. 180)), are among the better known examples of the fact that the same is true of the early Hellenic and late Roman worlds. There were professional street storytellers in the Roman empire; apparently unusually for an aristocrat, the emperor Augustus hired them, to soothe his bouts of insomnia (Scobie 1983, 11ff.). There was, moreover, a submerged vernacular tale-telling tradition. Literate affluent society encountered vernacular narrative tradition largely as the tales which nurses,

² For example, K2111 *Potiphar's wife*; *E710 *external soul*; E712.1 *soul hidden in tree*; *T11.4.1 *love through sight of hair of unknown princess*; E761.6.4 *beer foams (life token)*; E631.0.5 *tree from innocent man's blood*; E631.0.3.1 *red plant from blood of slain person*; D1355.5 *magic hair produces love*; H1213.1.1 *quest for princess caused by sight of one of her hairs dropped by a bird (or floating on river)*; T511 *conception from eating*. This is not an exhaustive analysis.

³ AT 1137 *The Ogre Blinded (Polyphemus)*; AT 425A *The Monster (Animal) as Bridegroom (Cupid and Psyche)*. K521.1 *escape by dressing in animal (bird, human) skin*, K602 'Noman', K603 *escape under ram's belly*, K1011 *eye-remedy*.

often foreign slaves, told to entertain or frighten the children of their masters. Plato, St. Paul, and other intellectuals presaged centuries of educated mistrust of these stories, regarding them as, at best, fit only to excite the initial curiosities of children, or of adults who were uneducated and therefore childlike (Scobie 1983, 11ff., Timothy 4: 7). These ancient patterns recur with striking consistency in later European history: an association of vernacular oral narrative with old, lower-class women, combined with a whiff of unrespectability and an often bitter censure by the educated, overlaying an enduring fascination. Ironically, this rejection of folkloric culture was distilled into a folklorish commonplace, as durable as the underlying fascination of the stories themselves: Plato's *muthos graos* (μυθος γραος), and Apuleius' *anilis fabula*, have a precise analogue in the modern *old wives' tale* (Warner 1996, 14).

In the post-Roman period, the literate cultures and technologies of the Roman world penetrated the new Germanic aristocracies in the heartland of Europe. But oral narrative traditions of many kinds were preserved throughout below this élite level, and also in the Northern and Western fringes of Europe where classical cultures had penetrated less. Moreover, writing was often used not to eradicate but to record narratives which derived from the largely oral and often ultimately pre-Christian cultures of the incoming and less Romanised élites. Throughout the middle ages, educated literary writers continued to draw on stocks of myth, epic and romance with folkloric resonances at the level of motif, and on the imagery of oral narration and perhaps the content of current traditions.⁴ Through the literate and Christian artifice of these works, later scholars claimed to glimpse vestiges of still more ancient culture and belief (Weston 1993 (1920), Graves 1988 (1961)), and several texts preserve the pre-

⁴ Andrew and Waldron 1996 (1978), Benson 1986 (1974), Byock 1990, Chaucer 1957, Gantz 1981, Geoffrey of Monmouth 1986 (1966), Jones and Jones 1996 (1949), Malory 1971 (1954), Matarasso 1969, Wrenn and Bolton 1992 (1953).

Christian, originally oral mythic world with a greater or lesser degree of directness (Larrington 1996, Snorri Sturluson 1984 (1954)). Examples include the Scandinavian Eddas and sagas, the Irish mythological, Ulster, Fenian and kings' cycles and Milesian tales, the Welsh Mabinogi, numerous heroic epics, and the vast labyrinth of Arthurian romance. Integrated into a Christian world-view, and implicitly or explicitly syncretised with Biblical narrative - itself a compendious collection of mythic and folk narrative motifs - these medieval story cycles contributed to an élite literary narrative culture of which the content and connections with oral tradition were exceptionally rich and diverse.

The *aniles fabulae* had represented the traditions of an unlettered underclass dominated by a lettered élite. By contrast, in origin, setting and audience, medieval myth, epic and romance preserved, at some remove, the traditions of the former masters of an old, almost or wholly unlettered world. The protagonists of Norse myth and saga, Old English epic, and Irish, Welsh, Anglo-Norman and French magical romance were anthropomorphic divinities of aristocratic mien, noble human warrior-heroes, or something between the two. These story-cycles may have had their vernacular analogues. It is possible that Arthur, a hero of educated romance in Britain and on the continent, with roots ultimately in British heroic praise-poetry, was also a hero of medieval folkloric and vernacular culture; certainly, his reputation started chauvinistic fights between ordinary Cornishmen and Frenchmen at the height of his literary vogue in the early 1100s (Barber 1972, 122 - 4). A major figure of English tradition, Robin Hood, was socially protean enough to figure both in the iconography of lower-class riot and unrest and in the courtly and noble retinues (Gray 1999, 8, Holt 1989, Knight and Ohlgren 1997, 5 - 6). Both Arthur and Robin are commemorated in placenames in their British and English culture areas (Barber 1972, 122 - 4). However, of all the extant written narrative corpora with some connection to tradition, few show much inclination to look

outside affluent, privileged, courtly, usually warlike and predominantly male *milieux*. Possible exceptions in the cited works include the yeoman Robin Hood and some of Chaucer's middle-ranking Canterbury pilgrims. But many of Chaucer's commoners, like Robin Hood - and, indeed, like Chaucer - were, by calling, functionaries of aristocratic, ecclesiastical or legal administrations, and most of the remainder are relatively affluent. Some, such as the Miller and Franklin, lived perhaps on the fringes of the vernacular culture of the lower-class majority, but the one *bona fide* commoner, the Ploughman, tells no tale at all, and the tale, so called, of his brother the Parson is a scholastic sermon which is clearly not an example of popular oral narrative culture. These silences exemplify the larger fact that truly vernacular medieval narrative traditions went largely unrecorded until after the middle ages.

The spread of print through sixteenth-century Europe created a popular chapbook and broadside literature which opens a documentary window on areas of culture previously beyond or beneath notice or record. Within this literature folktales were widely current. Protagonists in these early printed folktales are still often ostensibly noble, and the aesthetic affect is still hauntingly strange, but instead of the labyrinths, the '*ambages pulcherrimae*' of the great aristocratic medieval story-cycles (Lawlor 1969, vii), the vernacular tale-world is more compact regarding plot and texturally more demotic. Again, it attracts censure as lower-class, trivial, feminine, senescent and heterodox; as by Plato and St. Paul, old wives' tales were often the subject of censure by educated moralists (Holbek 1987, 605, Warner 1996, 7). Nevertheless, in Britain, a folkloric narrative culture existed which was commonplace enough for Shakespeare to trust audiences to make sufficient sense of fragmentary *dités* such as "The owl was a baker's daughter" (*Hamlet*, IV, v, Philip 1996, 351), and especially the "'Tis not so nor 'twas not so" of the robber bridegroom Mr. Fox (*Much Ado About Nothing*, I, i, Jacobs 1967

(1898) 148 - 151). Shakespeare also used vernacular lyric idiom in songs (*Twelfth Night* V, i, *Hamlet* IV, v), and, following his sources, made extensive use of traditional tale types and motifs. Peele's use of disembodied heads as magical donors in his significantly titled *Old Wives' Tale* of the 1590s (Warner 1996 12 - 13, Jacobs 1967 (1898), 222 - 227), and Munday's gentrified use of the forester heroes Robin Hood and the Pinder of Wakefield (Knight and Ohlgren 1997, 340) exemplify a more substantial use of folkloric narrative as a source of plot. In the same decade came Nashe's satire of the "Pedant" who can talk all day about the origins of the couplet "*Fy, fa, fum, I smell the bloud of an Englishman*" (Philip 1992, v). The heterodoxy of this culture is shown in Shakespeare's ascriptions of vernacular songs to clowns and other marginalised figures such as the distracted Ophelia. But these references also show that some scholars were taking an interest in a widely familiar and generally fascinating vernacular culture. Apparently, just as scepticism has always been a stable and integral part of supernatural belief traditions (Bennett 1985, 1987), so high-minded censure seems always to have been a stable and integral concomitant of vernacular narrative culture. This popular and chapbook literature remained current during the nineteenth century and later. The poet John Clare, a working-class labourer from the rural east midlands, associated it with the joys of childhood (Philip 1992, xiv). Concomitantly, even in England, long noted for its paucity of more substantial narrative traditions (Philip 1992, xiii - xiv), elaborate oral narrative performance was not wholly unknown in vernacular circles, especially in outlying regions far from the larger thoroughfares and centres of population. Annual lying competitions were being held in Cumbria in the 1820s, and there were droll-tellers, that is, wandering musician-storytellers, in Cornwall up until the 1850s. (Philip 1992, xiv - xvii). Philip reprints a late droll (1992, 337ff.), a mermaid legend, expanded in the telling to *Märchen*-like length. East Anglian stories, resembling memorates as it were on the turn into a substantial legendary lore, were heard from old men in

fenland pubs by the young W.H. “Jack” Barrett in the early twentieth century (Barrett 1966 (1963), 1964)). The BBC sound archive records Joseph Wilkes, a fulltime professional storyteller working Black Country pubs as late as 1948 (Philip 1992, xiii, xxi, xxxvi). In the mid-twentieth century, Ruth Tongue collected from West Country oral informants (see below, p. 241) (Philip 1992, xxx); she was only one - and perhaps the least rigorous, though certainly not the least imaginative - of a number of folklore collectors working at this time. In 1974, what appears to be a submerged indigenous tradition of tall-tale telling broke cover in an annual council-run lying competition in Cumbria.⁵ Oral narrative performance remains socially possible in public settings such as after-dinner speaking and stand-up comedy, and privately in family party-pieces, and other dedicated performance genres. Gradually, however, in modern Britain, outside these special cases and minority and marginal communities, oral narrative traditions have changed - probably, over the long term, dwindled - into the contemporary mainstream recorded by folklorists in England from the 1970s onwards (Bennett 1980, 165, 1985, 1987, Bennett and Smith 1985 1988 (1 - 3), Bennett, Smith and Widdowson 1987). Storytelling revivalism reacts against mainstream narrative culture, and this mainstream, studied by a new generation of British folklorists from the late 1970s and early 1980s, is centred on personal experience narratives, legends, jokes and other relatively short genres. Throughout the affluent world, largely commercialised mass media have consolidated their dominance of longer and more elaborate narrative genres.

Storytelling revivalists have tended to appropriate both the élite and the demotic levels of these European oral narrative traditions. Firstly, there are more aristocratic bodies of myth, epic, and heroic romance, enshrined in text by

⁵ John Carruthers, Duty Manager, Whitehaven Civic Hall (personal correspondence with author). The direct inspiration for this competition was Will Ritson, a Wasdale publican of the 1850s, who pioneered the art of lying to tourists.

Christian redactors from the early middle ages onwards. Secondly, there is the more demotic tradition of *aniles fabulae* which persisted throughout classical into medieval and modern European history. This demotic tradition was mediated by Perrault and others, ostensibly as a children's literature, and fed perhaps more directly into storytelling revivalism through the latter's pedagogic roots. However, storytelling revivalism has cast its appropriative net widely beyond Europe, among non-European traditions documented either by literate scholars of indigenous religious and political élites, or by colonial and post-colonial Europeans. In appropriating these sorts of narrative as their special preserve, however, storytelling revivalists have continued and extended a very long drawn-out process of appropriation, which it is necessary now to review briefly. In Reformation England, the first English antiquarians, such as Leland, Stow and Camden, sought vestigial remains of ancient worlds in the sayings and stories of contemporary vernacular art and culture. This was done under the heading of antiquities, rather as early manuscripts were abstracted from the libraries of the dissolved monasteries (Dorson 1968), and ancient ruins were examined in the contemporary landscape, as Popery apparently joined Gentilism and Judaism on the roster of defunct creeds whose remains were now available for mediation to the contemporary world. These were the antiquarians satirised by Nashe (see above, p. 223). The mediation of vernacular culture was artistic as well as intellectual, and both approaches intertwined. Towards the end of the seventeenth century, the literary fairy tale emerged in European, mainly in educated and courtly French literature, following ancient patterns persisting from the classical world, as a didactic or diverting genre associated ostensibly with children, maternal female narrators, and lower-class origins. As such it was alternately defended for its authenticity or dismissed for its infantile, feminine and/or plebeian decadence (Warner 1994, xiv, Opie 1992, 25). This is the *Kunstmärchen* (Zipes 1979, 7) or literary fairy tale of the *ancien régime*, which Holbek regards as decadent for precisely

the opposite reason that it was not lower-class enough to bear comparison with the genuine *Volksmärchen* (Holbek 1987, 605). The literary fairy tale was most famously exemplified in the 1696 *Histoires ou contes du temps passé* or *Contes de ma Mère l'Oye* of Charles Perrault (1628 - 1703) (Perrault 1888, Warner 1992, 55). Many other educated writers also used the fairy tale form. Examples include current standards such as *Sleeping Beauty* and *Little Red Riding Hood*. These were - perhaps truthfully - presented as arising from popular tradition, and they invited censure by invoking the iconography of the lower-class narrator and mimicking the speech “du bas peuple” (Opie 1992, 22). But the audience for such tales was middle-class or aristocratic, and most literary fairy tales were authored rather than collected from traditional narrators.

This movement also apparently bequeathed the generic label *fairy tale*, probably a translation of Madame d'Aulnoy's *conte des fées* of 1698, in English circulation by 1749 (Opie 1992 14, Zipes 1979, 23). Perrault was in English translation by 1729 (Opie 1992, 24). Over the following century, as the literary composition of fairy tales continued among middle-class and educated European authors, intellectuals furnished artists with a respectable manifesto (Zipes 1979). In the late eighteenth century, the Enlightenment reverence for “science and reason” was countered from its inception by a romantic preoccupation with “feeling, intuition and above all the natural” (Roberts 1990, 636, 641). In this process, at least one poetic mediator of vernacular narrative, Macpherson (1736 - 96), exerted enormous and Europe-wide influence. A Highland Scot by origin, and an historian and MP in later life (Saunders 1895), Macpherson in his twenties published a series of narrative prose-poems which, he claimed, were translations from the work of Ossian, a third-century epic poet (Macpherson 1996 (1760-3), Smart 1905, Stafford 1988, Stafford and Gaskill 1998). Like most such mediations, these have always been suspect as

translations; they were certainly Macpherson's own work, but heavily influenced by the Fenian tales which he encountered in medieval manuscripts and in the vernacular oral ballad tradition of his native Highlands (Thomson 1952, 1987). They were followed by Campbell's more systematic collecting in the Gaelic Highlands, resulting in his *Popular Tales of the West Highlands* (1860-2) (Campbell 1983 (1860-2)). More widely, they immediately galvanised romantic and nationalist sensibilities throughout Europe, from France to Russia, and specifically they established the melancholic and otherworldly Celt as a durable archetype.⁶ On the Ossianic model, the German Herder (1744 - 1803) regarded "folk poetry" as the expression of the national soul, and also, given what he regarded as the Francophile corruption of élite German culture in the age of Enlightenment, regarded lower-class and traditional culture as the only genuine extant form of it (Zipes 1979, 93, Wilson 1989, 28). Herder contrasted this state of affairs with England, which, he thought, had in Shakespeare and Spenser literary poets steeped in national folk culture. He advocated the collection of vernacular culture with explicit revivalism, as a source of inspiration and raw material for a new, nationalistic high culture. In doing so, he pioneered both folkloristic collection and artistic revivalism as complementary aspects of a single process of cultural renewal. Here, already, is seen the close relationship between educated study and educated emulation of vernacular art which has proved so problematic for later folklorists studying traditional arts revivalism. The brothers Grimm (Jakob (1785 - 1863) and Wilhelm (1786 - 1859)) were only the most notable of the many who responded to Herder's call. The *Kinder- und Haus-Märchen* (1812 - 22) (Zipes 1992) were collected from middle-class friends and relatives, "servants, housewives, a watchman, and inhabitants from towns and small cities" (Zipes 1979, 30). This massively influential attempt to collect traditional genre

⁶ This perhaps had less to do with any enduring national genius than with the fact that the poems were researched and composed in the aftermath of Jacobite defeat, which Macpherson himself, a Highlander, had witnessed in childhood at first hand.

narratives as from the lips of source-tradition bearers voiced a Herderian longing for German unification and freedom both from the Napoleonic occupation and the indigenous aristocracy, although many of their tales came from a family of *emigré* Huguenots, the Hassenpflugs, and were of French origin, and few came directly from the peasantry (Zipes 1992, xx). The example of Herder and the Grimms inspired largely romantic, nationalistic and revivalistic collecting of both verbal and musical vernacular art throughout mid-nineteenth-century Europe, resulting ultimately in the tale-collections of Lönnrot in Finland, Asbjørnsen and Moe in Norway, Kristensen in Jutland, Grundtvig in Denmark, Afanas'ev in Russia, and many others (Dégh 1972). Meanwhile, as these middle-class scholars went among the people to collect narratives, the working-class Dane Hans Andersen (1805 - 1875), rooted in the oral storytelling traditions of his own "superstitious and virtually illiterate" background, met them as it were coming the other way, producing original literary fairy tales for a middle-class readership. Andersen's tales were published in Britain in the 1840s (Andersen 1994(a), 1, Andersen 1994(b), Toksvig 1933, 8, Stirling 1965, 31).

Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, then, the intellectual and the artistic intertwined again as scholarly collections of vernacular art, understood as the uncompromised voice of collective national consciousness, exerted influence over official musical and literary culture. At first, artistic energies ran within the precedented channels of classical music and print literature. Beethoven (1770 - 1827) had used folk tunes for local colour and programmatic narratives, but throughout the nineteenth century Mendelssohn (1809 - 1847), Dvorak (1841 - 1902), Sibelius (1865 - 1957), Nielsen (1865 - 1931), Vaughan Williams (1872 - 1958) and Bartók (1881 - 1945) made extensive and in many cases nationalistic use of traditional and vernacular melody or lyric (Scholes 1991 (1938), 87 - 8, 309, 368, 684, 949 - 50, 1072 -

3). Composers also used narrative tradition nationalistically. Wagner (1813 - 1883) used translations of Norse Eddas and sagas for the *Ring* cycle, and Sibelius used Lönnrot's *Kalevala* for many programmatic compositions. Romantic poets from Wordsworth to Yeats wrote verse in ballad metre and derived narratives and images from medieval epic and romance, and simultaneously from the contemporary working classes. Meanwhile, the place of the *Märchen*, alongside classical myth, medieval epic and romance, and animal stories, in the diverse body of fantasy, traditionalistic and children's literature, was secure.⁷ The intellectual rationalisation of these mediations had not stopped with Herder. In 1846, the English scholar Thoms had coined the term *Folk-lore* (Dorson 1968, Thoms 1968, Haviland 1990, 386), to replace *popular antiquities* in defining the post-Herderian study and collection of the vestiges of savagery in "barbarous," that is, mainly, working class and rural subgroups surviving within otherwise civilised, that is urban, technologised, educated and Christian societies. These assumptions pertained throughout the nineteenth century and were not generally discredited until well into the twentieth. Pedagogic education took its cue throughout from these movements in high art and scholarship. The *Kindergarten* was invented in Germany in the 1840s to provide a structured and educative play environment for children. Thereafter, organised storytelling was a recognised activity within educational provision, and thus, crucially, it was a skill institutionally governed and professionally cultivated by teachers and others as well as creatively evoked by leading writers. Later, in the 1880s, the first children's libraries were established, and, again, storytelling was one of the services provided. Education is the tap-root of storytelling revivalism.

⁷ For example: Garner 1967, Macdonald 1995, Masefield 1927, Tolkien 1971 (1955), Lewis 1974 (1950), 1978 (1951), 1979 (1952), 1977 (1953), 1979 (1954), 1976 (1956), Wilde 1948, 224 - 321.

A crucial coda to the prehistory of storytelling revivalism was the emergence of performance-based traditional arts revivalism generally. Music and dance were first. The folksong and folk dance revivals of the turn of the twentieth century, associated in England with Sharp, Neal, Gardiner, Baring-Gould and others (Harker 1985, Karpeles 1987, Boyes 1993, Mackinnon 1993), were rooted in the appropriative ambience of romantic nationalism theorised by Herder. They involved song collection, mostly in rural areas, and performance and teaching in schools and polite drawing-rooms, and they helped to create the idea of folksong as it exists today. The second folk revival originated from the late 1940s and early 1950s, with the first folk clubs, and the BBC broadcasts of source song and original work in similar idioms, programmes such as *As I Roved Out*, *Ballads and Blues* and the *Radio Ballads* (Goldstein 1982). Academic folklore had formed a specialist branch of intellectual endeavour since the later nineteenth century, and folklorists were involved in these efforts, most prominently the US folklorist Alan Lomax, who was also active in the US folksong “revival.” By the late 1950s the British movement had made prominent figures of Ewan MacColl (James Miller) and A.L. Lloyd. To generalise, the rationalisation of these efforts was broadly Herderian via Cecil Sharp, and Marxist via Raymond Williams, a striking hybrid which redoubled the focus on communal and working-class culture (Lloyd 1967, Harker 1985, Mackinnon 1993, MacColl 1990). There is a specific link to storytelling, in that folk revivalists studied, collected and even performed narratives as well as song (MacColl and Seeger 1986). In the early days of British storytelling revivalism, Charles Parker, the producer of the *Radio Ballads*, worked with Harold Rosen’s narratology students in education (Medlicott 1990, 19), and the revivalist folksinger Frankie Armstrong, a member of MacColl’s Critics Group, worked with Jenny Pearson of Kew Storytellers and the Waterman’s Arts Centre group.⁸ Earlier appropriations of folk melody by classical composers

⁸ See Chapter 5.

and literary poets had incorporated vernacular influences into established élite performance idioms and contexts. By contrast, twentieth-century appropriations established whole new idioms and performative contexts, and new forms of mediation. By the time of MacColl and Lloyd, the mediation of traditional vernacular story was similarly beginning to escape precedented literary and print channels, and the educational networks which took their cue from literature. This marks the beginnings of storytelling revivalism.

Developments in these mediations of vernacular narrative, from Perrault up to this mid-twentieth century turning point, depend consistently on certain defining conditions. Vernacular narrative has been mediated, through artistic idioms and institutional educational provision, as a corpus of “nursery tales” exclusively for children, but this mediating stricture has been consistently breached, and the originally adult constituency and content of the tales apparently unwittingly recognised, in that the mediated tales have always been enjoyed by adult audiences and conveyed adult meanings and messages (Opie 1992, 9, Jacobs 1967, vi, Warner 1994, xiii 18). Secondly, although it has been frequently regarded by educated opinion as an ephemeral fad (Opie 1992, 25), it has persisted in an unbroken development over three centuries and more. If Apuleius and his models in the street storytelling and *aniles fabulae* of the classical world are admitted, this persistence extends over more than fifteen centuries. Thirdly, it has consistently offended some sections of sophisticated literary opinion for the very reasons which recommend it to others, such as its perceived lack of sophistication or interest in laboured artifice for its own sake, its closeness to the female, the vernacular, the childlike, other marginal or heterodox categories, and a *Märchen*-like disregard of narrowly linear views of historical development and narrowly prescriptive constructions of modernity and/or cultural value. Modern fantasy literature, looking back mostly to heroic romance but also to epic and to literary and oral fairy tale, has similarly

weathered dismissals as ephemeral and “juvenile trash,” levelled by comparable sections of sophisticated literary opinion (Curry 1997, 15 - 16, Shippey 1982, 1 - 5). Moreover, and perhaps less congruently with the vernacular sources, the attractions of the mediated forms have often been explicitly revivalistic, including ostensible freedom from contemporary adulterations and deficiencies. They have been actively politicised in these rather pastoral terms, first by nationalists, and later by ecological protesters and other postwar countercultures of the affluent anglophone world (Curry 1997, McKay 1996, Wilson 1986, 21). It is also worth noting that, despite the dissonances reviewed in the first chapter, the inspirations and developments of folkloristic scholarship and revivalistic activism in a very broad sense have been common from their shared Herderian outset, and intertwine symbiotically through history like the red rose and the briar.

Importantly, in the light of this process, Holbek’s pessimistic understanding of the mediation between *Kunstmärchen* and *Volksmärchen* must be significantly modified. Like Zipes, Holbek rightly attaches cardinal significance to such mediations, which he regards as drawing the political teeth of the genre by recasting its social subversiveness as a more anodyne treatment of intra-familial tensions (Holbek 1987, 605). It is certainly apparent that this happened, and that it continues to happen within storytelling revivalism, where the interpretative approach of choice is often psychotherapeutic and thus consistent in its preoccupation with the narrowly familial. Important qualifications, however, need to be made. Firstly, Holbek ignores the attenuated but real subversive potential of the literary fairy tale, which Zipes notes, and which seems to underpin its consistent excoriation in sophisticated literary opinion. Secondly, and relatedly, the boundary between middle-class and working-class tale culture has always been permeable in both directions. The relationship between *Volksmärchen* and *Kunstmärchen* is not devolutionary or even

genealogical; it is an ongoing, cross-fertilising exchange. Canonical literary fairy tales were swiftly and lastingly absorbed or re-absorbed into popular culture through chapbook publication. Perrault's literary tales (which seem to have had oral vernacular sources) and Andersen's (which certainly derived from oral vernacular inspiration, but were equally certainly Andersen's original compositions) were swiftly re-absorbed into vernacular circulation, and even collected by the Grimms themselves as oral tales (Opie 1992, 27). The same is true of the Grimms' own tales. Also, nineteenth-century middle- and upper-class children, like their classical forebears nearly two millennia before, imbibed stories, songs and other folklore and traditions from working-class servants and nurses; indeed, it is exactly at this social nexus that the Grimms started collecting (Buchan 1972, Philip 1992 187 - 93, 402 - 7, Zipes 1992, xxiv). Similarly, Wilde's *fin-de-siècle* literary fairy tales carry echoes of the oral vernacular tales which his father, a doctor, collected as payment in kind from his poorer patients in mid-nineteenth century Dublin (Warner 1994, 20, Wilde 1948, 224 - 321).⁹ In short, the social distance between literary and vernacular narrative culture - though substantial at times - was frequently crossed and re-crossed by tales and by those who enjoyed them. This reciprocity suggests that the experienced meaning of the tales is not reducible to socioeconomic class. Something more was going on in them besides. It has already been argued, in Chapter 2 (see page 98), that Holbek's methodological and evidential basis prevented him *a priori* from acknowledging aesthetic functions of the marvellous over and above its function as an allegorical representation of sociopolitical reality. The social adaptability of the *Märchen* is based in - and effectively proves the reality of - just some such extra function of the

⁹ Incidentally, like these stories, Wilde's own name is another verbal echo of his parents' folklorish interests. "He is to be called Oscar Fingal Wilde," Lady Jane wrote after his birth, in November 1854. "Is that not grand, misty, and Ossianic?" (Quoted in Macpherson 1996, v).

marvellous. History refutes the rejection of the *Kunstmärchen* and comparable mediations out of hand.

4.2 Revivalistic storytelling 1890 to 1972

In terms of the present account, the beginning of storytelling revivalism represents the point at which mediated vernacular and traditional oral narrative followed song, music and dance out of highbrow and literary *milieux*, and into a new, autonomous setting which sought to imitate vernacular contexts and channels while preserving and extended the mediative ambience. The revivalistic storytelling movement has two overlapping defining characteristics: firstly, the profession of the storyteller, one who, in the affluent industrialised world, lives partly or wholly by performing mediated genre folktales and other oral narratives; and, secondly, a discrete adult audience for mediated genre tale performance. As suggested above, these developments are rooted in formal education provision, and emerged in the anglophone world, more or less at once in Britain, North America and the Caribbean. In Britain in the decades around 1900, following the lead of the writers and scholars noted above, teachers and educators gave great prominence to myth and fairy tale, both as spoken art and as literature, and storytelling was an established part of teacher training (Bone 1923).

The Greek and Northern myths had become standard classroom reading by the 1920s. Most educated people of fifty [i.e., those born about 1920] can't remember not knowing who Perseus or Athene or Thor or the Marquis of Carabas were ... then the impact of the revival lost its force. (Cook 1976, 2)

Meanwhile, by the 1890s, library storytelling for children was already being programmed in the United States, in Pittsburgh, New York, and Buffalo (Smith 1993). In 1890, the Anglo-French Marie Shedlock (1854 - 1935), a translator

of the tales of Andersen, whom she regarded as her “great master” (Shedlock 1951, viii) left her London schoolteaching job and became a fulltime professional storyteller (Baker and Greene 1977). The concept of the storyteller was already an established one in this context, and derives ultimately from the pedagogic role of storytellers and storytelling established by the *Kindergarten* earlier in the century. The number of fulltime professionals before Marie Shedlock is not known, but she spearheaded an expansion, training over fifty other storytellers in the United States alone (Shedlock 1951, viii), where storytelling was being formally taught to “all workers with children” by 1914 (Cather 1922). She performed both to children and to adults, telling stories in restaurants (Baker and Greene 1977, 4) and lecturing on storytelling to teachers and librarians in Britain, the United States, and Europe. She toured France during and in the wake of the Great War. Especially in the USA, Marie Shedlock’s innovative achievement was apparently to systematise and popularise a practice which had previously been undertaken sporadically on individual librarians’ own initiative. She pioneered storytelling training for librarians and her approach and methods (Shedlock 1951) were recognised as innovative by her numerous successors (Baker and Greene 1977).

Storytelling in this *milieu*, like Cecil Sharp’s parlour folksong of the same period, was a formal, high-minded, and rather stilted-sounding activity:

New York Public Library story hours ... were formal and dignified, with fresh flowers, a wishing candle, and books on the table ... [The supervisor, Mary Gould Davis:] ‘Her voice was gifted, her timing perfect, her gestures controlled ...’ (Baker and Greene 1977, 8)

The content of performances was literary, with the emphasis on myth, medieval romances, folktales, and fairy tales. The storytellers were often trained elocutionists. Memorised text and improvised speech were both used

(Shedlock 1951), the latter increasingly so over time (Sawyer 1944, 99). Library storytellers delighted in reforming “confirmed crap-shooters, pool-players and delinquents” (Baker and Greene 1977, 11), and encouraging girls away from “obscene” games and towards such wholesome and instructive make-believe as “allowing themselves to be rescued from burning towers and fetid dungeons” (Shedlock 1951, 125). More useful to their successors was their reverence for traditional precedents, their exacting standards, their insistence on not glossing over the dark or uncomfortable elements of folktale, fairy tale or myth, and their highly developed sense of technique (Shedlock 1951).

In the early 1900s, children’s libraries, library storytelling, and the ancillary adult audience spread across the United States and beyond, backed by an in-service structure of training, conferences, and committees. A National Story League was founded in Tennessee in 1903, and several libraries had a supervisor of storytelling by 1908. By 1950, library storytelling was established in Canada, Britain, Europe, the Caribbean, and elsewhere. It underpinned later storytelling developments in these areas. A high proportion of those involved were professional women; it was in fact generally assumed at the time that children’s librarianship was a woman’s job (Hill 1973).

Meanwhile, others besides children’s librarians were using storytelling for didactic purposes, and these were later to influence the revivalistic movement. Perhaps the most important examples of this point are psychoanalysis and analytical psychology. Before Freud and Jung, myth was viewed in terms of ritual or other communal preoccupations (Cook 1969, 3). But they additionally understood and used myth and fairy tale as indexes of individual states of mind and inner being (Jones 1965, Henderson 1964). Meanwhile, in 1919, a Stuttgart industrialist invited the Austrian anthroposophist Rudolf Steiner to

found a school for his employees' children.¹⁰ Thus began the Steiner Waldorf education movement, a central feature of which was, and is, an integrated and sophisticated application of story and storytelling. There are now about 650 Steiner Waldorf schools, in over forty countries. Like the psychoanalysts, anthroposophists theorised the personal, didactic and developmental benefits of traditional story in spiritual or quasi-spiritual terms, and like many of its devotees they deployed it in opposition to established, in this case educational, structures. From the first, however, the Steiner movement's heterodox instincts never impeded a close association with industrial and corporate capitalism, and here an early precedent was set for professional work with story, financed by commercial sponsorship as well as by official, civic and private sources, and by paying audiences.

These various approaches differed, but shared a preoccupation with the heterodox nature of mythic and vernacular narrative, expressed in the view of traditional story as an especially potent link, on the one hand, to the intuitive, unconscious, spontaneous or non-rational side of human nature or society, and, on the other, to the past, in which this intuitiveness was felt to have found expression (Estés 1992, 34, 473n.7). There was a corresponding preoccupation with contemporary peoples or situations which were felt to have preserved this link, or for whom it was considered especially significant. Nineteenth-century scholars studied non-Europeans, or the rural working classes, sunk in instinctual stupor (Frazer 1993, 297ff.); novelists wrote for children, with their limited rationality and their intense imaginative lives (Green and Hooper 1974, 237, 253 - 6, Masefield 1952, 241); and psychotherapists and their clients explored the unconscious in search of transformation and healing. These were diverse constituencies and projects, but the underlying ideas were consistent, and they have continued in mutual reinforcement until the present day.

¹⁰

Prospectus for Steiner Waldorf teacher education at Emerson College.

Storytelling came to British libraries in the early twentieth century. Libraries specially for children were contemplated in the early years of the century (Hill 1973, 4), but children's literature was almost wholly neglected and storytelling was, as earlier in the USA, sporadic, although among some few others a Miss Hammerston in Leeds library was active in it.¹¹ The establishment of librarianship as an undergraduate degree subject at University College, London, in the mid-1920s, and the introduction, apparently from Holland, of dedicated children's libraries, helped to change this. In 1926, Hendon Council employed a UCL graduate librarian, Eileen Colwell, then in her early twenties, to establish a complete library service, starting with a children's library. Eileen Colwell was personally motivated by childhood fascination with story, and also by offputting childhood experiences of unfriendly British libraries. Like her scattered predecessors, she arranged storytelling on her own initiative, but the innovative and prestigious children's library in which she worked until her retirement enabled her, like Marie Shedlock, to advocate and exemplify library storytelling on a larger scale. She ran storytelling at the library, and cultivated an in-service adult audience at conferences, and English teacher training continued, following the 1920s heyday, to involve storytelling, often in the sense of reading aloud from text.¹² An important figure in this period is Elizabeth Cook, storyteller, educationalist, and senior lecturer in English at Homerton College, Cambridge (Cook 1976).

Relevant developments occurred in professional theatre from the middle of the century. During the second world war, plays with large casts being impractical in wartime, an actor, Margaret Leona, toured a solo show of traditional tales. Meanwhile, Joan Littlewood's Theatre Workshop was active in the 1940s, producing political and satirical theatre. The Theatre Workshop involved

¹¹ Interview with Eileen Colwell (SCSA/DH/16a).

¹² Tony Aylwin (personal correspondence).

Littlewood's then husband, Ewan MacColl. MacColl's involvement prefigured his later work in revivalistic folk music revival, reviewed in the survey above, and later developments in political theatre fed directly into revivalistic storytelling (Goorney and MacColl 1986, x - lvii, MacColl 1990).

At this point, in the 1950s, outside proto-revivalism in the libraries, indigenous oral narrative traditions were being enriched generally by postwar immigration. Several immigrant communities, like those of Irish and West Indian origin, imported their own conspicuous traditions of storytelling, within which individual tellers could become recording and media personalities (Brennan Harvey 1992, Rosen 1988). Importantly, too, the storytelling of an indigenous British minority began to attract scholarly attention. In the early 1950s, Hamish Henderson, highly active as a folksong scholar at the new School of Scottish Studies at the University of Edinburgh, diversified his achievement and exploded scholarly assumptions that no English-language folktale tradition remained in Britain by discovering one among ethnic travellers (McDermitt 1985, 2, Williamson 1983, 1989, 1993). These established traditions were shortly to feed into the storytelling movement, via printed collections, through the research and collection of institutions such as the National Community Folktale Centre, and through intermediate figures, such as Scottish travellers like Betsy Whyte, Duncan Williamson, Sheila Stewart, and Stanley Robertson, who became influential performers within the new revivalistic movement. In the 1950s, however, all this lay in the future and for the moment these traditions remained largely esoteric.

Within library circles, meanwhile, Eileen Colwell was still an active storyteller and rather a conspicuous figure when she attracted the interest of Grace Hallworth, another writer-librarian with a strong personal enthusiasm for stories and storytelling, who moved to England from Trinidad in 1956 to work

in Hertfordshire's new children's library. Storytelling was now established in library services in the Caribbean, the result, as in Britain, of a combination of initiatives by enthusiasts, and of the example of the North American scene (Baker and Greene 1977, 14). Grace Hallworth typifies both: a lifelong enthusiast, she had also studied storytelling formally in Toronto children's library, Boys' and Girls' House, and in the New York children's library, during the 1950s. By this time, both Toronto and New York were well established as major centres of library storytelling. Storytelling continued in schools and libraries alongside other activities used to "help children to appreciate books and reading" (Hill 1973, 7). The largely in-service adult audience led, in the 1950s, to early storytelling festivals at US library conferences (Baker and Greene 1977, 14). Subsequently, storytelling for adults became increasingly independent of the library infrastructure. Moreover, at this point, almost half a century after the pioneering work of Marie Shedlock, two defining characteristics of the modern revivalistic storytelling movement were becoming manifest in Canada and the USA. Firstly, storytelling was becoming a professional activity in its own right, based in education, with a body of commercial practitioners of storytelling, based around a core of fulltime professionals. Secondly, an adult audience for storytelling was in existence, with its own networks, partly or fully differentiated from the professional and educational scene. When Eileen Colwell visited Toronto during the 1960s, to represent John Masefield at a library festival, recreational storytelling sessions among adults were already being held. Meanwhile, the first of a new breed of professional storytellers was emerging, such as Diane Wolkstein, and Connie Regan-Blake and Barbara Freeman, former children's librarians who left formal employment to become a travelling duo of storytellers, the Folktellers (Baker and Greene 1977, 14, Sobol 1994, 20).

The carnivalesque and nomadic Folktellers exemplify the fact that the emerging north American storytelling movement had tangentially to do with the countercultures of the affluent but turbulent 1960s. Thus, the new style of storytelling coincided with cultural heterodoxy and political protest, mostly among young, affluent, educated people in Europe and North America. This reinforced the enduringly iconoclastic but also rather middle-class character of the mediation of myth and traditional narrative (Cook 1976, vii, McKay 1996, Sobol 1994, 18 - 20). After their exuberant late 1960s heyday, the countercultures abandoned such serious social and political radicalism as they had espoused, and became introverted, personalised, and more purely individualistic (Sobol 1994, 19 - 24, 42). At this time, a popular scholarship best exemplified by Campbell (1973, 1993) mediated traditional narrative in vaguely psychotherapeutic terms. Within this context the revivalistic storytelling movement appealed as a form of self-development carrying the apparent sanction of immemorial tradition. Adult storytelling continued to separate off from formal educational provision. Winnipeg had held a storytelling festival since the mid-1970s. In 1973, in the United States, the first National Storytelling Festival was held as a tourist attraction in Jonesborough in Tennessee, leading to the foundation of NAPPS (the National Association for the Preservation and Perpetuation of Storytelling)¹³ in 1975. In 1977, in the US, Ellin Greene was writing of a fledgling but established non-library "revival" (Baker and Greene 1977 15). Meanwhile, in Britain, collecting and publication of oral and mediated literary vernacular narrative continued through the 1960s under the auspices of many scholars, including Katharine Briggs and Ruth Tongue (Briggs 1991 (1970 - 1)). Again, these efforts fed into performance: Ruth Tongue's collecting methods involved her own storytelling performances designed to elicit testimony from audiences, and her published collections bear the stamp of her own literary imagination (Philip 1992, xxx).

¹³ Later, the National Storytelling Association.

By the end of the 1960s, with the increase in postwar affluence, television had replaced radio as the primary medium of mass communication. Electronic media, particularly television, are conspicuously powerful in eroding local narrative traditions (McDermitt 1985). Storytelling revivalism, as suggested in the previous chapter, often sees itself as opposed to the technologisation of the imagination (Rosen 1988 166, Medlicott 1990 19, Sobol 1994, 76, 87ff). The media have at times responded with a similar lack of enthusiasm (Quirke 1993). By this time, Eileen Colwell had befriended John Masefield (1878 - 1967), then poet laureate. Masefield, an author in the literary tradition of children's fantasy reviewed above, was active in beginning to bring storytelling out of the library. During the 1960s, he started a Guild of Storytellers, ran storytelling festivals, and sought to start a storytelling "revival" (Errington 2000, Masefield 1952, 216 - 242). Masefield knew of developments in North America (Masefield 1952, 236), and, as noted above, Eileen Colwell visited Toronto storytellers as Masefield's representative in the 1960s. However, for reasons discussed in the conclusion of the present chapter, the early British efforts at a separate storytelling "revival" were abortive; Masefield's Guild was wound up, and this fascinating antecedent is all but forgotten among present-day storytelling revivalists in Britain. Eileen Colwell retired from Hendon in 1967, and continued until 1979 to cultivate her own adult storytelling audience, as a freelance storyteller and lecturer.

At the same time, during the late 1960s, political theatre was being revitalised by protest and counterculture. Actors, directors and companies continued to cultivate working-class audiences, art, and artists. Active groups included Ken Campbell's Roadshow and the 7:84 Theatre Company. These efforts, like the then emerging Theatre-in-Education movement, eventually fed directly into revivalistic storytelling. In 1968 the avant-garde theatre director Peter Brook moved to Paris, momentarily on the brink of revolution, to pioneer new,

formally theatrical mediations of traditional and mythic material: once again, a mediator of myth and traditional narrative had sought out a centre of political heterodoxy, and his work later influenced revivalistic storytelling in Britain and on the continent.

In the later 1960s, too, the beginnings of a storytelling movement outside library services were further stimulated by developments within them. The new immigrant communities of postwar British cities endured a “background of discrimination in jobs, housing, and social opportunities,” and there was a pervasive “lack of trust between the immigrant community and the police force” (Morgan 1985 (1), 582 - 583). Ethnocentric bias in conventional education added to the alienation and disempowerment of minority communities. In the 1960s, Janet Hill, a Lambeth borough librarian, castigated the education system for failing to deal with these issues (1973), and pioneered the use of storytelling to counter cultural deprivation, through the Lambeth Libraries storytelling scheme. From 1966, in Lambeth in the school summer holidays, teams of storytellers with banners and portable amplification performed, not, as was then normal, in the library building, but in parks throughout the borough. The aim was to promote the library service to children of all backgrounds.

4.3 Revivalistic storytelling 1972 to 1980

From 1972, Lambeth Libraries storytelling sessions were also held in housing estates. But 1972 was a watershed year for two further reasons. Firstly, and independently from Lambeth, the Inner London Education Authority employed the first fulltime storyteller in the country: a former English teacher, Roberto Lagnado, who had been inspired by local storytellers on a sojourn in North Africa, and who visited schools at the authority’s expense (Rosen 1988, 71).

Secondly, Lambeth began to employ non-teachers and non-librarians as storytellers on the holiday storytelling scheme. Gradually thereafter, via advertising and audition, the library service recruited and cultivated a body of experienced storytellers, who later included such influential pioneers in professional storytelling as Helen East, Mary Medlicott, and Pomme Clayton. In Britain, as in North America, storytelling was emerging as a profession in its own right. In the 1970s, the Manchester-based architect Tony Bennett was supporting bands touring the London Irish circuit with storytelling modelled on the Irish media “shanachie,” Eamon Kelly. In the revivalistic developments which followed, cultural diversity, particularly in an urban context, provided a motivating ideology and environment for professional and educational storytelling.

Meanwhile, developments within education continued. Throughout the 1970s, Margaret Spencer (Meek) taught an MA in storytelling at the London Institute of Education. One person who took the course, in 1976-7, was Tony Aylwin, then an ILEA teacher, who was involved in the later storytelling movement in London. From 1977, Tony Aylwin began himself to teach storytelling in primary education. Also at the London Institute of Education, Harold Rosen, the narratologist, taught an MA in narrative studies. With students and former students of the course, he developed the London Narrative Group, which became an influential and long-running forum for teachers interested in story and its educational applications. At conferences and in his publications Harold Rosen himself became a major advocate of the importance of narrative, particularly oral narrative, in education. As a result of these efforts, story remained a significant topic of research and debate in education, and oral storytelling gained new impetus.

4.4 Revivalistic storytelling 1980 to 1990

In the years immediately around 1980, however, developments began fully to echo those of the 1960s in North America as several small groups followed Roberto Lagnado into fulltime storytelling. Strikingly, a non-commercial adult storytelling scene emerged, quite independently, within the same few months, and only subsequently came into contact with the fledgling professional community. Contemporaries testify to there being “something in the air”¹⁴ or in the *Zeitgeist*, perhaps a sharpened appetite for renewal in the polarised political climate. Certainly the independent origins of new storytelling institutions - their polygenesis - suggests that the general sociocultural environment was favourable.

The non-commercial adult storytelling scene was revitalised by colleagues of the Anglo-Indian writer Idries Shah (1924 - 96). Shah had published devotional works of his idiosyncratic brand of Sufism, and collections of Middle Eastern traditional tales, in the 1960s and 1970s (Shah 1987), and advocated a renewal of oral storytelling. Consequently, under a director, Pat Williams, a writer and journalist, a group of Shah’s colleagues inaugurated the College of Storytellers in 1980. The College was based in Hampstead. It ran sessions from 1981 in pubs and community centres. These were open to all tellers on a strictly non-commercial basis. The College published a newsletter, and attracted media attention. Its aim was as Masefield’s had been: explicitly “to revive the ancient art of storytelling” (Parkinson 1996). It thus set a further precedent, not simply for what later became known as the storytelling club or session, but for an openly revivalistic approach to storytelling. Another explicitly revivalistic milieu already existed in the folk revival, which was also expanding and

¹⁴ Interview with Ben Haggarty, London, 3rd April 1995 (SCSA/DH/1a). For a general discussion of how these things happen, see Haviland, 1990, 415.

consolidating at about the same time. Sidmouth festival programmed its first storytelling competition in 1979. However, according to folk festival organisers, these and other programming accommodations were merely formal recognitions of existing storytelling activity among festival-goers, often between songs at sessions.¹⁵

Meanwhile, professional storytelling continued to emerge piecemeal. As outlined below, storytelling was fostered in the educational response to racism and cultural deprivation, which remained current as issues (Morgan 1985, 587). In the early 1980s, urban bodies such as the Greater London Council and the Inner London Education Authority promoted inter-cultural understanding through multicultural Saturday schools, children's festivals, and community arts projects. The ILEA employed an advisor on multi-ethnic issues. Theatre-in-Education (TIE) companies were widely used in this work. They had already been used in schools by local education authorities and regional arts associations from the 1970s. With the Lambeth Libraries storytelling scheme still in operation, a number of teacher-storytellers at work, and one fulltime storyteller on the ILEA books, storytelling already had something of a multicultural track record. Now, from the early 1980s, the multicultural use of traditional stories was extended. Many TIE, alternative, street and community theatre companies used them.

It was a natural step for such theatre workers to move towards the actual telling of stories as a performance in its own right. Two influential groups emerged simultaneously, but again independently, in 1981: Common Lore, featuring Helen East, a former storyteller on the Lambeth Libraries scheme, alongside Kevin Graal and Rick Wilson, and the West London Storytelling Unit (WLSU), comprising Ben Haggarty, Godfrey Duncan (performing as TUUP,

¹⁵ Alan Bearman and Malcolm Storey (personal correspondence).

The Unprecedented Unorthodox Preacher), and Daisy Keable. The WLSU was based in the Priory youth club in Acton, which had been an active site for community theatre. It had further roots in Welfare State Circus, which had used traditional stories as a basis for performance pieces. Meanwhile, the work of educators themselves continued. Betty Rosen (1988) has written on her multicultural and storytelling work as a teacher in a Tottenham secondary school in 1981. She invited visiting storytellers, most were non-professionals, and many minority community storytellers were sought out and introduced to a wider audience. In 1982, the Reading Materials for Minority Groups project at Middlesex Polytechnic obtained a three-year grant to produce dual-language children's story-books, featuring stories collected orally, by school- and community-based teams, from members of North London ethnic minorities. Research was co-ordinated by Jennie Ingham, a literacy development worker. The project ended in 1985, but not before it had furnished a direct institutional link between the storytelling traditions of minority communities and the revivalistic movement which was emerging on more common ethnic ground closer to the mainstream. The later history of the project is discussed below.

In the early 1980s, for the first time, there was a fully functioning independent storytelling movement in England. Common Lore, the WLSU and the College of Storytellers had already made contact, and there had been cross-fertilisation. Between late 1982 and 1984, adopting and developing the methods of the College, the WLSU ran monthly "club nights," or sessions for adults. The influence was mutual. The College established a professional troupe, which donated its fees to charity, in accordance with the College's non-commercial ethic. Groups ran workshops as well as performances and sessions: Common Lore and the WLSU met at one. Appropriated stock figures from global traditions, such as Anansi, the West African/Caribbean spider-man, and Mulla Nasrudin, the Turkish fool, entered the common culture of a new and expanded

movement. Storytelling as an adult pastime, as well as a profession, was acquiring a momentum and identity of its own.

These were by no means the only channels through which the new storytelling flowed from education and the libraries into an independent adult context. In 1983 and 1984, Mary Medicott, a former journalist and Lambeth library storyteller since 1980, organised events for Lambeth childcare workers to gauge their opinions of storytelling for children and of the library storytelling scheme. These proved unexpectedly popular, and were extended and developed into an ongoing series of workshops, originally for childcare workers, but subsequently also including parents and teachers, learning how to tell stories to children. Gradually they came to focus less on the children's than on the adults' own interests in story. Meanwhile, from 1984, Hammersmith College ran creative writing meetings under the banner of storytelling. When these ended, one of the group members, Jenny Pearson, also a former journalist, started a new group, Kew Storytellers.¹⁶ Outside London, in 1985, Jean Dunning, an 11-14 teacher reading for a PhD in oral storytelling, started a storytelling discussion group for members of the Leicester branch of the National Association of Teachers of English (NATE). This group diversified into workshops, sessions and performances. In the same year 1985, Jenny Pearson relocated from Kew to the new Waterman's Arts Centre in Brentford, which featured storytelling performance and workshops thereafter. The Waterman's group, like others, developed, and began to insist on, oral and tradition-based storytelling at their events. A shared sense was emerging of what storytelling was, and how it should be done.

Professional storytelling, congruently with its piecemeal emergence, was also initiated by a small number of isolated individuals on their own initiative. Robin

¹⁶ A more detailed resumé of Jenny Pearson's storytelling career is given in Chapter 5.

Williamson, formerly of the countercultural 1960s Incredible String Band, moved in the 1980s, from his *sui generis* myth-mediating acoustic pop, into spoken word and then actual storytelling performance. At the same time, Hugh Lupton, a writer and ex-teacher, started storytelling professionally, at first in order to finance his writing, but later for its own sake. Taffy Thomas, an escapologist and street entertainer well known in the folk “revival,” had told stories as a subsidiary part of his act, but concentrated exclusively on storytelling after suffering a stroke in 1984. Early in his career he was influenced by Ruth Tongue, whom he met at Sidmouth folk festival, and later by the Scottish traveller storyteller Betsy Whyte.

The storytelling profession was, and is, largely freelance. Business has formed a secondary source of employment and sponsorship. Storytellers, however, depend for employment largely on official institutions in receipt of central government funding for education and the arts, and other grant-awarding bodies, and storytelling institutions, like other arts promotion bodies, are often reliant on grant aid from the same sources. These institutions have been of crucial importance and their effect should be borne in mind, including the fact that many storytelling institutions do not receive grant aid and therefore function on a much smaller financial scale. Many small or middle-sized storytelling clubs run largely on audience contributions. Larger-scale storytelling for an adult public has always involved the difficult and uncertain process of applying directly for grant aid. At first, storytelling applications tended to be passed like a buck between literature and performing arts budgets, but in 1984, Lawrence Staig, Eastern Arts literature officer, subsidised storytelling from his budget. This set a precedent, and thereafter storytelling was funded as literature, dovetailing with its bracketing under English rather than drama in the National Curriculum. Grant aid from regional arts associations and officers, and the Arts Councils, became significant, often more

than financially: Lawrence Staig and his successor Richard Ings in East Anglia, David Hart in the West Midlands, and John Rice at Kent Arts and Libraries, have collated information, and organised and funded influential projects.

By this point, developments in Ireland, later significant in their effect on the scene in Britain, were well under way. Liz Weir, at Belfast library, had run storytelling programmes in a variety of venues from the late 1970s onwards. In 1985, a library storytelling course at the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum produced the idea of a monthly session. Yarnspinning, at Belfast's Linen Hall library, began in July 1986, a network of Yarnspinning clubs, and a whole Northern Irish movement, spread from there. In the early 1990s, this new storytelling crossed over into the Republic, and mingled in distinctive ways with established oral tradition, academic folklore studies, and official folklorism (Ryan 1995).

In England, already, by this point, civic anxiety about racist and sexist subtexts was beginning to constrain the ILEA's use of traditional story in education, leading to jarring revisions of European standards along the lines of 'Ebony Black and the Seven Dwarfs' (Mellor, Hemming, and Leggett 1984). However, the ILEA's interest in storytelling had already provided vital impetus to the development of the new storytelling movement, and in time other institutions took up the mantle. A new centre for the emerging storytelling culture came, like so much else, out of education, though this was not the only centralising focus that emerged in the mid-1980s. Despite having published a considerable number of titles before winding up in 1985, Middlesex Polytechnic's Reading Materials for Minority Groups project had clearly hardly scratched the surface of the storytelling traditions of multicultural London. Accordingly, a National Community Folktale Centre, with charitable status, was established at Middlesex Polytechnic in 1986, to continue the project's

work of research, recording and publishing in traditional, rather than revivalistic or professional, storytelling, and to make the archive generally available as a resource to storytellers and other interested parties. Despite assiduous efforts, however, reliable ongoing funding eluded the Centre. Jennie Ingham returned to publishing, and the Centre's future hung in doubt. However, another conspicuous and highly significant point of focus had already been prompted by the success of the WLSU's club nights for adults. Ben Haggarty, of the WLSU, now suspected that an adult market existed for much larger events. Leaving the Unit in 1984, he organised, between 1985 and 1989, a series of three storytelling festivals, the first in England since those of John Masefield's now long defunct Guild. The 1985 Storytelling Festival presented a mixture of storytellers from the new London scene, writers and academics, and two firsts in England, which heralded important new influences. One was the storytelling of Irish and Scottish ethnic travellers, including Duncan Williamson, and the other was Abbi Patrix' French storytelling theatre, known to Ben Haggarty from a sojourn in Paris around 1980. Abbi Patrix' work was associated with *CLiO*,¹⁷ with the work of Peter Brook and Bruno de la Salle, and since 1986 with the *Compagnie du Cercle*. The festival ran at the Old Town Hall, Lavender Hill, from January 28th to February 3rd, 1985. Audience figures were very much higher than promoters expected. Clearly the adult demand for storytelling was not being fully met. A second festival was planned, with a significantly expanded budget. The result was the second International Storytelling Festival, in January 1987, at Waterman's Arts Centre in Brentford, the home of Jenny Pearson's storytelling group, which prompted the use of the venue, and ran sessions in the foyer throughout the week. Abbi Patrix and Duncan Williamson returned. Grace Hallworth was now involved. The second festival was also extremely successful, and enjoyed extensive coverage in the national press. Consequently, Ben Haggarty was invited to run

¹⁷ Centre for Oral Literature.

a third festival at the South Bank Centre, with an £80,000 budget, over sixty times larger than the first.

The international festivals exerted a massive influence on the new storytelling movement, consolidating and extending its culture in a number of ways. Firstly, they were a forum for networking by enthusiasts. Many storytellers hitherto had followed the pattern of Hugh Lupton, who until then had been working as a lone freelance storyteller in street theatre, in schools, and at the countercultural Albion fairs in East Anglia (McKay 1996, 34 - 44). That is to say, they had been solitary agents, unaware of wider developments. The festivals brought Hugh Lupton and many others into contact and, ultimately, collaboration. Secondly, they were copious and innovative exemplars of styles and performances across a wide range of cultures and traditions. The French precedent for adult storytelling theatre bore immediate results. The Storytelling Unit disbanded. Ben Haggarty, Pomme Clayton, and Hugh Lupton put together a self-funded tour of East Anglian village halls late in 1985. They subsequently adopted their current title, The Company of Storytellers. Also about this time, an American actor, Tom Lee, was putting on theatre-based storytelling performances in London; he subsequently joined Jenny Pearson's group. Outside the international festivals themselves, these were the movement's first formal storytelling performances for adult audiences, as opposed to workshops or story-sharing sessions. Historically, this was an important formal development, reintegrating the two defining elements of professional practice and adult audience. Practically, it assisted the promoters of the forthcoming third international festival with a programming problem. Indigenous storytellers had formed the backbone of the first festival, but they were too few to fill two weeks at the South Bank Centre. However, Jenny Pearson's Storyband had played the Chair Theatre in Ladbroke Grove, and the manager had invited her to programme weekly storytelling events. So, whereas

the second festival had created events in its wake, the third threw them up ahead of its coming. The Crick Crack Club, a series of weekly storytellings for adults of the new formal performance type, programmed by Ben Haggarty and Jenny Pearson, opened in September 1988. The motive was to test the growing number of native storytellers before adult audiences, with the forthcoming festival in mind. Shortly afterwards, Jenny Pearson left, and Daniel Morden stepped in. The club ran, with summer breaks, for several years, and diversified its work to become a wider promoting body.

The third International Storytelling Festival was held in November 1989. Of the three, this was by far the biggest, the most lavish, and the most exuberantly multicultural. It featured performers from ten countries, with special emphasis on Celtic, Judaic, Muslim, Native American, Caribbean and Hindu themes. The forty-one guests included, alongside Duncan Williamson, Grace Hallworth and Abbi Patrix, then-unfamiliar figures such as Sheila Stewart and Rob Roy MacGregor, who were bearers of the English-language folktale tradition of the Scottish travellers; Inuit singers; Indian Pandvani singers performing from the *Mahabharata*; and Turkish praise-singers or *ashiks*. Taffy Thomas and the Company of Storytellers represented English revivalistic storytelling. Furthermore, in addition to the London events, guests appeared at twelve venues nationwide in twenty-two supporting events, in what amounted to a countrywide network of simultaneous festivals. The 1989 festival was the last. Exhausted by last-minute wrangling with the South Bank Centre over the programming, Ben Haggarty vowed never to run another festival, “unless,” as he said, “it was in a tent in a field in Yorkshire.”¹⁸

The international festivals were only the most conspicuous of developments in storytelling during the later 1980s. In January 1987, Helen East of Common

¹⁸ Interview with Ben Haggarty, London, 3rd April 1995 (SCSA/DH/1).

Lore had been appointed part-time director of the National Community Folktale Centre for three years. The centre was relaunched, as the National Folktale and Storytelling Centre, in May of that year. It published two story collections, *The Singing Sack* (East 1989) and *Two Tongue Tales* (East *et al.* n.d.), the first directory of storytellers, in 1988, and the second (Cotterill and East 1990). Storytelling in education was also being fostered, in a climate of increasing hardship for schools, within the frameworks of the National Curriculum and the National Oracy Project. Oracy, as a word and an idea, had been current in education at least since the late 1960s (Harvey 1968). The earliest National Curriculum planning reports, from 1988 onward, make little mention of storytelling. Interest in telling, and particularly in traditional story, later increased. Telling and talking about stories, and group representations of story, were discussed by Curriculum planners in 1990 (Aylwin 1994). This was later abandoned, but planners were at least discussing oracy skills and the oral culture of pupils, and the concept of oracy has remained highly current in further revisions of the National Curriculum. For this, the National Oracy Project must take some credit.

The National Oracy Project (NOP) ran from September 1987 to 1991. Originally planned to run till 1993, its final dissemination stage was curtailed. It grew out of a National Writing Project; both were initiatives of the Schools Curriculum Development Committee. The NOP aimed

to enhance the role of speech in the learning process 3 to 19 ... to develop the teaching of oral communication skills across the curriculum [and] to develop methods of assessment of and through speech, including ... public examinations at 16+.¹⁹

19 NOP planning brief, September 1987.

Pilot schemes were run for a year. Thereafter, local educational authorities participated voluntarily at one of three levels. The Project encouraged, co-ordinated, financed and supervised about forty participant local education authorities. These authorities implemented specific teaching programmes on oral skills, or adapted existing subjects to exploit and enhance pupils' oracy, usually assisted by audio and/or video equipment. A newsletter, *Oracy Issues*, a journal, *Talk*, and other publications were issued. A conference was held in March 1989. The Project published its findings in a booklet and video.²⁰ From the educator's point of view, it highlighted the applications of oracy on an unprecedented scale. Storytelling took its place among the many approaches implemented (Norman 1992). From the storyteller's point of view, the Project afforded unrivalled opportunities to acquire professional experience and knowledge: to earn and to learn. It was also another forum for networking among storytellers, who are often solitary performers working in a natural isolation from colleagues.

In fact, and paradoxically, in the mid-1980s, educational storytelling actually benefited "for all the wrong reasons"²¹ from cuts in funding and subsidies for schools, and by Local Management of Schools (LMS), the new funding system introduced in the 1988 Education Reform Act. Under LMS, schools came to control their own budgets, rather than having their funding managed centrally by the local authority as before. Effectively, at this point, storytelling superseded theatre in education. From the point of view of a school, striving to fill its National Curriculum commitments on a limited budget for which it bore sole responsibility, storytelling represented good value for money. It was classified under English, which was a core National Curriculum subject, whereas theatre in education was classified under drama, which was not. Also,

²⁰ *Common Bonds*, Hodder, 1992.

²¹ Mike Wilson (telephone conversation, 15th September 1997).

a solo storyteller, working with minimal equipment, costumes or props, has lower overheads than a theatre company with a group of performers and a range of equipment, and can accordingly accept much lower fees.

Meanwhile, towards the end of the 1980s, the ferment of adult storytelling, punctuated spectacularly by the international festivals, began to spread. Organisations such as the Company of Storytellers and the College of Storytellers extended their operations across the country, and found interest and activity already growing. A countrywide storytelling network was coming into being, coalescing loosely around metropolitan centres. In audience and ambience, storytelling for adults became quite a different *milieu* from storytelling in education, although professional storytellers clearly had the freedom to move between the two spheres and work with both audiences.

From its base in London, the College of Storytellers established regional branches in Tunbridge Wells, West Yorkshire, Bishops Stortford, Brighton, Wiltshire, Somerset and Cornwall. "At its peak in the mid to late eighties, the College had three hundred members" (Parkinson 1996). Rob Parkinson has written in some detail on the Tunbridge Wells branch, in which he was involved. In 1984, like its parent London organisation, to which it was loosely affiliated, the Kent branch established a non-profit-making troupe, which ran concert performances and workshops in hospices, schools, libraries, regional cultural festivals, folk clubs, and other venues. The Crick Crack Club and the Company of Storytellers, meanwhile, formed a single network with shared personnel (most conspicuously Ben Haggarty) and a rather more prescriptive approach derived from professional theatre. The Club ran at the Chair Theatre, then at Kentish Town's Assembly House. Meanwhile, Company members performed and taught extensively within and beyond London, bringing many into the scene, including the Devon storyteller Michael Dacre in 1986, and A

Wing and a Prayer, a session/workshop/performing troupe, which started at Milton Keynes' Madcap Theatre in 1989. The Company's work was often in workshop format, since, ironically, funding for performances was harder to attract.

The monthly group had continued at Waterman's Arts Centre after the 1987 international festival. Margaret Leona, the theatre storyteller of the 1940s, began attending, and running workshops there. Jenny Pearson had left the group around 1988, and obtained a two year seeding grant from Camden Council to start a new monthly storytelling club. Entitled the Camden Ceilidh, and featuring a mix of guest and floor storytellers, it opened in 1989.

1990 saw a high point of media interest in the new form, which publicised the movement on a spectacular scale. Channel 4 commissioned and ran a 4-part documentary series, *By Word of Mouth*, devised and produced by Mary Medlicott. The series attracted a total audience of between two and two and a half million. The accompanying booklet (Medlicott 1990) was Channel 4's best selling publication to date. Revivalistic storytelling, despite its ambivalent attitude to technological mediation, had benefited greatly from the involvement of journalists and others in the media, and from supportive and insightful media coverage (Joffe 1989, Medlicott 1990, Pearson 1995). *By Word of Mouth* presented a snapshot of the storytelling movement in England c.1990. Voice-overs, commentary, and background were kept to a minimum. Instead, a shifting collage was presented of a wide variety of storytellers at work, interspersed with interviews in which they described the context, purposes and meaning of their work. Educationalists such as Harold and Betty Rosen, librarians such as Eileen Colwell and Grace Hallworth, theatre and schools storytellers such as Common Lore and the College and Company of Storytellers, and ethnic traveller storytellers such as Mikeen McCarthy were

featured. Adult-audience performances, workshops, and school sessions were portrayed. The final episode consisted of a showcase of Betty Rosen's classroom story-teaching techniques, in the form of multiple retellings of the ballad-story *The Suffolk Miracle* by schoolchildren in her classes.²² *By Word of Mouth* was influential publicity for storytelling. In 1991, Mary Medlicott followed it up with *Time for Telling*, a book of stories in versions by contemporary storytellers based in Britain.

The years around 1990, the period of the third International Storytelling Festival, and of the screening of *By Word of Mouth*, were, in terms certainly of scale, and arguably of vision, the zenith of a revivalistic storytelling culture which had emerged around London and the South-East gradually since the 1970s. Observing the scene at this time, it would have been reasonable to suppose that London storytelling institutions would consolidate their position as the natural centre for the countrywide scene. This was nearly achieved on more than one occasion. By the early 1990s, however, it was clear that it was not going to happen. The obvious focus for the movement was the National Folktale Centre at Middlesex Polytechnic, which had provided a quite invaluable focus, researching, collecting and networking. By the late 1980s, the NCFC was struggling financially. Eventually the Polytechnic withdrew the offer of premises, no new premises were found, and, sadly, the Centre closed in January 1990.²³ Secondly, the College of Storytellers, now a countrywide network loosely centred on London, disbanded in 1991. Its founding objective, to revive adult storytelling, had been manifestly achieved, and its influence on later storytelling continues. Besides functioning as a general precedent, it has direct offshoots in storytelling clubs in Brighton, and perhaps elsewhere, and

²² Child 272 (Child 1898, 58 - 67). E215 *The Dead Rider (Lenore)*, E310 *dead lover's friendly return*.

²³ It is to be hoped that its extensive archive, and that of its parent Reading Materials for Minority Groups Project, will be made accessible at some point in the future.

former members participate at every level. Thirdly, about 1992, the Crick Crack Club failed in an attempt to consolidate its standing as the hub of a countrywide network. The club obtained an Arts Council grant to explore the possibility of a countrywide network of twelve permanent storytelling venues, by means of a pilot tour, the Crick Crack Circuit. As at the National Folktale Centre, a successful one-off, in this case the 1989 festival touring network, had suggested a permanent equivalent. The rationale, as in 1989, was to make overseas guests affordable through economies of scale. Like the Centre, however, the Circuit did not secure ongoing funding, and the preliminary tour was not followed up, except by one venue. St Donat's Arts Centre, near Llantwit Major, had since 1988 programmed storytelling for children and adults in and around the Centre, mostly by the Company of Storytellers, and subsequently by the Centre's resident troupe. Larger-scale storytelling in more prestigious venues was still dependent on grant aid; the paying customer alone could not support it. By 1992, therefore, three possible candidates for a hub or focus for the countrywide movement had foundered, mostly for reasons related to funding. But the scale and vitality of the movement itself were increasing, and these developments were therefore concentrated as it were by default at the lower end of the financial scale.

4.5 Revivalistic storytelling 1990 to 1998

Although the growth in storytelling accelerated sharply around 1990, this growth was not without antecedents, and to understand it fully it is necessary once again to recapitulate. During the mid- to late 1980s, as described above, both the movement in general, and the storytelling profession, had been attracting new participants through media exposure, performance and development work throughout the country. This process can be discerned in

the several reports on the movement and directories of storytellers published in the later 1980s and early 1990s, as described below. In 1981, there were three new, larger storytelling organisations: the WLSU, the College of Storytellers, and Common Lore, and a small number of more solitary veterans such as Roberto Lagnado. In 1981, then, there were therefore perhaps a dozen full- or part-time professional storytellers in England and Wales. By 1990, according to the directory compiled by Linda Cotterill and Helen East for the National Folktale Centre, there were at least a hundred solo performers, nine duos, and twelve groups of three or more (Cotterill and East 1990). This represents a tenfold increase over ten years. Growth continued. By 1992, the directory update compiled by Tony Aylwin listed a total of 191 solo storytellers, eight duos, and eight groups: twenty times the 1981 estimate, and twice that of two years before (Aylwin 1992). The 1995 directory published by the Society for Storytelling listed 135 solo storytellers and six groups, rising to 157 solo artists and eight groups in the 1995 update: a slight falling-off from 1992 (anonymous, 1995). These directories were not exhaustive, but it is clear that the profession increased in numbers throughout the 1980s, and furthermore mushroomed remarkably in the very early 1990s - if anything, more dramatically than the directories suggest.

The Elephant and the Four Counties, Rob Parkinson's 1996 report on storytelling in the South-East, corroborates the idea of steady growth, mushrooming around 1990. Fulltime professional respondents in the report had track-records of between five and 16 years. This suggests that these fulltime professionals had typically begun their careers between the mid-1970s and 1990. However, the majority of less experienced and part-time tellers register, on average, 6.6 years, which suggests that as a body they tended to enter the profession towards the end of this period. Parkinson's figures therefore suggest that the years of growth were the 1980s, particularly the end of that decade.

By comparison with the veterans, most of the newcomers were part-time rather than fulltime storytellers. This suggests that the growth spurt came a little earlier than the directories imply: shortly before, rather than shortly after, 1990. Parkinson's focus was on south-eastern England, and it is plausible that the boom period began slightly earlier here than in the country as a whole. Alternatively, the discrepancy may be explained by the differences in the data recorded in the directories and the data recorded in Parkinson's report. The directories record synchronic data, simply listing practising storytellers without systematic inquiry into career histories and patterns. By contrast, Parkinson directly asked informants about the duration of their involvement. The discrepancy between the directories (which record a boom in the early 1990s) and *The Elephant and the Four Counties* (which records a boom in the late 1980s) could result from a lag of a few years, between a point in the late 1980s when the mass of new storytellers began to take their first steps in professional practice, and the later point by which they had attained the confidence and motivation to register themselves in the national directories of the early 1990s. Whatever the reason for the discrepancy, the overall pattern one of continuous growth throughout the 1980s, accelerating most sharply some time around 1990, and then levelling off.

The newcomers came, according to Parkinson's report, from a range of backgrounds. Teaching and education remained most common, followed by theatre. Family tradition, literature, music, and the folk revival also figured. Importantly, many of these new professionals, unlike the earlier pioneers, were able to build on the more unified storytelling culture which had emerged during the 1980s, and spread through the work of groups like the Company and College of Storytellers. The predominance of professional and middle-class backgrounds is noticeable. *The Elephant and the Four Counties* also paints a useful picture of the kinds of work available to the professional storyteller at

this time. Apart from the fundamentally important schools and libraries, storytellers performed in higher and further education and training colleges, theatres, arts centres, museums, art galleries, parks, outdoor centres, pubs, hospitals, prisons, bookshops, youth clubs, retirement homes, places of worship, restaurants and zoos, at story clubs, folk clubs, cultural festivals, private functions, fairs, weddings, business courses, Women's Institutes, and playschemes, with special needs groups, for local councils and literature development agencies, and in the media. 64% of reported work was performance, 26% was in a workshop format. 58% of audiences were of school age, 35% were adult, and 7% were mixed. In a typical year, it is estimated, a single professional storyteller would perform to about 12,900 people, and about two million people countrywide would witness professional storytelling in some form: that is, an eighth of a popular television soap opera's audience per episode; or the total audience for *By Word of Mouth*.

Furthermore, in the early 1990s as in the early 1980s, a sharp increase in the numbers of professional and semi-professional storytellers dovetailed with an enlarged adult audience, and fed into a corresponding explosion in the numbers of storytelling groups and organisations, and the eventual emergence of new and more eclectic types of storytelling organisation.²⁴ There is a link to the expansion of the professional body of storytellers, in that many of those who ran the new organisations were, or became, professional and semi-professional storytellers of the kind discussed immediately above. Many of the new storytelling clubs, such as those in Devon, Newcastle and Sheffield, were elements of a range of programming in a variety of professional and other contexts. The expansion of the profession and the spread of clubs are therefore aspects of a single process. Many new networks derived from existing

²⁴ The following discussion concentrates on the storytelling clubs; it is not exclusive, and other parallel networks may have existed.

institutions, mostly based in the capital. The Crick Crack Club continued to run, at the South Bank Centre, Battersea Arts Centre, and the Candid Café. Its ancillary events included a monthly all-comers' session, and a Lying Competition held annually between 1992 and 1995. A sister Crick Crack Club was running in Norwich by 1991, organised by Hugh Lupton of the Company of Storytellers; this club programmed a festival in June 1992. The Crick Crack Club published a journal, *The Crack*, at irregular intervals, after February 1993. Milton Keynes' A Wing and a Prayer, and Jenny Pearson's Camden Ceilidh had both by this point been running since 1989. Over New Year 1990 - 91, group which Jenny Pearson had founded at Waterman's Arts Centre renamed itself The Circle of Storytellers, and moved to the Friends' Meeting House in Ealing, where it met monthly until 1997. Meanwhile, from Autumn 1991, Richard Montagu, originally of the Waterman's group, published the movement's first newsletter, *Facts and Fiction*, which appeared on a quarterly basis from autumn 1991 until late 1992.

Many other organisations were entirely new, however, and these were often markedly more eclectic in their approach. The Eltham-based Storytelling in Hope is a case in point. Following his work in education, Tony Aylwin, Margaret Spencer's former MA student, had discovered the wider storytelling movement in 1987, on a course run by Pomme Clayton of the Company of Storytellers. He had subsequently run a storytelling club for students at Greenwich University, where, from the late 1970s, he had lectured in education. On his retirement in 1992, he opened a monthly storytelling club, Storytelling in Hope, at the Bob Hope theatre in Eltham, South London. The club was self-funding until July 1994, when it received the first of several grants from the London Arts Board. Besides core events, it ran workshops and maintained a resident troupe, Storytellers on Supply. There is a subtle shift of emphasis in these developments. Previously, lacking precedents or the support

of an established scene, organisations such as the College of Storytellers or the Storytelling Unit had tended to start with quite specific approaches and objectives, such as to revive adult storytelling, to create a storytelling profession, or to work professionally in education. Only subsequently had they broadened their remit, often through contact with other groups. In the 1990s, then, older groups therefore tended to retain some sense that, even within a diverse spread of activities, there was one specific kind of storytelling which, more than others, was their special concern. By contrast, starting with a clean slate, but at the same time with the precedent of ten years' diverse development by other organisations, Storytelling in Hope, like A Wing and a Prayer, aimed from the outset to spread its net as widely as possible over the range of available options. This new approach had implications for the structure and ideology of the movement.

Furthermore, as well as combining existing precedents in new ways, the new organisations also worked from other models hitherto less intimately tied to the movement. The storytelling movement had revitalised storytelling within the folk scene. Sidmouth programmed storytelling sessions - at which all comers could tell stories - from 1988. Storytelling performances and workshops followed in 1991. Festival-going storytellers such as Richard Walker and Peter Clarke, rather than festival organisers, took storytelling on their own initiative from Sidmouth festival to Whitby, where storytelling events were soon similarly featured on the folk festival programme. Performers such as Hugh Lupton, Roy Dyson, Richard Walker and Taffy Thomas had long combined involvement in both storytelling and folk music. In turn, many folk performers and enthusiasts were drawn into the storytelling scene, but the folk music "revival" was only one of a number of antecedents whose influence was now brought to bear. Another was psychotherapy. Since Freud and Jung, many writers developed the therapeutic applications of traditional and mythic story

(von Franz 1990, 1993, 1996, Bettelheim 1976, Stein and Corbett 1991). Concomitantly, some including the storyteller and psychotherapist Kelvin Hall of Gloucestershire, applied it directly to storytelling performance (Estés 1992, Gersie and King 1990). Therapeutic approaches, in turn, have influenced other practitioners and writers who have applied myth and story to a wider range of spiritual, healing, personal and developmental contexts (Bly 1991, Stewart 1990, Moorey 1996, Campbell 1973, 1993). These developments have been fruitful and influential, but their larger claims regarding the interpretation of myth and traditional story outside therapeutic contexts have been probingly reviewed by Leith (1998), and conclusively rejected by Holbek (1987, 259 - 322).

The creation and spread of new networks began slowly. The earliest of the new clubs was Tales at the Edge, held monthly at the Wenlock Edge Inn in Shropshire, which began in September 1989. As this club is the object of detailed study below, the full story of its inception is recounted in the following chapter. Its founders were the late Richard Walker, a fulltime storyteller, Mike Rust, a farmer, and Amy Douglas, then at school, aged fourteen. Amy Douglas remembers that around 1988 - 89, Tales at the Edge and the Crick Crack Club seemed to be the only storytelling clubs in England, but, as noted above, the Camden Ceilidh, the Circle of Storytellers and the Norwich Crick Crack Club were soon to follow.

Meanwhile, wholly new clubs began with sessions in private houses. Regional branches of the College of Storytellers had hosted storytelling sessions in their homes from the early 1980s. Between 1989 and 1992, three new series of regular house- sessions were begun. These were held in Brighton; in Sheffield, under the auspices of the late Peter Clarke, like Mike Rust a traditional dance storyteller; and in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. 1992, like 1981, was a year in which

something seemed to be in the air, leading to the polygenetic emergence of new networks as house-sessions overflowed into public space. Five new institutions appeared: three public clubs, of which two derived from the house-sessions just mentioned; a regional storytellers' co-operative; and an annual festival. In April, Yarns, Tales and Lies opened at the Grapes Inn in Sheffield, and the Brighton group opened as a public monthly club at the Volunteer, with funding from South-Eastern Arts. In September, Tales at the Tiger opened in Long Eaton, Derbyshire, a storytelling offshoot of a folk club, and Wendy Dacre, a Devon-based singer/community artist, established the Mouth, a regional co-operative for semi- or fully professional storytellers. Also in 1992, Shropshire's Tales at the Edge began a three-year pilot run of festivals at Stokes' Barn, a countryside centre. Festival at the Edge has been held annually since.

Growth continued into the following year, with no fewer than 10 new institutions and events claiming a place in the account: six new monthly clubs, an ongoing promoting body, and three annual festivals. In 1993 Lies and Legends at Leicester opened at the Rainbow and Dove. In February, a monthly club opened at Jacob's Ladder, Falmouth, as one of a number of storytelling projects organised by Sally Tonge, a regional verbal arts co-ordinator on the precedent of Ireland's Verbal Arts Centre, which had opened in Derry in 1993. The club moved in 1995 to the Seven Stars Inn. In May 1993, Kent Arts and Libraries started Storytellers Live!, an organisation promoting performances, workshops, and sessions, at Strood Library. Storytellers Live! subsequently moved to Rochester Library, and in 1995, library links broken, became resident at The Chequered Flag in Chatham. From September to December 1993 there were sessions at the Black Bull in Blidworth, Nottinghamshire, and in October a Scunthorpe club, Total Tales, opened. A non-commercial session, the Mid-Devon Story Club, began at Spreyton's Tom Copley Tavern in November.

Birmingham's Brummagem Blarney opened in December. 1993 also saw a South Yorkshire Storytelling Weekend, organised by a coalition of local arts and government bodies. In the same year, the first North Pennine Storytelling Festival took place, under the direction of Sally Greenaway. Meanwhile, the Crick Crack Club and St Donat's Arts Centre extended their collaboration with the first of a series of annual festivals, *Beyond the Border*, the closest obvious successor to the international festivals of the 1980s, and so Ben Haggarty, his earlier exasperated vow notwithstanding, returned to festival promotion in a castle on a cliff in Wales, rather than a tent in a field in Yorkshire. *Beyond the Border* has been the most lavishly conspicuous of more recent festivals, exploring, innovating, showcasing, and teaching predominantly performance and theatre-based storytelling.

The development of the club scene levelled off from 1994: although nine new monthly clubs opened (one derived from a regular house-session), five closed; meanwhile, a new umbrella group was formed. *Tales at the Tiger* closed in November. The Mid-Devon Story Club closed in January 1995, *Total Tales* in March. Meanwhile, Newcastle's *A Bit Crack*, in which Sally Greenaway was also involved, opened a club in February 1994, at the Cumberland Arms in Byker. Liza Watts established an umbrella group, Leicester Guild of Storytellers. New clubs appeared. From February 1994, Roy Dyson ran *Tall Tales and Short Stories* at Nottingham's Rushcliffe Leisure Centre. In November, he replaced this with *Tall Tales at the Trip* at the *Olde Trip to Jerusalem* in Nottingham. This became a runaway success. After a number of successful house-sessions, Alan Sparkes organised *Tales at the Wharf*, at Stubbings Wharf in Hebden Bridge. He subsequently opened another club at *On the Eighth Day*, in Manchester. These clubs run beginners' workshops. Two new York clubs attracted small audiences, and one closed. *Tales at the Pantiles*, named after an area of Tunbridge Wells, descends from the South-

Eastern Storytellers' Forum, which first met in June 1994. Organised by Rob Parkinson, it is an echo of the College of Storytellers Tunbridge branch, which had used the venue. The Carlisle Storytelling Group opened a club in April 1995, but closed it after about a year. A club opened in Avebury, and new clubs were being planned for Reigate, Canterbury, and Malvern during 1995. 1995 was also the year in which Margaret Leona, the 1940s actor/storyteller and Waterman's workshop leader, died (Pearson 1995). This almost exhausts concrete information held on developments. Tony Aylwin's directory (1994) also mentioned clubs in Lichfield at the King George, and Southampton, and a Devon house-session, Tipi Tellers. There is a Penzance dialect-based session, Word of Mouth, recalling the links, never quite broken, to indigenous vernacular storytelling culture. A club ran briefly at Spilsby Theatre in Lincolnshire. Kelvin and Barbara Hall now run a Ballads and Stories workshop/discussion group for tellers at Ruskin Mill in Nailsworth in Gloucestershire, in tandem with a series of concert performances. In 1997, the Crick Crack Club closed for a time,²⁵ and Ben Haggarty opened a storytelling research and training centre in Wiltshire. In 1996, guests were reintroduced at Tales at the Edge.

This exhausts information held on storytelling clubs to 1998, which may be summarised as follows. Only two institutions in the mid-1990s were direct continuations from the old London storytelling scene - the London Crick Crack Club and the Circle of Storytellers. More were indirect offshoots from the London scene: the Beyond the Border festival at St Donat's Castle; A Wing and a Prayer in Milton Keynes; the Norwich Crick Crack Club; the Camden Ceilidh, and the newsletter *Facts and Fiction*. Most of the activity reviewed, however, was largely independent. One new club is recorded for 1989 (in Shropshire), followed by three in 1992, six in 1993, and nine in 1994, balanced

²⁵ The London Crick Crack Club reopened in 1998.

by five closures; a net gain of 14 monthly clubs over the six years 1989 - 1995. For the same period there is fragmentary evidence for another six regular meetings or clubs of which the history is little known, and three more new clubs were being planned in 1995. In the same period three annual festivals were inaugurated (besides *Beyond the Border*), and three new ongoing promoting bodies were founded. In the mid-1990s, then, there seem to have been about 23 operative monthly storytelling meetings, four annual festivals, three dedicated storytelling promotion organisations, and a quarterly newsletter. No systematic research has been conducted into developments since 1995, but the present writer's impression is that, despite minor fluctuations, including the closure of older clubs and the appearance of newer ones, the storytelling movement operates today (mid-2001) on a scale similar to or perhaps slightly larger than that observed during fieldwork in 1996. Although a dramatic increase in proportion with the storytelling movement's previous development, the scale of this boom should be borne in mind. In 1987, somewhat after the heyday of the folk music club, a folk music agency, Acorn Entertainments, was still dealing with 864 folk clubs, of which the typical example had been running for 20 years (Mackinnon 1993, 34). Storytelling revivalism has never been comparable in scale with folk music revivalism.

As noted above, the new scene was arguably more diverse and eclectic, and less centred on London, than the old. Eventually, controversy between the old metropolitan centres and the newer provincial networks broke out on the pages of *Facts and Fiction* in early 1992, when the sharp increase in the numbers of professional storytellers had already occurred, and the new club scene was just about to take off. The second issue included an edited version of a piece by Ben Haggarty, of the Crick Crack Club and the Company of Storytellers, suggesting standards for the assessment of professional storytelling, drafted

during the planning for the third international festival. After ten years of international festivals, other large-scale projects, and performance within a fully professionalised ethos, the Crick Crack Club was conspicuous within the storytelling scene for its relative success in gaining media exposure and grant aid. Compared with the Crick Crack Club, however, many of the newer clubs had a demotic, semi-professional or non-commercial ethos, and ran on smaller budgets, including smaller grants, ticket sales, and organisers' goodwill, and programming a mixture of paid and unpaid telling. Many were also rather less experienced. The newcomers were learning on the hoof, by trial and error, just as the older practitioners had done in the early 1980s. But the older practitioners were now something of a relatively settled establishment, and "The aim of the High is to remain where they are" (Orwell 1981 (1948), 163). They perceived an underlying and problematic paradox: that is, the newcomers were opportunistically assuming equal professional status but, allegedly, without the performance skills which older cadres had honed through ten years of similar opportunism: "The aim of the Middle is to replace the High" (Orwell 1981 (1948), 163). But now, it was suggested, storytelling enjoyed some credibility in the wider arts world, which manifest incompetence within the profession might undermine. These issues overlaid anxieties about discrepancies in levels of grant aid and freelance professional charges, and contested advocacy rights for storytelling as a whole. Some therefore feared that hard-won standards were being complacently eroded, others that false ones were being arrogantly imposed, and the article was passionately, at times vitriolically, debated in subsequent issues and elsewhere. Early in 1993, Richard Walker, of *Tales at the Edge*, took over the editorship of *Facts and Fiction* and relaunched it as a magazine. Meanwhile, the controversy spread beyond its pages. Ben Haggarty developed his theme in a paper for a Sfs/FLS²⁶ conference in May 1995, again provoking heated debate. He

presented it again to participants at the Beyond the Border summer school in July, and met scarcely a murmur of dissent. A further revised version was published by the SfS (Haggarty 1995). It was presented to the 1996 annual gathering, and met with a less polarised reception;²⁷ the adversarial heat appeared to have abated. In fact, Ben Haggarty's contentions represent the telling insights of a dedicated and experienced arts promoter. But they are far from disinterested, and seem to assume that the contingencies of revivalism represent the universal qualities of oral narrative tradition. All sides therefore had a point. There is no apparent possibility of fairly or authoritatively regulating entry into professional storytelling, or practice within it. Unlike professional singers in the second folk music "revival," who served apprenticeships as unpaid floor singers and club residents, there is little dedicated space for probationary practice by new or would-be professionals, who therefore go straight into competition with more experienced colleagues for work in diverse and often highly taxing performance environments. However, the professional body is small, generally dependent on the same practical processes of learning by experience, and often reliant on good sociable relations with colleagues for developmental and practical career support. Direct, informal interpersonal criticism or rejection is not, therefore, easily voiced. The profession has weak internal checks on charlatanism and incompetence in individual cases. Meanwhile, the market place similarly imposes inadequate external checks. Again unlike the early professional folk singers, who played to relatively knowledgeable and sympathetic folk club audiences, formal professional storytellers rely on a general public and on promoting bodies who are neither familiar with nor necessarily well disposed towards professional storytelling as a whole. Having gambled money on the unfamiliar idea of a storyteller, and engaged a poor one, an audience or promoting body may well not bother looking for better storytellers, but, rather,

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Tape recordings of many of these discussions were made by the SfS.

abandon storytelling altogether and spend their money on some other form. The problems in essence are structural and practical, and beyond simple solution. They seem, however, to derive ultimately from the difficulty of professionalising a vernacular art form in a cultural context (that of the British Isles) which lacks any relevant precedent either in its source narrative traditions or in other traditional arts revivalistic movements, within which professional status has tended to be a useful but unusual and rather peripheral feature. As observed in Chapter 2, professionalisation places unusual strains and demands even on proficient source-tradition bearers, and may be avoided by them for this very reason. A thoroughly commercial context is not one within which a provisional and experimental revivalistic movement is ultimately likely to thrive.

From the present study's point of view, this debate is of interest for several reasons. It exemplifies the problems of professionalising vernacular performance, and the internal and external effects of the lack of a shared aesthetic noted by scholars as significant. Most of the arguments proposed were practically concerned with the artistic and social exigencies of the scene, but revivalistic and vitalistic ideas often lurked in the background. In a letter to *Facts and Fiction* 4, Betty Rosen wrote:

As you imply in your editorial, there is room for all kinds [i.e. of storytelling], but there must surely be a distinction to be drawn between the performance and The Performance of storytelling! There are those who ... are able to practise their skills confidently anywhere, anytime, be it Battersea, the South Bank, or in a tinkies' tent. These are Performers. Then (not to be sniffed at) there are the rest of us. ...

The act of retelling folk stories ... shines a candle in an otherwise naughty and synthetic media dominated world.

These often fraught developments in specialist and performance storytelling should not eclipse the considerable continuity of expansion of storytelling in teacher training and research since about 1989. It had grown from a predominantly early-year role, into secondary, drama, and language education. As described above, this had led to in-service pastime storytelling sessions, at Bedford HE College, and at Greenwich University, courtesy of Tony Aylwin. The number of conferences on storytelling in education increased rapidly after 1990. Today, many courses and groups, often bringing in the services of professional storytellers, cater to teachers' interests in storytelling. Jean Dunning's Leicester NATE discussion group continues. Harold and Betty Rosen's London Narrative Group continues to meet at the London Institute for Education. Storytelling, as a performance skill, is taught at Middlesex and Derby Universities, and at Bretton Hall University College. Emerson College, a residential Steiner adult education college in East Sussex, has since 1988 had the professional storyteller Ashley Ramsden on its drama staff. It has run performances and workshops and, since 1992, an annual three-week storytelling symposium. In 1994, a three-month residential School of Storytelling opened at Emerson College.

As noted above, revivalistic storytelling in both England and Wales has resisted the national centralisation which characterises it in the US and elsewhere. When the National Folktale Centre folded, Tony Aylwin, of Greenwich School of Education and Storytelling in Hope, personally assumed the function of an information point, incorporating an update of the 1990 Directory in his *Traditional Storytelling and Education* (Aylwin 1994). But in 1992 a countrywide rather than a formally national Society for Storytelling was first mooted, and inaugurated in Birmingham in June 1993, at the high point of the latest wave of expansion. The Society has since been hampered by budgetary and other practical restrictions, and has relied heavily on the goodwill, and

usually unpaid time, of directors and active members. Furthermore, to preserve impartiality, the Society does not endorse individual storytellers, which effectively precludes directly-organised Society storytelling performances. These practical and policy constraints have led many to find it rather irrelevant. It has meanwhile begun to define itself as a facilitator and a platform for dialogue, sponsoring conferences and publications, gathering and disseminating information, promoting debate and discussion within the movement, and acting as an advocate and facilitator of storytelling outside it, in the arts and education, to business, and generally.

4.6 Conclusion

A cyclical broadening process can be discerned within this history. Periodically, a largely stable movement endures upheaval as new constituencies and types of storytelling are generated or encountered, and then incorporated, through adaptation and sometimes disagreement. There follows a time of stability and consolidation, which is subsequently interrupted again. Each time, the common culture of the movement is expanded and enriched, and becomes more diverse. To illustrate: the starting point for what later became the storytelling movement was a late Victorian schoolteacher's technique, with an ancillary, rather literary adult audience, set in a largely Herderian ambience of literary appropriation. In the first turn through this cycle, which lasted from the 1880s up till the 1960s, this storytelling moved into children's libraries, and took on children's librarians as a new performing body. In the 1960s, furthermore, it revitalised its radical political consciousness, and embraced the troubled but richly multicultural inner cities. It remained, by and large, the preserve of conventional professional educators. Thereafter the cycle was repeated more rapidly, roughly at ten-year intervals. In a second move, from 1972, an embryonic specialist storytelling profession, the first of the two defining factors

of a revivalistic storytelling movement, emerged, in Lambeth and through ILEA. In a third move, beginning about 1980-1981, newcomers, many from performing arts backgrounds, further expanded the profession and increased its independent character, as a larger market for storytelling in education was created as a by-product of social change and official policy. With mysterious simultaneity, the second of the two defining characteristics, an independent adult storytelling scene, arose. These two elements coalesced throughout the 1980s into a network of festivals, sessions, workshops and clubs, at all levels of commercialisation, spreading outwards from London and the South-East, in the first establishment of a common culture under the separate heading of a revivalistic storytelling movement. In a fourth move, from about 1990, further growth and diversification on an unprecedented scale redefined the profession, often stressfully, and transformed the adult scene, as, countrywide, a new, more eclectic and less centralised storytelling network emerged. Some of the beneficiaries of the previous round of expansion resisted the subsequent round of growth and development, but to little practical effect.

If this narrative is set alongside the larger tendencies noted in the prehistory of revivalistic storytelling, it becomes clear that the larger ambience of mediation has been preserved. Firstly, its development reproduces the ancient, ambivalent formal relationship which both source tradition and later mediation have always had to children as an audience, overlying an actual involvement with adult audiences, and to women as a performing and creating group; and, moreover, it continues the mediation of this tradition into more official and orthodox channels. The movement began precisely when librarians and other adult professional educators, often women in official, institutionally feminised and slightly marginal contexts such as children's libraries, used their professional involvement in stories as the pretext to enjoy stories themselves; or, conversely, when adults such as Eileen Colwell shaped their professional

interest so as to indulge their own delight in traditional tales. Some press coverage has been rather supercilious in tone, but overall the nearest approach to wholesale dismissals of storytelling revivalism has been in the scholarly literature reviewed in Chapter 2. This has tended to oppose it on opposite grounds from the historically usual, that is on the grounds that it is not vernacular or heterodox enough; though here, in an odd topsy-turvy sense, revivalism, which exists on the margins of the margins, is in fact being dismissed as a heterodoxy, as argued in Chapter 2. Certainly, within revivalism, interpretation of folktales as narratives of family without wider sociopolitical meanings, in the modern form of psychotherapeutic allegory, have been consistently preferred to the less reassuring social and political allegorical readings offered by Zipes and Holbek. The movement is perhaps not large enough to attract defensive hostility from other quarters. It is apparently a largely educated, middle-class appropriation or recasting of vernacular narrative culture, within which certain genres are appropriated within an attenuatedly iconoclastic ideological context. This had to do initially with the cultural deprivations of race, and thereafter and more generally with the effects of the mass media, especially of television, and the perceived impoverishment of indigenous mainstream oral narrative culture. In this respect it is interesting both that television is more widely associated with the decay of oral narrative traditions (McDermitt 1985), and that, globally, the early years of storytelling revivalism fall just as the television becomes settled as a normative fixture in the homes of the affluent world. There are, however, two unique differences of revivalistic storytelling compared with the constant current of mediation post-Perrault. Firstly, the socially and structurally situated performance channels whereby forms are mediated is a dedicated and separate one, and one moreover which, despite the innovative professionalisation of core activity, consciously strives to reproduce the vernacular channels of the source traditions as revivalists understand them. That is to say: revivalists do not

simply use tales as the basis for print literature, music, or other arts; they try to tell the tales in the oral manner in which the tales were formerly told. Secondly, apparently for the first time, the adult audience of mediated tales is receiving explicit recognition and attention.

The final point to be noted about this process of development is the way in which it has proceeded largely by a tradition-like process of external exemplification. Individuals such as John Masefield, Robin Williamson and Hugh Lupton, who conceived the idea of formal, selfconscious storytelling performance largely on their own initiative, are comparatively rare. The typical pattern, by contrast, is for activity to begin with the direct imitation of the inspirational example of another storyteller or storytelling institutions. This process operates at once at institutional and personal levels. An awareness of genealogical relationships between particular groups and institutions is crucial to an understanding of the development of storytelling revivalism. It explains the broadening of remit which early organisations underwent under mutual influence in the mid-1980's, and the more eclectic founding approach of the later organisations such as Storytelling in Hope. It contributes to the important introduction by the Company of Storytellers of storytelling to non-interactive adult audiences, partly on the precedent of French storytelling theatre, and an ongoing relationship with Abbi Patrix, a leading figure within it. Such relationships exist between the Company of Storytellers and its ancillary networks such as A Wing and a Prayer at Milton Keynes, and between the College of Storytellers and the storytelling clubs at Brighton and Tunbridge Wells. In Shropshire, indigenous local narrative culture, folk dance storytelling, folk drama and children's entertainment coalesced into storytelling clubs and festivals through the persons of Mike Rust and Richard Walker, but only when a professional storyteller visited the area. The general pattern was well summarised in interview by Hugh Lupton (SCSA/DH/2a, c. 42:00ff.):

There's a sort of a sense of ferment, and then something happens which crystallises it, and then it comes into being. That seems to be the pattern everywhere.

Similar quasi-genealogical relationships exist between the careers of individuals. Even Roberto Lagnado, apparently the first revivalistic professional storyteller in the UK, was imitating North African street storytellers encountered on a trip to Morocco. David Ambrose, director of St Donat's Arts Centre, dates his involvement in revivalistic storytelling from observing Ben Haggarty at work in a school (SCSA DH/12a, 7:37 - 10:25):

Immediately I *knew* that I was watching something that I'd been, it's not too much to say, looking out for and in need of most of my life, because it was bringing together a whole series of interests of mine ... the folk arts ... any art form that seems to permit a high degree of self-expression by the performer. ... myth, and ... magic ...

Similarly, a crucial conceptual shift occurred for Jenny Pearson through exemplification (*italics indicate emphatic speech*) (SCSA/DH/4a):

People did all sorts of things in this group [i.e., the Kew storytelling group] that were not what I call storytelling at all. But one young woman got up, and she told, without script, the story of The Frog Prince. And she really told it well. And *something just lit up in my soul*, and I thought, "That's for me." And I just never looked back.

There is thus a sense in which the very idea of revivalistic storytelling - as well as, or rather than, any specific story - is itself shaped by the chain of collective authorship which is the primary and standard definition of tradition. This developmental process is diachronically and objectively traditional, rather than traditionalising. This consideration finally permits a sense of the global causation of revivalistic storytelling. There are two classes of factors, loosely considerable as preconditions and conditions. Firstly, there is a necessary

preconditional environment, which in its most general sense comprises the largely capitalist and technological expansion of the *Umgang* or sphere of habitual contact. Within this large movement, it has become a consistent habit or tradition of educated persons to appropriate and adapt vernacular culture as, so to speak, a softly heterodox counterbalance, possibly shorn of its more radical implications. In the twentieth century, moreover, interestingly as the intellectual awareness of the nature of art shifted from a largely text-based view to one encompassing context and function, this habit or tradition overflowed from inculcating vernacular influences in conventional textual genres into attempting to create something comparable to a vernacular ambience and channel of performance. Finally, the technologisation of mainstream narrative culture increased mid-century, with television establishing a pervasive presence. Here, the preconditions of oral storytelling revivalism were more or less fully in place, and the movement was already beginning to stir polygenetically at several independent starting points over the affluent world.

This argument begs the question why Masefield's "revival" did not take root; the preconditional environment was approximately the same, and Masefield's ideas and approaches were not significantly different from those of later and more successful revivalists. On the evidence collated, the answer appears to be that John Masefield was trying to create a "revival" *ex nihilo*. He endured a lack of institutional support relative to that enjoyed by later storytellers as a result of educational moves against cultural deprivation. His working model of storytelling was that of formal theatrical performance unaffected by the freedom, experiment and countercultural iconoclasm of the later 1960s. He also lacked the precedents of in-service work in education during the 1970s by figures such as Harold Rosen and Margaret Spencer, of earlier developments in North America, and of a rather longer-lived Lambeth Libraries storytelling scheme with a roster of practised and proficient storytellers. From the early

1980s, these environments and precedents, relatively small though they were, were substantial enough to generate storytelling on an unprecedented scale. From this viewpoint, it is salient that the successful College of Storytellers was conspicuously similar to Masefield's unsuccessful Guild. Both were middle-class revivalistic organisations based around a leisured, high-minded, charismatic and largely literary *animateur*. But the College enjoyed a preconditional context which was significantly better than that endured by Masefield's Guild. Rooted in an apparently exotic philosophy (Shah's quasi-Sufism), it appealed to the countercultural impulse to experiment and assimilate. Above all, it was quickly joined by collaborators such as Common Lore and the WLSU, and was able to integrate into a larger scene. It is therefore tempting to speculate that, without their mutual collaboration and support, the College of Storytellers, Common Lore and the WLSU, would eventually have foundered in isolation, as did Masefield's Guild. This, however, did not happen; they met, and became mutually supportive, from the early 1980s. Thereafter, the logic of external exemplification acquired its own tradition-like momentum, spreading through the favourable preconditional environment like a forest fire in a dry landscape. It was polygenetically augmented, as in Shropshire and indirectly from North America, by comparable unrelated standing starts. The rest of the story virtually tells itself.

This is to run ahead of the argument somewhat, and three things are now required to verify this account. Firstly, some demographic and biographical evidence is required to substantiate the apparent fact that storytelling revivalism is a largely middle-class, educated undertaking. Secondly, some sense must be gained of what, precisely, in local-field terms, the establishment of a revivalistic storytelling interactive environment involves. Thirdly, and most importantly, evidence must be offered about whether revivalists really feel themselves to be grounded in the tradition of softly iconoclastic heterodoxy which, by scholars'

previous explanations and on the evidence reviewed in this chapter, is central to the movement. These are the functions of the following chapters.

5 Revivalistic storytelling performance (1): participants, genres, key and instrumentalities

5.1 Preview

As described previously, the present and following chapters are linked in theme and argument. The general aim is to describe the seventeen storytelling events observed between January and May 1996. The aim of the following chapter is specific: to analyse how participants enact revivalistic storytelling events as consistently structured dialogic exchanges which meet all the interactive preconditions for the telling of stories in the revivalistic idiom. This central analytical focus fulfils a general aim of giving an account of storytelling revivalism in the local field which is exhaustive and inductive within stated evidential and methodological boundaries. This dialogic exchange is the central focus of local-field analysis. Material presented in the present chapter is intended to contextualise discussion of this core dialogic exchange, using social, demographic, folkloristic, and other data.

Largely for the sake of convenience, data in the present and following chapters are presented according to Hymes' categories laid out in the acronym SPEAKING, somewhat amended, as follows. The core of data on the dialogic sequence of interactions is presented in the following chapter, under the headings of *norms* and *act sequences*. Other data are presented in the present chapter: data on the *setting* and *participants* is presented first; next, the *genres* of the core corpus of 179 stories are surveyed; next, there is a discussion of performative style and texture, roughly corresponding to Hymes' *key* and *instrumentalities*. Final conclusions regarding Hymes' remaining category, the

ends or goals of interaction, is deferred until the end of the present study as a whole, though some preliminary evaluations are made in the conclusion to the following chapter.

5.2 Settings

5.2.1 Tales at the Edge

Tales at the Edge is held on the second Monday of every month at the Wenlock Edge Inn, which stands alone on the lower slopes of the long wooded ridge from which it takes its name, about three or four miles towards Church Stretton along the B4371 from Much Wenlock in Shropshire. Shropshire is rich in history and legend-lore. Most of the county lies just within the eastern boundary of an extensive rural territory west of the heavily urbanised M4 - M5 - M6 corridor which incorporates the cities of Bristol, Birmingham, Manchester and Liverpool. This adjoining rural territory comprises central and north Wales and the English border counties. Unlike other parts of this territory, Shropshire has not been heavily patronised by tourists, and many of its larger centres of population have remained small, old market towns connected by single-carriageway roads. Tales at the Edge was founded in 1989. As outlined in Chapter 4, it occupies a unique, doyen-like position within the network of storytelling clubs which sprang up in England and Wales around 1990. It was the first revivalistic storytelling club in England to arise entirely independently of the early London storytelling movement, and the first storytelling institution outside London to run a festival, the annual Festival at the Edge. For the first few years of its existence, it furnished a contrast to metropolitan storytelling institutions, and its regular participants maintained a broadly low-brow, vernacular and sometimes vociferous opposition to the more stilted claims and visions of some London revivalists.

The club's founders were Mike Rust, Richard Walker and Amy Douglas. Mike Rust's family was from Gloucestershire on both sides, and his father was a local politician and after-dinner speaker. However, Mike's first venture into the folk arts was into dance rather than storytelling: he started dancing with a Ledbury morris side in Herefordshire in the mid-1970s. Shortly afterwards, he encountered Dougie Isles, then squire of the Forest of Dean morris men,¹ telling stories at Putley harvest home ceilidh, and was inspired to remember the stories he had heard as a boy from his grandfather in Gloucester, to tell them in morris circles and folk clubs around Herefordshire pubs, and to solicit, collect and tell other stories by word of mouth. Within certain limits, storytelling, including jokes, shaggy dog stories, and wartime reminiscence, was a recognised accompaniment to music, drinking, dancing and socialising within this *milieu*. However, repertoires tended to be small, and the opportunities to air them tended to be limited, and both were relatively jealously guarded. Out of deference, and in order not to overload a listening group whose appetite for storytelling was rather limited, Mike would not tell a story if Dougie was present. Nevertheless, Mike built up a reasonable repertoire for performance at folk clubs and social gatherings, and acquired a local reputation as a storyteller. In the early 1980s, he was too occupied with farming and with his young family to get out to folk clubs to tell stories, and, when in the mid-1980s he eventually did, he found that storytelling was not well received by the folk club audiences. This added lustre to the idea of a dedicated storytelling club, an idea which Mike now formulated in consultation with Richard Walker.²

¹ Dougie Isles was chief steward, and later director, of Bromyard folk festival; he no longer tells stories (Interview with Mike Rust, 10th May 1995 (SCSA/P/45)).

² *Ibid.*

Richard was originally from Sheffield, and moved to Shropshire to pursue a managerial career in the Post Office. Unlike Mike, he lacked any awareness of a pre-revivalistic family storytelling tradition. However, redundancy from the Post Office spurred him to professionalise a longstanding amateur and part-time involvement in folk drama, folk clubs and related arts, and he became a freelance children's magician and entertainer and folk music broadcaster for BBC Radio Shropshire. At the same time, that is, in the mid-1980s, he was discovering an interest in local toponymy, legend-lore, and folk story, partly through telling stories to his own young daughter, and partly through a visit in the mid-1980s by the US storyteller Tina Alston. He broadcast special editions of "Shropshire Tales" on his local radio folk show. Through these, in 1987, he met and quickly became close friends with Mike, by then a recognised storyteller in morris dance circles. Richard and Mike attended local storytelling performances by touring professionals such as Tina Alston, on a second visit, and Robin Williamson. Before long, without wider awareness of a revivalistic movement, Richard was including storytelling in his act as a children's entertainer, and he and Mike had conceived the idea of regular storytelling meetings, and possibly a festival. They discovered the Wenlock Edge Inn, and Taffy Thomas, known from the folk scene, was booked for the club's opening night. About this time, in 1988, Amy Douglas, from Little Wenlock, near Telford, discovered storytelling at a local folk festival Folk Around the Wrekin, also through Taffy Thomas. She approached Taffy for advice about further involvement, and he put her in touch with Richard and Mike. The three met, a grant was obtained from West Midlands Arts, and the club began in September 1989, originally as an irregular series of grant-aided guest nights with featured performances supported by storytelling from the floor - that is, subsidiary performances *ad libertatem* by all comers. At first,

floor telling was chiefly by the founding trio of Richard, Mike and Amy.³ Events became monthly within the first year. Guests were funded entirely through grants, and by the common practice of subsidising the evening club performance with paid work in local schools brokered by the club promoters. The club itself never charged a door fee or directly paid a guest, and, during fieldwork for the present study early in 1996, admission was still free. Publicised largely by word of mouth, the club attracted regular attenders and floor tellers widely from the west midland and border areas. The booking of featured guests became intermittent and was eventually discontinued altogether, as it would have necessitated a door fee, which participants strongly opposed. In 1991 the festival began, at Stokes' Barn, a countryside centre discovered through its use by a scout troop attended by Mike's son Jake. In all, although Tales at the Edge does not constitute the full or direct continuation of a source storytelling tradition, it is conspicuous within the sample in that it clearly enjoys some significant continuities with the pre-revivalistic public and vernacular oral narrative *milieux* of the border region. Most conspicuously, family relationships were developmentally significant to it. In all, four generations of Mike's family have had a direct effect, from the grandparents and parents who inspired his own practice, to the son who led him to a festival venue and the daughter who accompanies him to the club, and sometimes performs there. Tales at the Edge exemplifies a form of revivalism in un-Bausingerian continuity with its direct antecedents, rather than its distant or imagined forebears.⁴

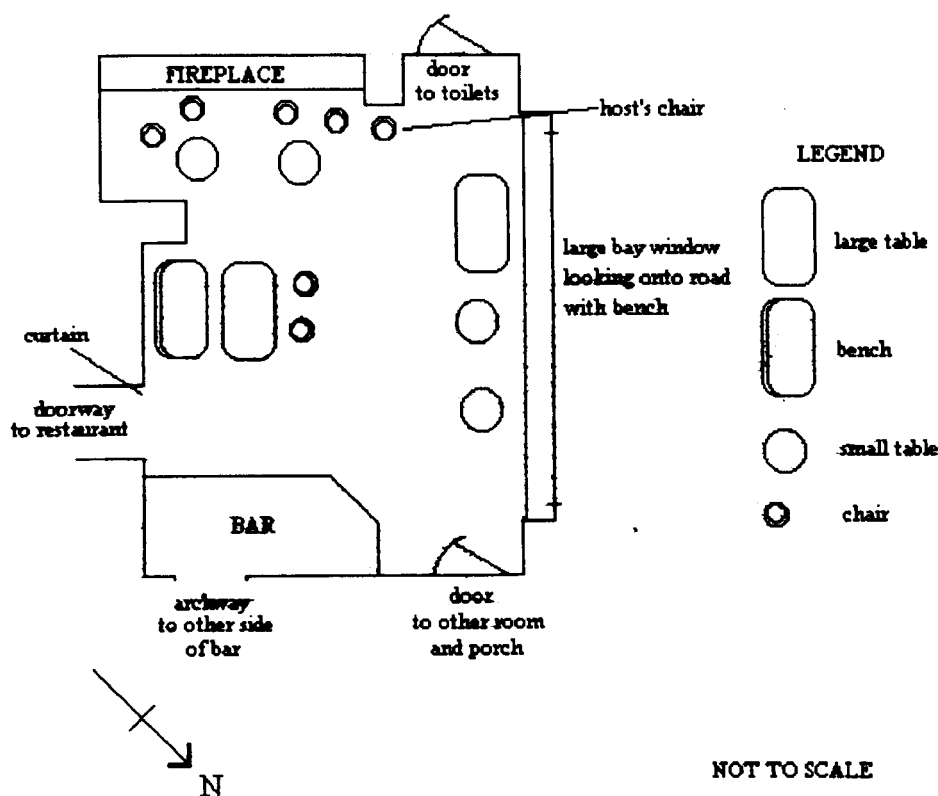
The Wenlock Edge Inn is a long two-storey building, aligned with the road which runs from south-west to north-east, with two public rooms at the front

³ Interview with Richard Walker (13th February 1995 (SCSA/P/33))

⁴ Amy is now a full-time professional storyteller. Mike is still a financial advisor. Both have remained in Shropshire. Richard remained a professional storyteller until his death from lymphatic cancer, aged 56, in 1999.

on the ground floor, and a restaurant at the back, which is closed on Mondays. The bar occupies the middle of the ground floor, extending into both front rooms through a narrow archway in the wall dividing them. The storytelling club (see Figure 1) is held in the right-hand room, for which the licensee does not charge. Access is through a door in the dividing wall from the other room, where the inn is entered. The room is rectangular, but is given a shape like a fat capital L by the bar which runs in through the archway to the entrant's left, and fences off the near left-hand corner. The lighting is warm and subdued. The middle of the room is empty; chairs and benches are arranged around the walls, looking in. There is room for about 20 people to sit around the walls, and a few more in the central space. But as participants enter and take their seats, the majority take seats by the wall and find themselves facing in towards each other in a loosely circular formation. This arrangement is preserved for the event, so the layout of the room encourages a single, large encounter. Before each event, the landlord places metals bowls filled with crisps, nuts and other nibbles on the tables.

Fig. 1. Tales at the Edge, Wenlock Edge Inn, Much Wenlock, 15th April 1996 (Event 10)



5.2.2 Tall Tales at the Trip

Tall Tales at the Trip is a series of storytelling events held between half past seven and eleven p.m.⁵ on the second Tuesday of every month at Ye Old Trip to Jerusalem Inn, familiarly the Trip to Jerusalem or the Trip, a public house in the centre of the city of Nottingham in the English midlands. Its founder and principal administrator is Roy Dyson, a geography teacher in secondary and further education, and semi-professional storyteller and storytelling promoter. During fieldwork, Roy was still working full-time in teaching, while

⁵ The legal closing time for licensed premises in England and Wales.

promoting storytelling in his own time.⁶ Tall Tales at the Trip was not Roy's first venture in storytelling club promotion. A folk dancer and dance caller in the second folk music revival, Roy discovered storytelling *via* the Channel 4 series *By Word of Mouth*, and thereafter told stories, learned from the published collectanea of folklorists such as Katharine Briggs and Ruth Tongue, at local folk clubs, including the storytelling club Tales at the Tiger in Long Eaton. There he met Liza Watts, with whom he opened his first dedicated storytelling club, Lies and Legends at Leicester. Also, on his own initiative, from February to November 1994, he ran events at Rushcliffe Leisure Centre in the Nottingham suburbs. Over the months, the Rushcliffe audience dwindled, but another regular participant suggested moving to the Trip. Roy then took the organisational initiative once again, and Tall Tales at the Trip opened in November 1994 in the upstairs function room at the Trip to Jerusalem, with an entrance fee of £2 to £2.50.⁷ Like many folk clubs, and also like all four storytelling clubs in the sample, Tall Tales at the Trip is not a club in the sense of an ongoing collaborative association. It is simply a series of meetings provided largely on the promoter's initiative. In time Roy began to enlist volunteers to take money at the door, and also to delegate other administrative functions to a group of committed regular participants. However, he still did most of the practical organising work, from the selection and organisation of venues, engagement of artists, and production and distribution of publicity, to hosting on the night and taking money on the door. From its opening night, the club was a great success, regularly attracting capacity audiences of over seventy. The success was in large part to do with Roy's assiduous monthly output and distribution of hundreds of posters and handbills, to libraries, museums and other outlets. In early 1996, when

⁶ Telephone interview, May 2000. Roy has since taken early retirement, resumed part-time lecturing in further education, and registered a small but expanding storytelling promotions agency as a business.

⁷ These developments are reviewed in the previous chapter.

fieldwork took place, the club was still attracting large and highly responsive audiences.

The inn itself was certainly part of the winning formula. It is by reputation the oldest inn in England, dating, as its own sign asserts, from 1189 AD. This is the date of the Third Crusade, to which its name is an understated reference. It is situated at the foot of the south flank of Castle Rock, a conspicuous sandstone bluff in the centre of the otherwise flat city, with the medieval and Georgian edifice of Nottingham Castle on the summit. The outer part of the Trip is an old house-front of brick and timber, with a beer garden in a walled yard at one side, but its back part occupies the outer chambers of an ancient complex of caves extending into the Rock itself.⁸ The storytelling club meets in an upper function room, a cave-like space approached via a narrow stone-cut staircase from the back of the main inn (see Figure 2). Beneath a certain cultivated old-fashionedness, this room emanates a genuine and slightly eerie sense of age. The floor is wooden boards, but the walls are living sandstone on three sides, and the air is cool. There is one built wall on the northern side where the sandstone gives out; this wall has a bay window looking down onto the beer garden. A large old-fashioned bar, like an ornate booth, fences off one corner. A dresser, and disused old grandfather and grandmother clocks stand or hang against the walls. Framed old prints, decorative harness, and reproduction medieval and early modern arms and armour hang from the walls. Prior to the 1998 refurbishment, and therefore during fieldwork, there

⁸ As children, my brothers and I were told by my father, who was brought up in the Nottingham suburb of West Bridgford during the 1930s and 40s, that the Trip was a stopping-off point for Crusaders on their way to the Holy Land. He also told us that the caves under Castle Crag are connected to the Castle by narrow holes in the rock, whose construction remains mysterious. The caves were instrumental in 1330 in allowing the young Edward III to seize power from his mother, Queen Isabella, and her lover, Roger Mortimer. Robert Eland led the young King and his associates through the tunnels to ambush Isabella and Mortimer as they lodged at Nottingham Castle. As a result of this raid, Isabella's power was broken, and Mortimer was hanged. Mortimer's ghost is supposed to haunt "Mortimer's Hole," a cave in the complex near the Trip. It is rumoured that the caves under the crag were a sanctuary for medieval thieves, being outside the jurisdiction of all legal agents owing to a legal loophole.

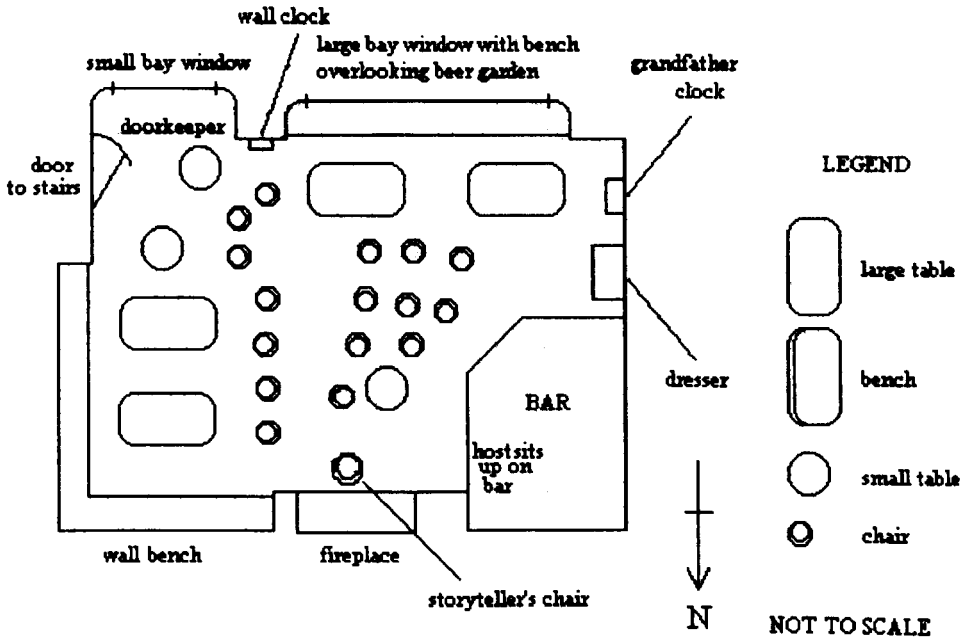
was almost no ceiling; the cave was, so to speak, bottle-shaped. Above the old-fashioned furniture and fittings, the walls simply sloped upwards into the darkness of a large, dark, narrowing, chimney-like cavity ascending towards the foundations of the castle directly above. From this void, grains of sandstone regularly trickled, and a handwritten sign on the wall issued a rhymed invitation to patrons to cover their drinks with a beer-mat. As a venue, then, the Old Trip to Jerusalem might almost have sprung directly from the wishful thinking of a storyteller arguing the living presence of folklore and history in romantic terms, and this point is not lost on revivalists themselves. Images of the Trip itself, and *précis* of its historical claims, feature prominently in Roy Dyson's publicity for the club. When, at event 17, a trio of regular tellers at Tales at the Trip performed as the featured guests at Tales at the Wharf, they did so as the Cave Tellers (AE/32a). When Roy visited Tales at the Edge, he was introduced in approving and reasonably precise terms by the host, Mike Rust (AE/28b):

Roy runs the Nottingham storytelling club. This old stack of stones that they're sat in goes back, in the oldest point which is over there, about four hundred years. The pub which runs his storytelling club goes from - 1183? Something like that. Which is pretty old ... ! The other thing that Roy can do is say that "Robin Hood used to sit on *that seat!*"

However, these claims go rather beyond the evidence. Although the caves are clearly old, with a long history of human use and habitation, there is no concrete record of an inn on the site of the Trip before the late eighteenth century.⁹

⁹ Since fieldwork, the room has been redecorated. It is now cleaner, brighter, and visibly closer to the pseudo-antique, and much of this ambience has been dispersed.

Fig. 2. Tall Tales at the Trip, The Old Trip to Jerusalem Inn, Nottingham, 13th April 1996 (Event 4)



Roy habitually arrived early, and filled the normally empty middle of the room with stools arranged in short rows and in twos and threes around small round tables. A large, conspicuous, ornately carved wooden chair, which normally stands to one side of the fireplace, was placed out in front of it, providing a conspicuous focus. There were no special lighting arrangements; the light was the normal, slightly subdued electric yellow. The layout of the room for a storytelling event is therefore as follows: the telling space, marked by the chair before the fireplace, facing into the body of the room; and the listeners' space, on stools arranged in loosely linear fashion around small tables, as in a café, or for a cabaret. The door and the doorkeeper's desk were at the back, that is, behind the listener as they sit facing the storyteller.

5.2.3 Tales at the Wharf

Tales at the Wharf is held on the last Friday of every month, in the upstairs function room of the Stubbings Wharf inn in Hebden Bridge,¹⁰ a small town in Calderdale in West Yorkshire on the A646 between Halifax and Burnley. The town is originally a product of nineteenth-century industrialisation, built around its mills, and along the canal which made these mills accessible to narrowboat haulage. Between the two world wars, the region suffered industrial decline and emigration. However, semi-nomadic hippies and counterculturalists settled in significant numbers from the late sixties onwards, drawn by low housing costs (a large house, now worth about £70,000, would then sell for about £500) and the large number of empty properties available for squatting.¹¹ This ensured the town's economic survival, but gave it a markedly bohemian air and reputation, which it preserves to the present day.

Tales at the Wharf was founded and is hosted by Alan Sparkes. Alan was part of the wave of countercultural immigrants into Hebden Bridge; he first lived there between 1973 and 1976, after several years wandering in Europe, Canada and North Africa. Afterwards, he settled in Manchester and became a freelance printer. He discovered professional storytelling at a Taffy Thomas workshop in the nearby Calderdale town of Todmorden early in the 1990s. As for Mike Rust, this evoked childhood memories of his grandfather's war reminiscences, and, enthused, Alan began storytelling privately among friends, but was dissatisfied with the results. He moved back to Hebden Bridge from

¹⁰ After fieldwork was completed, Stubbings Wharf inn appeared once more in the world of letters, somewhat more auspiciously. It provides the setting and title of a poem in *Birthday Letters*, the final autobiographical collection by the late poet laureate, Ted Hughes, a native of Calderdale (Hughes 1998, 106 - 8). The poem records a visit by Hughes and his first wife, the subject and addressee of the book, the American poet Sylvia Plath, to "the gummy dark bar" "between the canal and the river." Here, over a Guinness, Hughes suggests buying a house outside the town. The house they bought lies up a side-valley above Hebden Bridge, below the hamlet of Heptonstall, where Plath lies buried. They never lived there; Hughes first leased and then sold it to a writers' charity, the Arvon Foundation. It is now a writers' retreat.

¹¹ Interview with Alan Sparkes, 14th March 2000.

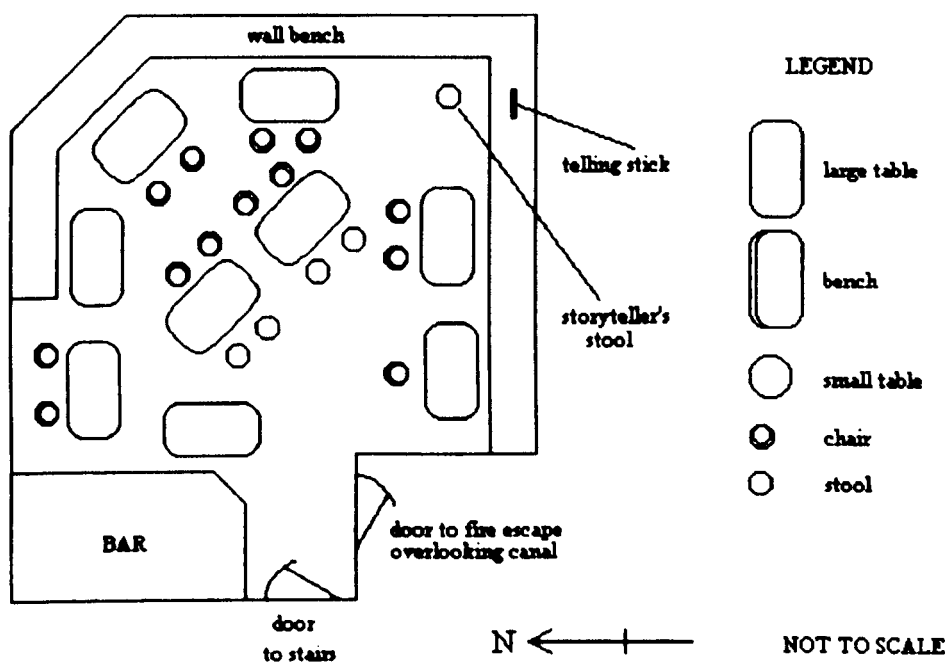
Manchester in 1994, and in July of that year he attended the week-long residential summer school for storytellers at the Beyond the Border storytelling festival. This evidence of wider interest gave him the confidence to bring storytelling into public space. The Stubbings Wharf club opened in October 1994. A second club opened at a vegetarian café in central Manchester in early 1995. Tales from the Wharf soon built up a roster of regular floor tellers, although the burden of promotional responsibility continued to fall on Alan himself.

As its name implies, Stubbings Wharf is a canal-side inn. It is accessible either from the main road or along the canal towpath, about ten minutes' walk from the centre of Hebden Bridge. It stands at the western edge of the town, set rather back from the main road, over a small bridge across the river Calder, a large, square stone building facing north over the main road and river, with the town to the east on its left. The storytelling club was held in a room upstairs, for which the club paid a booking fee to the licensee. To enter it, participants went to an inconspicuous door just behind the bar itself, up a steep and rather dark staircase, and up to another door on the first floor opening onto a small passageway opening to the left. This opened out into the upstairs function room, a large, darkly furnished clubroom with cabinets on the walls well-stocked with sports trophies (see Figure 3).¹² Although oblong in shape, the room had a large booth of painted timber and reinforced glass in the near right-hand corner, enclosing a doorway leading onto a balcony over the canal behind the pub, and the near left-hand corner is closed off behind a modern-looking bar, so the usable area of the room was rather smaller and lay beyond these obstacles. A wall-bench, upholstered in dark green, ran around most of the far and left-hand walls, with five rectangular tables along its length. Each

¹² Like the function room at the Trip to Jerusalem, this room has been redecorated since fieldwork, and is no longer a clubroom.

table had backed chairs on the inner side. Two more rectangular tables, with chairs and stools, were set diagonally across the middle of the usable space, and there were two more in the corner to the immediate left of the entrance.

Fig. 3. Tales at the Wharf, Stubbings Wharf, Hebden Bridge, 29th March 1996 (Event 7)



Prior to the event opening, the designated telling point, which was static in the far right-hand corner from the entrance, was marked in four ways. Alan usually placed a curiously shaped wand of wood on the bench: a telling stick, for tellers to hold while speaking. In fact, they rarely took up the idea, and the stick remained on the bench. A subdued spotlight, a permanent fixture of the room, was trained on the telling point, whereas the rest of the room remained in half-darkness, with the electric lights off, and nightlights placed on the tables by Alan. A row of nightlights stood on the low shelf at the top of the bench, behind the telling point. There was a teller's chair, an ordinary bar-

stool, at the telling point itself. The subdued lighting, combined with the sombre green of the furniture and fittings, gave the room a dark, expectant atmosphere. On one occasion, Alan brought a portable stereo, which he placed on the wall-bench by the telling point, and played compact discs of ambient instrumental music before the event began and in the intervals.

5.2.4 The Camden Ceilidh

The Camden Ceilidh was normally held on the third or fourth Monday of the month, although during fieldwork the sequence was disrupted by an extra event for April Fools' Day, and a rescheduling to tie the club event in with a one-day storytelling workshop. The venue has always been the Torriano Meeting House, a small meeting room, a shop premises by design, in a largely residential side-street about five minutes' walk from Kentish Town tube station in north London. The club's founder, Jenny Pearson, was active in the seminal west London storytelling scene, from her first contact on a storytelling course, so-called, at Hammersmith adult education college, run by the poet John Hoarder in the mid-1980s. This was not strictly or exclusively about revivalistic oral storytelling performance as such, and written poetry and prose fiction were both read. It was at this point that Jenny made the excited discovery of storytelling narrated above (see above, p. 278). For five years thereafter, storytelling dominated Jenny's life. By 1988, however, shortly after helping establish the Crick Crack Club in west London, she began to feel the strain in her wider life and interests. She withdrew from the scene, became a drama therapist, and obtained a two-year seeding grant from Camden Arts to start a new storytelling club in North London. This club was the Camden Ceilidh. She ran the club directly for a number of years, insisting, in accordance with her established practice, on the telling of traditional tales. She later handed it over, firstly to Nina Bain, and subsequently to Jasmine

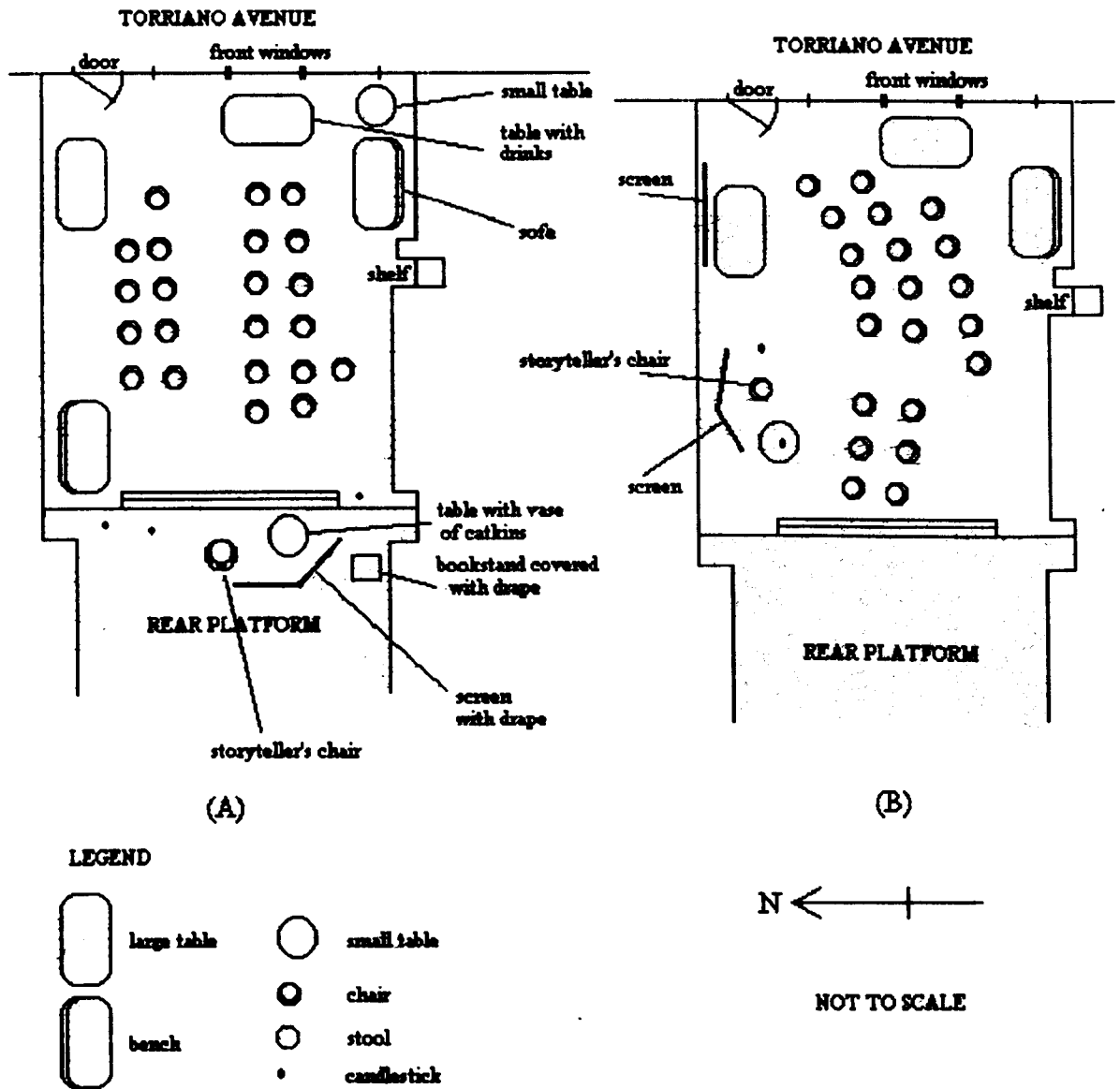
Perinpanayagam, an alumna of the storytelling school at Emerson College, the Steiner adult education college at Forest Row in Sussex. Under Jasmine's influence, several Emerson College storytelling graduates were attracted to the club as a place to perform. Shortly before fieldwork commenced, Jenny took the reins back from Jasmine, and was sharing the organiser's role with Bernard Kelly, another Emerson College storyteller.

As recounted in the previous chapter, London storytelling generally was motivated by an acute sense of lack regarding traditional oral narrative, accompanied by a highly developed sense of discovery, or rediscovery, and a noticeable gravitation towards consciously worked out and structured ideologies. These ideologies were essentially imaginative reconstructions of what the lost tradition, so understood, must or ought to have been like. Jenny's own approach was eclectically and quite consciously constructed from formal theatrical techniques of voice and movement, but with an eye towards transitional storytellers from source traditions, such as Duncan Williamson. She conferred extensively with the folk singer Frankie Armstrong,¹³ whose approach, like that of Frankie's former mentor Ewan MacColl, was a highly conscious, and selfconscious, attempt to scrutinise and define the core qualities of traditional art, as a prelude to reproducing them in revivalistic performance. The influence of Steiner education wove another strand of consciously structured and highly scrutinised practice into the club's idioms, set within explicitly stated general ideological manifestos. This is in marked contrast to *Tales at the Edge*, for example, where the lack of source traditions was less acutely felt (or at least less openly articulated) and the unselfconscious spontaneity of the act of storytelling concomitantly preserved undisturbed.

¹³ Eventually collaborating on Frankie Armstrong's autobiography (Armstrong and Pearson, 1992).

The Torriano meeting house is entered through a door opening straight onto the street, set in a defunct shop-front which is mostly a large, boarded-up window-frame filling the east or front wall (see Figure 4). The room itself is long, high-ceilinged, and rather bare. During fieldwork, the rear platform, a low raised stage occupying the back half of the room was filled with stacks of chairs and was little used. The event took place in the area at the meeting room's front or eastern end.

Fig. 4. The Camden Ceilidh, Torriano Meeting House, London: (a) 18th March 1996 (Event 5): (b) 20th May 1996 (Event 15)



The organisers, Jenny and Bernard, arrived early, and laid out the room for the event, placing a large wickerwork chair at the telling point, of which the location varied. Sometimes it was about halfway along the long northern wall, sometimes in the middle of the raised back part of the room. Rows of chairs were arranged across the middle of the room, in loose concentric arcs facing

the teller's chair, with a central aisle left clear directly in front of it. At the back, that is, behind the listeners as they sit facing the teller, was a bench, and before each event Jenny laid out bottles of wine and mineral water and stacks of disposable clear plastic beakers. The teller's chair was covered with a decorated throw. Two screens, also draped with decorated throws, stood behind it. There was a low table beside it on which was placed a vase of flowers, and on the table and the floor on the other side stood lighted candles. The telling space seemed, one could imagine, not unlike a small, self-contained Victorian interior, a set in an early portrait photographer's studio, with a slightly exotic, perhaps Wildean air, and it contrasted with the functional sparseness of the meeting room as a whole. At the February meeting, which occurred around the Chinese new year, the walls were also decorated with paper banners and Chinese symbols of good luck on A4-sized sheets of red paper. When the event began, the electric lights were switched off, and telling proceeded by candlelight, which further masked in shadow the bareness of the room.

In conclusion: all four clubs in the sample began on the initiative of a single founder, or a small group. They are a symptom of the personal cultural and social development of the founders, worked out within the context of exemplification described in the previous chapter. All clubs gathered on weekday evenings, a time customarily dedicated to recreational social, cultural and artistic activity, but free of the more substantial family and social commitments which often fill weekends. All were physically segregated from all other kinds of encounter, in dedicated public places set apart from the worlds of home, work, and all other social contact, including all untrammelled chatting. One occupied the whole of a small north London meeting house. The others used a dedicated function room, apart from the main premises and their normal sociable exchanges. Also, all were supplied with alcohol. Three met on

licensed premises; at the other, a complimentary glass or two of wine or mineral water were provided in the intervals by the organisers. Storytelling over a drink in the evenings, as can easily be imagined, might well occur quite unselfconsciously, with no need for conspicuous marking out. However, each club, in its way, chose its setting, and/or added decorations and modified lighting and layout deliberately in order to align itself spatially and visually with some more selfconscious idea of history. As argued above, this would not have surprised earlier scholars of traditional arts revivalism, such as Sobol, Pilkington or Mackinnon; and it recalls the Bausingerian definition of revivalism as preferring the distant to the immediate past.

5.3 Participants¹⁴

As described in Chapter 3, data on participants were counted in two rather different ways: by questionnaire returns, and through direct observation at events. The relationship between these two data sets was revealing. Questionnaires counted people, while direct observation counted attendances; so, for example, if a person were to attend a club twice during fieldwork, s/he would add a numerical value of two to the directly observed count, but only of one to the questionnaire count. Correlated with demographic and other variables, this discrepancy was useful and revealing, because it allowed distinctions to be drawn between patterns of frequent and infrequent participation. This can be illustrated with a fictional example, as follows. Suppose that a club was surveyed over two monthly meetings in the manner just described, that is, by a combination of questionnaires, completed and returned by all participants, and direct observation. The questionnaire returns yielded a straight headcount of 40, of whom 20 were female enthusiasts of

¹⁴ The data summarised in the following discussion are tabulated in Appendix 6, to which reference by section is made as required, in parentheses, as follows: (section 2.2.1.2).

myth and *Märchen*, and 20 were males who preferred short, realistic jokes. Observation at the two events reported a turnout of 30 in April and 30 in May, with twenty women and ten men at both events. The discrepancy between these figures reveals that all 20 women were present at both events, a fact reflected in their better showing in the gate returns, which give due credit to repeat attendances; while the men came in two successive groups of 10. It is therefore clear that the participant group was predominantly female, with a transient minority of male joke-tellers, each of whom appears to have reacted negatively to the atmosphere and not returned after his single visit. Neither data set alone reveals the transitory or ephemeral nature of the men's attendance relative to the women's, or the resulting effect on the club's ambience and character; only comparison reveals this. The basic statistical work involved in correlating sets of data was therefore worth the effort. At the real clubs, analysis revealed just such correlations between demographic variables and regularity of attendance, and this was significant in analysing the ongoing character of the clubs.

Questionnaires were completed by respondents themselves, and were thus necessarily more reliable than the researcher's guesses on variables such as age. Also, they covered background biographical details which could not be directly observed, such as levels of income and formal educational qualifications. However, the observed event by event gate count was more comprehensive, and included data on participants who did not respond to questionnaires. Questionnaire responses received totalled exactly 100, although two of these indicated no club of origin (section 1.2). The characteristics of the four clubs varied significantly, so analysis was carried out separately for each club; as a result, the two unmarked returns were not included in the analysis, and the total number of valid responses was judged to be 98. This represents a response rate of 60.2% from a total of 166 distributed

respondents claimed education to degree level or above, and a little over half (eight) listed their highest qualifications as A-level or equivalent. There was moreover only one part-time student and no full-time students attending the London club, and most participants at this club were past the normal undergraduate age, between late teens and early twenties. This is not the only sense in which the London club was demographically rather anomalous, and the evidence is discussed below.

About half of all respondents, and also consistently about half the respondents at each club, described themselves as employed (section 2.1.3). Descriptions of jobs and/or vocational training and expertise were offered by 67 respondents, nearly 70% of all questionnaire returns. White-collar occupations together account for about 40, or roughly three fifths of the total 67 (section 2.1.4). Approximately three fifths of all respondents specified their annual income (section 2.1.5). A third of those who did so in Much Wenlock and Hebden Bridge, and nearly half of those in Nottingham, claimed an annual income of £10,000 or less. Again, London was anomalous; of the eight who responded, five - nearly two thirds - claimed an income over £10,000 yearly. On this evidence, participants in London therefore seemed to earn rather more than participants at other clubs. This may be the effect of higher prices and wages in the capital. Overall, however, the general level of income within the sample seems rather low, given the high level of educational qualification. This was apparently because about half of all respondents were not employed. Only 10 of the 41 who both claimed employed status and also specified their annual income had yearly incomes under £10,000. Generally, then, at all clubs, having a job tended to mean receiving over £10,000 per year in salary, and lower income seems to indicate non-salaried status - that is, financial dependence, unemployment, retirement and/or full-time study - rather than

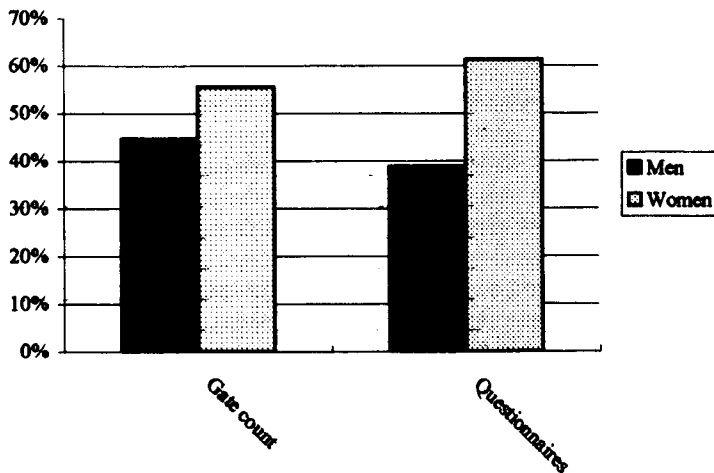
low pay. This is interpretatively significant. Mackinnon (1988) describes the folk club audience as having succeeded materially, but remaining culturally marginalised within the middle class. Storytelling revivalists, by contrast, seem to be a middle-class group of whom significant numbers have not, or not yet, or not quite, achieved independent economic success. Their marginalisation seemed financial, rather than, or as well as, cultural.

A second characteristic in which the participant body as a whole was very homogeneous was ethnicity: the predominance of white and English participants at all clubs was very strong, and needs little detailed elucidation (sections 2.2.1.2, 2.2.2.2, 2.2.3.2, 2.2.4.2). The only large observed anomaly was at Camden in March (event 5), which had an Irish theme in honour of St Patrick's Day. At this event the guest storyteller, and over half the group by direct observation, were white speakers of Irish English; one Scots accent was heard. The Wenlock Edge and London clubs were almost entirely white and mostly English affairs throughout fieldwork. Direct observation at the Hebden Bridge club showed about five person-attendances by non-white participants; the Nottingham club consistently attracted a handful of overseas students. At both clubs, these amounted to approximately 5% of the total directly observed gate.

The third basic demographic variable is gender. As stated above, over the whole period at all four clubs combined, the total observed gate, or directly observed tally of person-attendances, was 478. Of these, nearly half (213, or 44.6%) were by men and just over half (265, or 55.4%) were by women (sections 2.2.1.1.1, 2.2.2.1.1, 2.2.3.1.1, 2.2.4.1.1). However, this gate count shows a much lower proportion of women than do the questionnaire returns. Of the 98 analysed questionnaires, 60, or two thirds, were from women (sections 2.2.1.1.2, 2.2.2.1.2, 2.2.3.1.2, 2.2.4.1.2). The same higher proportion

of women is observable at three of the four individual clubs: Wenlock Edge, London and Nottingham. There is thus a significant discrepancy between the relative proportion of the sexes in the questionnaire returns and that in the count made at the events by direct observation (see Figure 5).

Fig. 5. Overall recorded proportions of men and women for whole fieldwork period

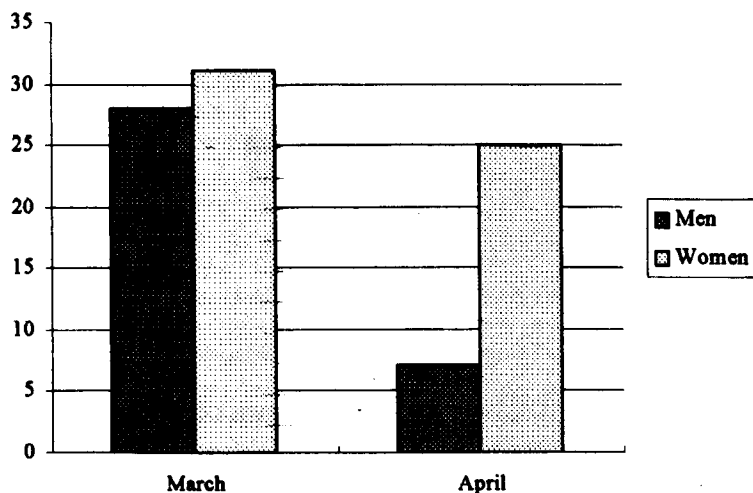


This discrepancy may be explained simply by the possibility that women may, for some reason, have completed and returned questionnaires more assiduously than men. There is no way to check whether or not this is the case. However, there is other evidence that the discrepancy arose largely because - rather like the women in the hypothetical example above - men were more regular attenders at the clubs, and women were more likely to attend once only, or sporadically. This fact became clear because respondents were asked in questionnaires both about their gender (question 2) and about the frequency of their attendance at storytelling events (question 19). This made observable the correlation between gender and frequency of attendance, which revealed that men were likelier to report frequent, regular attendance, and women were likelier to report sporadic attendance. In response to question 19, 59.6% of all

male respondents reported regular monthly attendance; but only 31.2% of female respondents did so (section 3.4). Of a participant group in which women were in the overall majority on all counts, the group reporting at least monthly participation was almost exactly balanced between men and women overall (20 to 19 returns), and the same balance is shown in the returns at two of the clubs, London and Hebden Bridge (section 3.4). Overall, then, the returns for question 19 suggest that men attended more regularly and frequently than women. As argued above, the arithmetical relationship between questionnaire returns and observed attendances means that variations in regularity of attendance would create a discrepancy in the data similar to that shown in Figure 5 above. Also, there was further evidence to corroborate the suggestion that varying attendance patterns were caused by such a discrepancy. This evidence resulted from the manner in which the questionnaires were distributed. As described above, questionnaires were handed out at the door to all participants in the first month of distribution (apart from a few copies which were distributed to individuals ahead of the bulk). In subsequent months, questionnaires were distributed, by self-selection, only to those who had been absent the previous month. Under these circumstances, it is reasonable to suppose that regular attenders would be more likely to attend the first meeting at which questionnaires were distributed, and so likelier to receive questionnaires early on in distribution. Similarly, sporadic attenders would be less likely to attend the first distribution, and so receive questionnaires in later months, as and when they attended. Under these circumstances, if women really were more sporadic attenders than men, the proportion of female respondents would increase in the returns from the second month of distribution. The patterns in the returns fit this picture (sections 2.2.1.1.2, 2.2.2.1.2, 2.2.3.1.2, 2.2.4.1.2); whereas the number of male respondents drops sharply after the first month of distribution, the number of female respondents drops much less sharply (see Figure 6). Overall, then, men

and women were roughly equal in number among the regular attenders (section 3.4), but men as a group seem to have tended to attend more regularly and frequently, and women, who were in the overall majority, attended more irregularly and sporadically.¹⁵

Fig. 6. Male and female questionnaire respondents month by month for all clubs

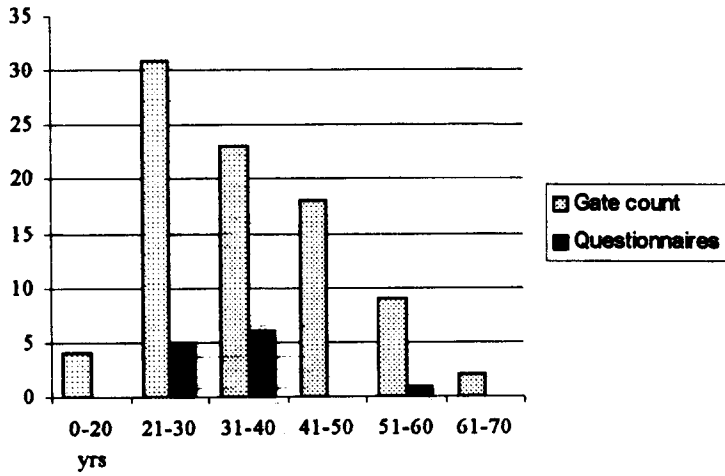


The last of the four basic demographic variables is age (sections 2.2.1.1.1, 2.2.2.1.1, 2.2.3.1.1, 2.2.4.1.1). The picture is slightly more complex and the clubs are best considered separately (see Figure 7).

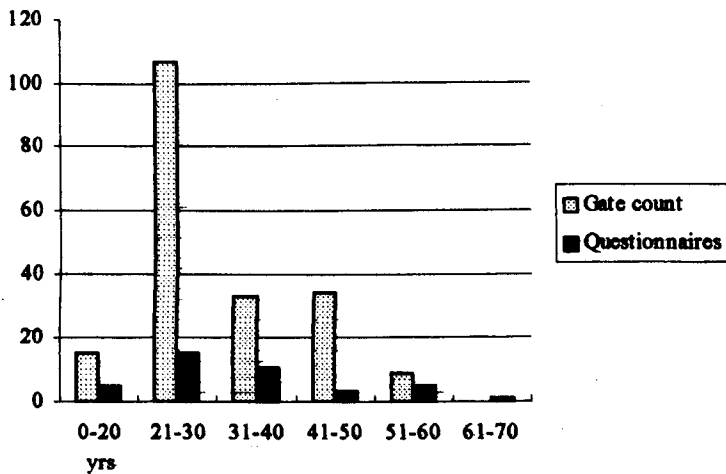
¹⁵The one event at Much Wenlock where men were in a really large majority was one event with an unusually low turnout. This supports the idea that men were more assiduous attenders at this club. Tales at the Edge was the club with the most numbers of male participants anyway, but this event seems to be an extreme example of the general pattern.

Fig. 7. Age-range distribution of club participant groups over total fieldwork period

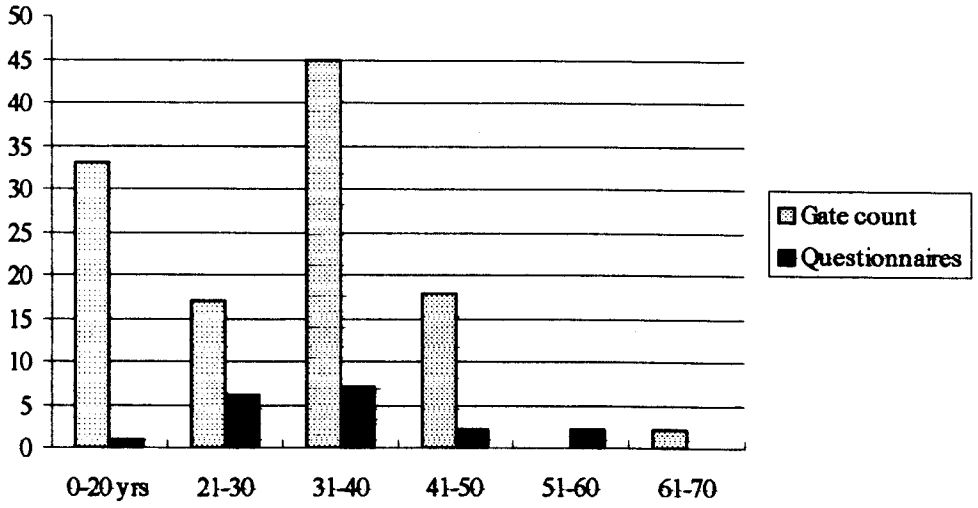
(a) The Camden Ceilidh, London (see section 2.2.2.1)



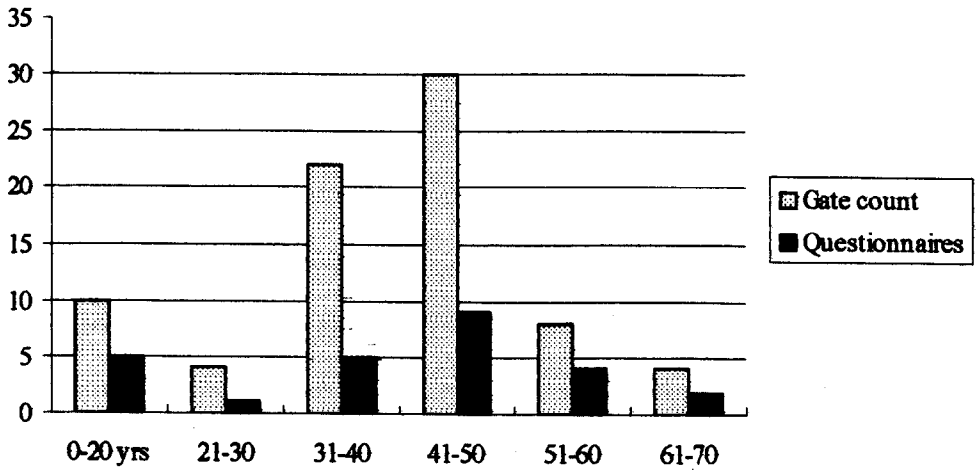
(b) Tall Tales at the Trip, Nottingham (see section 2.2.3.1)



(c) *Tales at the Wharf, Hebden Bridge (see section 2.2.4.1)*



(d) *Tales at the Edge, Much Wenlock (see section 2.2.1.1)*



At all clubs, age-range distribution tended to follow a distinctive pattern. At each club, there was a single most populous age-group. The age of this largest group varied from club to club. The questionnaire returns do not tally exactly with the impressionistic survey made by direct observation at the gate. Nevertheless, it is clear that the largest group at most clubs was in their twenties and/or thirties. The exception is Tales at the Edge, where the largest group was in their forties. However, at three of the four clubs, the data showed a smaller numerical peak for another age group which was not chronologically adjacent to the largest, but separated from it by a more sparsely-populated intermediate age-group or groups. The result in the graphs above is therefore a distribution curve rather like a lopsided capital letter M, with two peaks of unequal height, and a trough between. This is seen most clearly at Tales at the Edge (section 2.2.1.1). Here the gate count (that is, the impressionistic survey of ages made during event observation) agrees with the questionnaire returns in placing the largest group in their forties, and the second-largest group considerably younger, in the under-20s, with all other age-groups more sparsely represented. This preserves a demographic profile shown in little by the club's founding trio of two mature men and a teenager. At Tall Tales at the Trip, the picture is almost as clear: both data sets have the twenties as the largest age-group (section 2.2.3.1.1, 2.2.3.1.2); the impressionistic gate count surmised that the second largest group was considerably older, in their forties; the rather lower questionnaire returns suggest that they were in fact older still, in their fifties. Similarly, at Tales at the Wharf (section 2.2.4.1), the largest age-group by observation lies in the thirties, with a much younger second-largest group: a large contingent of under-twenties. The questionnaire returns for Tales at the Wharf do not corroborate this at all. However, there is a specific reason for this discrepancy in the case of this club. The majority of the second-largest group were young children who left the event early with their parents and attendant adults, and did not complete questionnaires (section

2.2.4.1.2). Again, London is the anomaly; here, the age-range distribution impressionistically assessed at the gate is a simple hump-backed curve around a large age-group in their twenties and thirties (sections 2.2.2.1, 2.2.3.1). The questionnaire returns suggest a very shallow M-shape, but this is due to a single respondent in the 51-60 age group, and the numbers involved are perhaps too small for clear conclusions to be drawn.

At all clubs, there was joint attendance by friends of similar ages, but at two clubs at least, it is possible to see this M-shaped age-distribution curve as resulting from joint attendance by multiple generations of single families, with the middle trough in the distribution curve representing the chronological gap between the generations of these families. There were few observable family relationships at Tall Tales at the Trip, although Terry and Jill Jobson attended with their son David, who was in his twenties. The explanation here seems to be simply that the club tended to attract students aged around twenty, and non-students in their forties and fifties. However, it may be assumed that all the children at Hebden Bridge were attending with parents and/or guardians. At Wenlock Edge, many of the young adults were similarly the offspring of older participants, who were attending with parents, usually fathers. Amy Douglas frequently attended with her parents Brian and Jackie, who, as described above, owe their involvement ultimately to hers. Mike Rust, Allan Walters and Wilson Boardman all attended with their daughters and their friends, all teenagers and young adults: Anna Rust and her friend Lucy, and Joanna Walters. Involvement in revivalistic storytelling at Wenlock Edge showed a hereditary quality shared with the circumstances of its foundation. Tales at the Wharf at Hebden Bridge shares the same hereditary quality, without the deeper roots, and everyone involved in it was about ten years younger than in the similar patterns at Wenlock Edge. The club is similarly rather shorter-lived. Unlike participants at Hebden Bridge, the Wenlock tellers have had

several years to establish friendships and familial habits of participation, and the younger generation have sustained some active interest in storytelling from late primary school age to the threshold of adulthood. Demographically, the Hebden Bridge club is not wholly dissimilar to the Wenlock one as it was at its outset, and both clubs began at a time when several adult participants had children of an age at which - by the conventional wisdom of the mainstream culture - they are most likely to enjoy traditional narrative.

5.3.2 The participant group: internal structure

Internal group structures and histories may now be addressed fully, according to the following criteria: average size of club turnout; point of first contact and longevity of involvement; regularity and diversity of attendance; and the relative proportions of active tellers to acquiescent listeners. By observation, turnout varied widely from club to club, but was largely stable over time at each club (section 2.2). Counting part attendances (that is, late arrivals and early departures), Nottingham had an average monthly turnout of about 50 (section 2.2.3.1.1); Hebden Bridge about 29 (section 2.2.4.1.1); Much Wenlock about 20 (section 2.2.1.1.1); and London just under 18 (section 2.2.2.1.1) (see Figure 8). The two older clubs had average turnouts about 20; the newer clubs had larger averages.

Fig. 8. Average monthly turnout per club



Data on duration of personal involvement is clearly beyond direct observation at events and is therefore given only in questionnaire returns. Duration of involvement among participant groups at the four clubs correlated with the age of the club in unsurprising ways. The older a club, the longer its participants tended to have been personally involved in storytelling, and the wider their personal connections tended to be with the storytelling movement outside the club. Question 18 on the questionnaire inquired about the date and place of the respondent's first contact with revivalistic storytelling. 29 Nottingham respondents answered with sufficient clarity to draw requisite inference on this point. Of these 29, approximately four fifths - 24 respondents - had first encountered organised adult storytelling events only in 1995 or 1996, that is, after the club opened in November 1994. Of the 26 who identified their first point of contact, 18, or approximately 70%, identified Tall Tales at the Trip

itself. A high proportion of Nottingham participants therefore reported entering the movement only recently, through the club itself; but the actual proportion may be even higher. Several responses, along the lines of *through a friend* or *leaflet*, seemed to imply that the respondent felt the point of contact to need no more precise clarification. These responses were not quite specific enough to categorise, but they apparently referred to the club itself. In Hebden Bridge, dates of first contact were similarly bunched in the very recent past, and the club itself was the normal point of first contact. Of the 11 respondents who identified their moment of first contact with organised adult storytelling, one came in per year between 1992 and 1994, and four per year in 1995 and 1996, after the club opened in October 1994. Of the 11 who identified a point of contact, seven (again, perhaps an underestimate) mentioned Tales at the Wharf itself. At these two clubs, then, and especially at the Trip, much of the participant group had been generated recently, and by the club itself. These clubs had a missionary quality and worked in relative independence and isolation from other storytelling institutions.

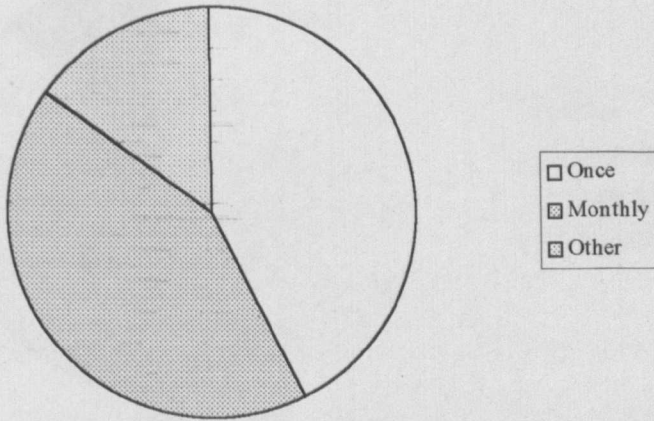
At Tales at the Edge, the participant group's collective history of first engagement preserved many of the same basic patterns, but it was in many ways rather more spatiotemporally diffuse. One respondent identified the Putley harvest-home ceilidhs as her first contact with organised adult storytelling; these, as described above, were also an early forum for Mike Rust, at which he first encountered Dougie Isles, many years before the Wenlock Edge club was first mooted. 20 other Wenlock respondents stated or precisely inferred a date of first encounter, of whom a few made the discovery in the mid-1980s, followed by a rush in the late 1980s accompanying the foundation of the club in autumn 1989, and a steady trickle of two a year through the 1990s. Of the 23 Wenlock respondents who identified their first point of contact, about half, 11, identified Tales at the Edge itself; the other

points of contact most frequently mentioned were Richard Walker's BBC local radio programme (three respondents), respondents' own fathers (three respondents), and other revivalistic storytelling institutions (three respondents). By contrast with the newer clubs, there is a sense here that the Much Wenlock club is not working in a vacuum, and was at its foundation continuing a developmental process that had already begun. As has already become apparent from the demographics, it draws on wider cultural and social relationships, and some relationships within storytelling revivalism itself. At the Camden Ceilidh, the situation was still more diffuse. Nine respondents stated or implied their date of first encounter; these occurred in an intermittent trickle of one per year, at most, between 1985 and 1994, with three in 1995. The club itself began in 1991, and this does not appear to have affected the rate at which current participants made their first contact. 10 gave some indication of their first point of contact and, although some laconic responses could be read as implying the Ceilidh, it is striking that none whatsoever unambiguously identified it. The most common points of discovery were previous and other revivalistic and organised events (seven respondents) and alternative healing work (two respondents). If the Much Wenlock club draws on wider social relationships generally, the London one seems to subsist largely within the relationships of the wider movement of storytelling revivalism. This is congruent with the clubs' histories, as described above: the one deriving from pre-existing vernacular culture, the other deeply integrated into a wider established revivalistic network which becomes more pervasive precisely in the lack of suitable pre-existing vernacular social and cultural networks. However, although the Wenlock Edge storytelling club seems to draw on relationships outside storytelling revivalism, and the London club seems to draw on relationships within it, neither of these two older clubs seems as isolated or as autonomous as the newer ones in Nottingham and Hebden Bridge.

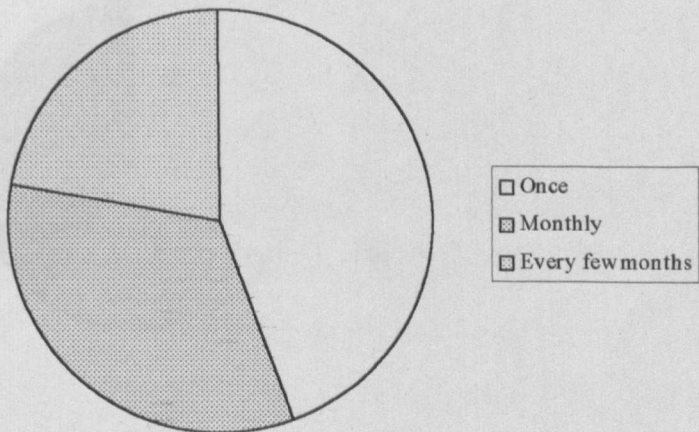
The second structural variable is the regularity and diversity of attendance at revivalistic storytelling events. Again, this was not directly observable, so questionnaire returns alone were examined with this in mind. Question 19 asked how often respondents attended organised, formal storytelling events. At Tall Tales at the Trip, those who reported attendance at storytelling events more frequently than once a month - a practice which, obviously, had to involve other events besides the monthly Tall Tales at the Trip - were greatly in the minority. 17 out of 40 respondents, or 42.5%, attended Tall Tales at the Trip every month, or attempted to, but had little other significant contact with revivalistic storytelling. Exactly the same number were virtual or actual newcomers to revivalistic storytelling as a whole, of whom most were actually attending for the first time on the night in question. Similarly, of the 18 respondents from Hebden Bridge who indicated their attendance patterns at organised storytelling events generally, eight claimed no previous attendance at all, four claimed attendance once every few months, and six claimed attendance of once a month or more often. Broadly similarly, too, the 26 Wenlock respondents who described their attendance patterns tended to do so in one of four general ways. Five respondents to question 19 claimed no previous attendance at an organised storytelling event, and 11 claimed monthly attendance. Six claimed annual or intermittent attendance, there was one vague response "whenever I can;" and three claimed attendance at one or more event per week. These three included two professional storytellers. At the Camden Ceilidh, of the 13 London respondents who indicated their frequency and regularity of attendance at storytelling events, only two claimed attendance once a month. Six claimed to attend once or twice a month or more frequently. The remaining six stated or implied that they attended less frequently or sporadically, and there was only one complete novice. These proportions are represented in Figure 9.

Fig. 9. Patterns of attendance at specific clubs

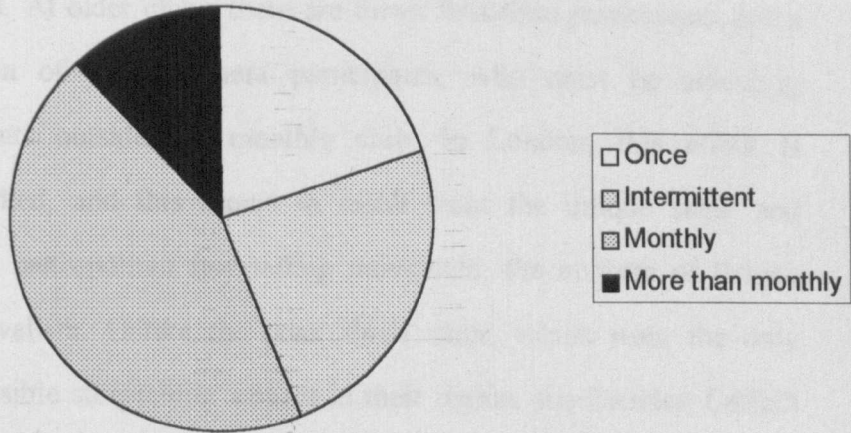
(a) Tall Tales at the Trip, Nottingham



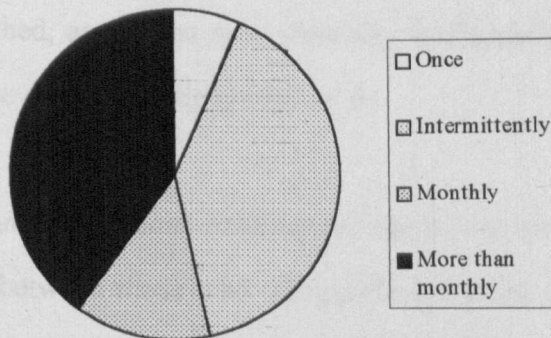
(b) Tales at the Wharf, Hebden Bridge



(c) *Tales at the Edge, Much Wenlock*



(d) *The Camden Ceilidh, London*



It can be seen from these tables that patterns of involvement correlate predictably with the age of the club. Newer clubs have high proportions of first-time attenders and low proportions of very frequent - that is, more than monthly - attenders; most regular participants have little contact with

storytelling outside the monthly club, and this is congruent with the high proportions of participants who discovered storytelling through the clubs themselves. The audiences at newer clubs are generated by the club itself; they tend to maintain loyalty in their habits of attendance and are isolated from the wider movement. At older clubs, there are fewer first-time participants and a larger proportion of very frequent participants, who must be attending storytelling events outside the monthly club. In London, this effect is particularly marked, and this seems to result from the unique scale and longevity of the metropolitan storytelling movement, the ur-form of British storytelling revivalism. Unlike the other three clubs, which were the only practically accessible storytelling venues in their region, the Camden Ceilidh was one of several storytelling institutions accessible to residents of greater London, as recounted in the previous chapter. London storytelling revivalism may have sprung up in a culture devoid of pre-existent oral narrative traditions, or at least of awareness of the kinds of oral narrative valued by revivalists; but, as if in compensation, as a movement in itself, it seems older and more entrenched, as well as more formally and consciously constructed, than storytelling revivalism in the provinces.¹⁶

The most important and obvious behavioural variable in the participant group is the distinction between those who tell stories and those who only listen to them. Questionnaires addressed this issue in terms of a straight count of autobiographical responses (section 3.1). Also, gate figures could be obtained by direct observation, by analysing the fairly self-evident proportion of performers at each event or club, relative to the overall observed attendance figures. The patterns of individuals' behaviour on this point were varied. Some

¹⁶ Interestingly, Ryan (1995) describes a similar contrast between British storytelling revivalism as a whole, characterised by an absence of tradition and a large, long-lived revivalistic movement, and Irish storytelling revivalism, characterised by a relatively substantial tradition and a small and recent revivalistic movement.

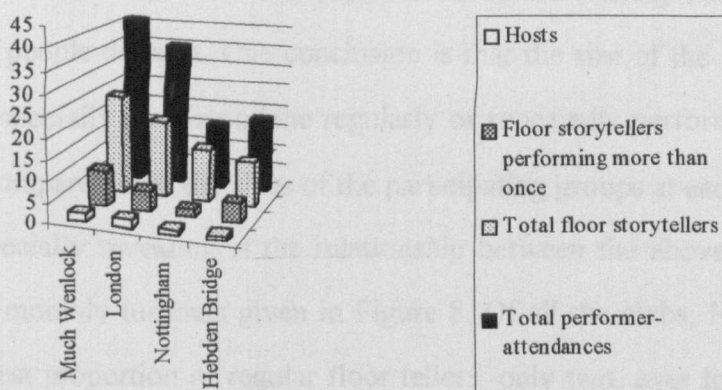
participants performed in public every month, or more often; others had done so once or twice, or would do so infrequently or sporadically. Also, data on these issues shows all the complexities mentioned above regarding the distinction between questionnaire returns and observed gate counts. Most significantly, the lower return rate for questionnaires seems to have distorted the questionnaire data considerably. Three fifths of all questionnaire respondents reported never having told a story at an organised public event (section 3.1). This is a significant underestimate; in fact, much more than three fifths of participants were directly observed never to perform at a storytelling club. Questionnaire responses suggested a much higher proportion of active tellers than could possibly have been the case judging by the gate count; and on this point the gate count is reliable. The discrepancy arises apparently because of the return rate for questionnaires (60.2%). It seems that active storytellers, being more motivated generally, were likelier to complete and return questionnaires than passive listeners, so that passive listeners were over-represented in the 39.8% of questionnaire recipients who did not respond. There is no means of testing this supposition, but it is a reasonable possibility and the only one which explains the data as recorded.

It was noticeable that those who tried storytelling from the floor - that is, at the short, unpaid performances which all comers could attempt - tended either to make it their regular monthly habit, or to give up after a small number of attempts. Also, significant numbers of the monthly floor storytellers were wholly or largely non-commercial in their storytelling activity (sections 3.1, 3.2); most did not progress beyond floor telling to more substantial or higher-status forms of storytelling performance. The returns for Much Wenlock and London show this most clearly. Data on the relative proportions of active tellers to passive listening participants are complicated and require careful consideration, as follows. The gate count of attendances by floor performers

over the whole period is a proportion of the total gate per club: the proportion of person-attendances during which the person attending also performed one or more stories. This proportion was about half the total gate in London (43, or 49%), one fifth in Hebden Bridge (25, or 21.7%), half in Wenlock (45, or 57.7%), and one tenth in Nottingham (23, or just over 11%). Clearly, then, the older clubs had a much higher proportion of active teller-attendances within the total gate count. However, this crude figure includes attendances by people who should properly be regarded as external to the club: for example, it includes performer-attendances by myself, and appearances by featured guests. If these are excluded, the remainder represents the proportionally smaller body of floor tellers active at each club during the fieldwork period. In London, this smaller body of active floor tellers was responsible for 35 directly observed performer-attendances over the four months (40.2% of the total gate for the same period). This is a monthly average of nearly nine in a club where the total average monthly turnout was about 18. These gate attendances were by 19 individuals, of whom only five performed at more than one event, and two were hosts. In Hebden Bridge, floor tellers account for 18 performer-attendances over four months (15.7% of the total gate for the same period). This is a monthly average of nearly five in a club where the total average monthly turnout was about 29. These attendances were the work of 11 people, of whom only five performed at more than one event and one other was the host: a scarcely larger body of regular floor tellers. At Nottingham, floor tellers account for 16 performer-attendances over four months (8.1% of the total gate). This is a monthly average of four in a club where the total average monthly turnout was about 50. These attendances were the work of 13 individuals, of whom only two performed at more than one event, and one was the host. The number of regular floor tellers at most clubs was therefore remarkably small, although the number of occasional tellers was larger. At Wenlock Edge, however, the situation was different. Here there were 41

performer-attendances over four months (52.6% of the total gate). This is a monthly average of just over 10 in a club where the total average monthly turnout was about 20. These were the work of 24 individuals, of whom a relatively substantial total of nine performed at more than one event and two were hosts. The number of regular floor tellers at this club was therefore much larger than at the other three. These proportions are shown in Figure 10.

Fig. 10. Performer-attendances and the active storytelling body per club



Overall, these figures preserve the sense of difference between the older clubs (which have a higher proportion of performer-attendances) and the newer clubs (which have a higher proportion of attendances by passive listeners). A number of additional conclusions can be drawn relating to the proportions of performing to non-performing individuals at each club. In Figure 10, for each club, the largest, hindmost column represents the total directly observed gate count of performer-attendances (excluding those by featured guests and by

myself). The next column, in light grey, gives the total number of floor storytellers per club, that is, the number of individuals whose (multiple) attendances make up this larger gate count. The next, dark-grey column gives the number of floor storytellers who performed more than once over the total fieldwork period: it is thus a subset of the figure given in the previous column, extracted by excluding the once-only storytellers at each club, and varies in direct proportion to the difference between the previous two columns. The foremost column gives the number of hosts who told stories themselves at some point during fieldwork, a rather special and anomalous case within the performing body as a whole. Overall, the table gives an impression of the relationship at the clubs between the volume of storytelling done and the numbers of people doing it. One conclusion is that the size of the performing body, and especially the size of the regularly or repeatedly performing body, was small compared with the sizes of the participating groups at each club and overall. Especially revealing is the relationship between the above table and the average monthly turnouts given in Figure 8. Of all the clubs, Nottingham had the lowest proportion of regular floor tellers: only two, over four months during which the average monthly turnout was nearly fifty. The other two clubs also show small proportions of regular floor tellers: each had five regular or repeat performers, with average monthly turnouts of eighteen (London) and twenty-nine (Hebden Bridge). Wenlock Edge was anomalous in this respect; it had the highest proportion of performing participants, with nine regular or repeat floor storytellers and an average monthly turnout of twenty. Still, this could be higher: at all clubs, the body of regular performers was outnumbered, often very heavily, by non-performing listeners. A second conclusion can be drawn from the see-saw-like correlation between low overall monthly turnout and a high relative proportion of repeat floor tellers within the performing group. That is to say: the smaller the club (most conspicuously Wenlock Edge, but also London), the higher the proportion of floor tellers who told stories

repeatedly at successive meetings, rather than just once. The larger the club (as at Nottingham), the more active tellers who performed once and no more. This finding corroborates and elaborates the noted fact that the two older clubs (Much Wenlock and London) had a noticeably higher proportion of performer-attendances in the simple gate count than the newer clubs (Nottingham and Hebden Bridge). Not only did the older clubs have smaller gate counts with a higher proportion of active performer-attendances; also, the performer-attendances observed at the older clubs were the work of a more dedicated group of habitual repeat performers. At the newer clubs, there were larger audiences, fewer active tellers overall, and a higher proportion of floor tellers performing once only. The older the club, the more likely its participant group was to be both small and more dominated by dedicated repeat performers. Overall, however, and with the exception of Wenlock Edge, the storytelling clubs in the sample seemed to function with surprisingly small communities of active storytellers in their midst. Most participants seem to be happy to listen.

The final variable considered is the gender of performing floor storytellers. Of the 69 individuals identified above as observed active floor performers, 36 were male and 33 female. Men were therefore in a very slight majority in the body of floor tellers as a whole. Of the 21 regular or repeat floor tellers who performed at more than one event of the same club, 12 (57.1%) were men and nine women. In the group of dedicated repeat performers, the male majority was slightly larger. Moreover, nine out of 13 featured guests (69.2%), and five of the six host-promoters (83.3%), were men: here the male majority was larger still. This corroborates and develops the picture of sporadic female and dedicated male involvement. As one moves up the hierarchies of involvement, from audience member to floor teller, to regular floor teller, and so to featured guest and host/organiser, the proportion of men to women consistently

increases, until at the top of the hierarchy there is pronounced male dominance which contrasts with the greater numbers of women in the participant body overall.

In conclusion, the participant body, as might have been predicted, was almost entirely white and English in ethnic terms, and largely middle-class in educational attainment and culture. It was, however, noticeably marginalised in terms of economic status. Most participants were women, but women tended to participate more sporadically. Men were generally more regular and active participants, and concomitantly they were numerically dominant in the organisational and performative hierarchies of the clubs. The clubs themselves seemed to display features which correlated consistently with the age and longevity of clubs. New clubs were fairly autonomous entities, generating inexperienced new audiences through publicity, and lacking substantial links either to other revivalistic storytelling institutions or to other non-revivalistic networks of relationships. Older clubs, by contrast, tended to be more rooted in both spheres and to draw on participant groups with wider experience of revivalistic storytelling. Patterns of participation were significantly stepped generationally - that is, they showed the M-shaped age distribution curve noted above - and this often co-occurred with known genealogical family relationships, and was apparently caused by these. The exception was the London club, which was more deeply embedded in the older, pre-existent revivalistic culture of the capital, but which showed no dependence on family relationships and a less diffuse distribution across the age-groups. Clubs tended to have only small numbers of resident floor storytellers, and significant numbers of floor tellers performed only once.

5.4 Genres

Limits of space preclude any exhaustive motif analysis of the recorded corpus of narratives told. However, some description of the genres of story told, however truncated, is necessary. A full account of the stories told in the sample is given as Appendix 7. At the 17 recorded events, 252 performed repertoire items were identified: on average, about 15 per event. This excludes the numerous announcements, links, extempore jests, autobiographical and other anecdotes and *dite*-like snatches of narrative with which tellers filled out and contextualised their performances. The status of these performative sub-items is interactively highly significant, and is discussed in detail in the following chapter. It seems clear, however, that they represent categories of utterance which, although integral parts of the overall performance of the club encounter, were not emically understood as constituting separate repertoire items. Of the 252, 24 songs, two tunes, and eight poems may be excluded from further consideration, as not constituting examples of spoken oral narrative. Also excluded from further consideration are the 15 stories (approximately one per event) which I myself told as a participant observer. Thirdly, performances which were not fully recorded on audiotape were excluded: all the 11 performances at event 3, and the 13 performances of Roberto Lagnado, the featured guest at event 8, who withheld permission for recording, and one poem, item 238 at event 17. These excisions total 74 items, leaving an analysable corpus of 178 performed stories. This corpus of 178 was analysed according to source, genre and type, referring initially to Aarne and Thompson's *The Types of the Folktale* (1964 (1928)), Baughman's *Type and Motif Index of the Folktales of England and North America* (1966), and Christiansen's legend typology, *The Migratory Legend* (1958). If an item did not correspond directly to any entry in these standard typologies, it was

assigned a generic definition from them on the basis of its general characteristics. Once these lines of analysis had been exhausted, the remaining unclassified items were characterised impressionistically according to their generic effect, known sources and analogues. Only in a few cases, about six, were the results for individual narratives ambiguous.

92 items, just over half of the corpus, corresponded in their general characteristics to Aarne and Thompson's folktale genres, although only a third of these 92 could be assigned specific tale-types. The two largest single categories were ordinary folktales, among which tales of magic predominated considerably, and the very slightly more numerous jokes and anecdotes, among which the most numerous typological category was *Stories about a Man (Boy)*. Most of the 20 or so remaining folktales were animal tales. 41 narratives corresponded to Christiansen's generic descriptions of legends; only 12 of these could be assigned specific legend-types, which suggests that the legends performed were morphologically more fluid (and perhaps therefore less book-bound in origin) than the longer folktales. Apart from all of these, 52 narratives eluded both generic classification and typology, of which 18 seemed broadly folktale-like. Many of these were recognisable as epic and heroic romances culled ultimately from medieval texts, or non-European folktales falling outside the Eurocentric Aarne-Thompson and Christiansen typologies. A further 22 were, or seemed to be, of literary or original provenance, and many of these were literary fairy tales, or fantastic fables with a loosely folktale-like ambience. Occasionally a literary provenance was explicitly identified for these, as for Michael Dacre's final story at event 10, which he entitled *Jan Bodicott's Big Black Dog*. Michael related informally that he had obtained this story at second hand from a French Canadian literary short story with which he was not directly familiar; subsequent research revealed that this was Natalie Savage Landor's short story *Jean Labadie's Big Black Dog*

(Corrin 1979). The remaining 12 items were factual in origin, and bore little or no significant familial resemblance to traditional narratives: personal reminiscences, oral abstracts of particularly striking episodes in documentary history, and the like. Although there was therefore something of a bias towards the shorter genres - animal tales and anecdotes - there is no question that the conventional folktale and folktale-like genres dominated the revivalistic storytelling clubs observed, with the legend as a rather secondary presence. When, against the general trend, a complex folktale was told, it tended to be a magic tale.

All but 29 of the narratives analysed had a recoverable geographical provenance. This was sometimes stated by the teller. If it was not, it could often be inferred from names of characters or settings within the story, and original and literary stories could be ascribed to their authors' cultures of origin, such that, for example, *Kunstmärchen* by Oscar Wilde or Hans Andersen could be classified respectively as Irish or European. Most parts of the world were represented in the appropriated stories; the exceptions, for no obvious reason, were central and south America. However, English stories constituted almost exactly a third of the corpus, which puts the eclecticism of English storytelling revivalism, noted in Chapter 2 above, rather sharply into proportion. This is entirely congruent with the submerged but significant preference, already noted immediately above, for shorter folktales, which have long been favoured in English oral narrative taste and tradition over the classic longer *Märchen*. The next largest category by culture of origin was Ireland, again by a considerable margin. Despite their eclecticism, revivalist storytellers often preferred to choose repertoire items from fairly close to home.

The final point to be made with reference to genre and provenance of individual stories is the way particular categories tended to cluster around specific contextual factors. Particular clubs, tellers, and events tended to favour particular types of story and a preponderance of stories of a specific type or from a specific global region could be predicted from such factors as the identity of the club or teller, the theme of the evening, or known calendar customs relating to the time of year. To give some examples: Richard Neville, a regular floor teller at the Camden Ceilidh over the four months, had a marked preference for longer Russian wonder-tales (items 14, 51, 100, 122, 172); nobody else told them in any number. Hugh Lupton, the professional storyteller who was the featured guest at Tall Tales at the Trip in March (event 4, SCSA/AE/16-17), performed English stories almost exclusively, and, as a native of East Anglia, he had researched a fund of East Anglian stories. Michael Dacre, a professional storyteller, was the featured guest at a special extra event at Tall Tales at the Trip a week later (event 6, SCSA/AE/9-10); he performed a repertoire which was drawn not only entirely from the English West Country (again, his area of personal origin), but, specifically, largely from the published supernatural legends of Ruth Tongue. As will become clear in Chapter 7, the culture at Tales at the Edge tended to mildly discourage longer stories, generally and throughout the fieldwork period. The themed nights at the Camden Ceilidh resulted in concentrations of Chinese and Irish stories, celebrating appropriate festivals such as the Chinese New Year and St. Patrick's Day (respectively, event 2, SCSA/AE/3-4, and event 5, SCSA/AE/7-8). Genres, ambiances and specific sources and source traditions were not therefore represented evenly throughout the recorded fieldwork corpus; rather, they clustered round specific contextual factors such as these. In conclusion, although the range of items performed at the clubs was clearly innovative and eclectic beyond the possibilities of everyday conversational oral narrative, there was a submerged conservatism in the genres selected. Appropriated

folktales and legends form the bulk of performed items, as might be expected. The spatiotemporal range of appropriation is very wide, but the majority of items are drawn from fairly near home and reiterate well-noted concerns and preoccupations in English oral narrative culture, such as the preference for shorter genres.

5.5 Key and instrumentalities: performative styles and textures

Similarly, although the content of revivalistic performance is often rather distanced from mundane concerns, and its performative scale is supra-conversational, revivalistic performative style is often lexically and syntactically close to everyday speech. Understandably, research recovered nothing of comparable scale to the sustained, mature, complex, all-embracing elevation of epic oral narrative poetry, or with the haunting and elaborate periphrasis of the *crua-Ghaedhlig* or hard Irish of Gaelic-language folktale narration. Even in Irish tradition, oral narrative in the English language is typically linguistically less adorned (Brennan Harvey 1992), and this characteristic is shared with revivalistic storytelling in England itself. Complex rhetorical narrative style and language depends on mature compositional traditions which an innovative revivalistic movement is clearly too young to have developed, and revivalists tend to eschew one alternative - fixed-text memorisation - as a matter of course. Also, certainly since the brothers Grimm, printed mediations of folktales and fairy tales have often cultivated a generic simplicity of style, even when the subject matter is fantastic (Zipes 1992, 168). Although this simplicity is often a literary device rather than a faithful rendering of traditional styles, it seems to have been adopted by revivalists as the appropriate *Märchen* style. At the outset of a typical example, a long magical folktale appropriated via a printed anthology from Indian tradition and told at *Tales at the Edge* by Judith Baresel, the king

pursues a white hind, which turns into a woman so beautiful that the king is overcome with desire for her (AE/28a: item 183, event 13, AT type 462, *The Outcast Queens and the Ogress Queen*):

And she said, "Well, then, if I'm to be chief queen, you'll have to prove that. Give me - give me a necklace made of the eyeballs of all your queens. If you give me that, I'll come back and be your queen. If not, I stay here." And the king, he went back home, he had his queens seized, eyeballs taken from them, and threw them into a desolate place, an old palace, where they were on their own, blind as they were and just ready to give birth. And he went off, he had a necklace made from these eyeballs, and he went off to the white hind, and he said, "Here is the necklace. Now come with me, I've banished my other queens." And she said, "Oh well, if that's the way you want it, I will."

Content aside, there is little here lexically or syntactically that is not acceptable as neutral, everyday spoken English; some individual words, perhaps, such as *seized*, *desolate*, *hind*, and *banished*, but little more. In item 211, told by Helen Griffith at event 15 at the Camden Ceilidh, the Devil goes about dressed as a fairy godmother, granting wishes which he hopes will lead people to damnation (AE/26a). (Round brackets indicate non-verbal vocalisation; punctuation is otherwise typographic.)

And he sees a crabby old woman walking along the road with a big bundle of sticks for a fire on her back. "Right, start with this one." And he goes up and says, "Good day, mother! Lovely day!" "(Growls) Not a lovely day!" "Well, it is now, 'cause I'm your fairy godmother, and I'm going to grant you a wish!" The old woman goes, "Well, I wish you'd go back where you came from!" And so the Devil found himself back down in Hell.

Content apart, and apart from a certain old-fashioned ring in the Devil's greeting, this is certainly uninterrupted contemporary, informal English oral narration, as shown by features such as the colloquial *crabby*, historic present,

omission of verbs and verb subjects, elision of *because*, and *go* used instead of the more formal *say*.

However, many revivalists do not seem to cultivate a plain or economical style for its own sake: it is, rather, something they often seek to augment or transcend. As exemplified in the careers of transitional artists such as Ed Bell and Jeannie and Stanley Robertson (McDermitt 1985, Mullen 1981, Porter 1976), revivalistic events are much larger in scale and more formal in ambience than those within many source traditional gatherings; they demand a commensurate increase in the scale of performance. Transitional artists can adapt a developed traditional style to a new context. But revivalists themselves lack the necessary grounding in source-traditional performing styles, and their native oral narrative experience prepares them little for the demands of the new performative context. To meet these demands, they therefore imitate and combine idioms from a wide range of sources and models: the informal conversational oral storytelling tradition in which they have grown up, the literary fairy tale and print-mediated folklore text, and (subject to exposure) the style of transitional storytellers from source traditions, such as Stanley Robertson and Duncan Williamson. They respond to the new demands of revivalistic storytelling through formal elaboration of performance, using a number of identifiable techniques. While these do not in aggregate amount to a fully developed aesthetic or style, they certainly exemplify a certain developing commonality of approach within the provisional experimentations of revivalistic performance. The means whereby this was achieved are variously textual and metatextual, and can be considered under these headings.

5.5.1 Textual techniques

5.5.1.1 Repetition and parallelism

Repetition within an oral narrative performance can occur at the level of plot or narrative structure, and/or at the syntactic and lexical levels of sentence, phrase, or word. It is a commonplace that many folktales have intrinsically repetitive plots (see, in the present samples, items 54, 60, 67 - 9, 99, 117, 125, 128, 138, 139, 143, 148, 152, 159, 161, 164, 167, 169, 171, 182, 188, 190, 224, 230, 249). It is interesting that Thomas (1993) cites repetition as one of the features of Newfoundland French-language *Märchen*-telling which was obnoxious to the tastes of modern audiences and contributed to the decline of the fully developed folktale tradition. Similarly, the plot repetition in many of the cited examples of revivalistic storytelling far exceeds what even a skilled urban English *raconteur* of the kind studied by Bennett (1980), or even an “old fisherman” like Ed Bell (Mullen 1981), could easily introduce into everyday conversational narrative in its *milieu propre*. It is significant therefore to see storytelling revivalists appropriating longer, repetitive plots, the exact crux impeding the unbroken perpetuation of substantial narrative traditions elsewhere. This is one of the basic, general idiomatic norms which storytelling revivalism makes a point of flouting.

Plot-based repetition occasionally assumed extreme proportions. The plot of item 139, told by Sandra Wye at event 10 at Tales at the Edge, is very easily summarised: it is a myth *set illo tempore*, in which nine out of ten primordial suns are shot out of the sky by a culture hero, who thereby cools the world to habitable temperature and leaves the one familiar sun in the sky. In the performance, the nine effectively identical episodes are each given full

narrative treatment and last up to five minutes, creating an extended, repetitive performance which lasts for over half an hour. In order to carry off this demanding feat, Sandra pushed her own energetic and highly physical storytelling style to the limit, standing in the middle of the room, declaiming, gesticulating and miming frenetically past the point of self-parody, and involving the entire participant group in a carnivalesque episode which was halfway between a much-heckled storytelling performance and a boisterously informal re-enactment of the tale, in which the participant group took the role of incredulous bystanders. The resulting performance was regularly punctuated by extempore cheering directed at the hero (or perhaps at the figure of Sandra, standing in the middle of the room and representing him), heckling, and so forth; even, at one point, a Mexican wave round the circle of listeners as a parodic gesture of supportive spectation.¹⁷ Over repeated previous performances, this story had already become a trademark of Sandra's, a test of her personal aplomb and of the capabilities of the revivalistic idiom. Its origins are pertinent.¹⁸ She once told it at a private party, and early on in the performance she was heckled by a friend, asking in mock dismay whether she was going to be narrating all nine identical shooting episodes in full. Sandra rose to the challenge, and did so, creating the extended performance which was an established part of her repertoire by the time fieldwork was conducted. The origins of this exuberant performance therefore lie precisely in a shared awareness of the boundaries and limits of existing oral narrative idiom, and of what is risked (and what can be gained) by breaking them.

¹⁷ The Mexican wave appears to have been introduced to Britain from Mexico by television coverage of the 1986 World Cup in Mexico City. It is performed by a group in a circle facing in towards the centre, usually a crowd of tens of thousands, seated tens deep, in a football stadium, but in this more modest case by a single ring of participants seated around the walls of a middle-sized pub room. Participants raise their arms aloft and lowering them in rapid succession around the circle, creating a ripple-like effect which moves around the circle like the second hand of a clock.

¹⁸ Personal conversation.

Repetitive textuality is also significant at the level of individual words and phrases. In the opening story of the same evening, a fragment of a West African animal tale, told by the host Richard Walker, the animals decide that whoever can survive drinking a glass of boiling water will be chosen as king. Hare, the trickster, volunteers, and deliberately takes so long about the preamble to his feat that the water, without anyone noticing, cools enough for him to drink it safely. Narrating Hare's own speech before this feat, Richard, without warning, took on Hare's persona, and began to address the other participants in the character of the other animals, even striding around the middle of the room to accost them in their seats, rather as Sandra turned them all into bystanders for the mock-heroic shooting of the suns. Other participants quickly accommodated the device and co-operated with it. The known speakers in the following excerpt are Richard (narrating and speaking as Hare), Sandra Wye (co-opted as Badger), Mike Rust (as Fox), and Rex Turner (as Rabbit). One participant was unknown. (AE/14a) (*Italic text in round brackets indicates actions and gestures, and/or non-verbal vocalisation. Roman text in round brackets indicates expansion of elided speech. Ellipsis indicates excisions. Punctuation is otherwise typographic.*)

RW And Hare was given the glass of boiling water. And Hare looked at it, and said, "I'll do it, but," and he went to Badger. (*turns to address Sandra Wye*) "Scuse me, Badger, if I do this and I die, you will tell the story, won't you?"

SW "Yes."

RW "Yeah, okay." And he went to Fox. (*to Mike Rust*) "Scuse me, Fox, if I do this and I die, you will tell the story, won't you?"

MR "No!"

(*general laughter*)

RW "Please! You can argue as much as you want ... (*several syllables inaudible*)! Scuse me, Wolf, if I do this and I die, you will tell the story, won't you?"

? (*nods*)

RW "(Thank you) so much, you'll tell the whole story? And tell how glorious I was, and how wonderful I was? Thank you. (*to Rex Turner*) Scuse me, Rabbit, if, if I do this and I die,

you, you will tell the story to everybody, how great and glorious I was, won't you?"

RT "Well, I'll tell the story!" (*laughs; general laughter*)

RW "Will you tell a little bit, will you tell - um, ex - excuse me, Dog, if, if I d - If I drink this - would you, would you please tell the story, tell everybody about it?" And so he went round everybody. By the time he'd got round it, the drink was cold, he drank it down and became the king! (*general laughter*)

However, the following examples are characterised by more than simple repetition. There is a degree of unobtrusive but significant parallelism, marked in the following quotations with underlines (double underlines for separated or overlapping patterns). In item 197, at event 13 at Tales at the Edge, Roy Dyson tells a story of a cat chasing a rat (AE/29a). (Punctuation as for the above quotation.)

And the rat shot off round the barn, and the cat followed it, and they ran round and round the barn, and up the ladder to the top of the barn, and up over the top of the barn and into the door and up on the roof and across the tiles and down back the other side and round and round, until eventually the cat cornered the rat.

In item 2, at event 1, also at Tales at the Edge, Richard Walker narrates a visit by a garrulous little girl to a Schlaraffenland-like otherworld (AE/1a):

And so they carried on the journey. And they carried on, and the mother said, "Look, I've told you. You mustn't, any thing you see, if you see a flea, anything, don't say." The girl went on, and she suddenly came round a corner, and there was a river. And the river wasn't clear and it wasn't water, it was full of white liquid flowing not downhill, but uphill. And she said to her mother, "Mum, mother, I've, I (*stutters*) how are my friends going to - a river of milk flowing uphill, mother, I've never seen the likes before!" And the moment she said that her mother looked aghast, she looked shocked ...

Item 203 at event 14 at Tall Tales at the Trip was a version of AT type 1540, *The Student from Paradise (Paris)*, told by Jill Jobson. It begins (AE/24a):

There was a soldier who was called Tom Hackerback. And he went to the wars, times gone by, and times gone by. And when he came out of the wars, returned home, there was no money. He was turned off, as many were in those days. And he took to the road, he went on the tramp from door to door, begging.

Following Richard's story of Hare and the boiling water, above Sandra Wye begins her own story, item 129 at event 10 at Tales at the Edge (AE/14a):

Hare may or may not have thought he was the strongest, and may or may not have proved it by the story we've just heard, but this is a story about Coyote, and as some of you may know Coyote is a hero of many stories, and Coyote knows that he is the strongest.

Item 4, told at event 1 in Wenlock, was Tony Addison's version of the story given in Jacobs (1994 (1892)) as *Connla and the Fairy Maiden*. Tony speaks with his eyes closed, sitting quite still, slowly and quietly, with great solemnity and concentration, pausing frequently, and becoming almost oblivious to the listeners (AE/1a):

And Connla saw a woman come toward him, in a dress now red, now green. And the woman stood before him, and said, "I have come, Connla, from the Land of the Ever-Young. In my land, people feel neither death, nor sin, nor any form of transgression. There is no waste of warmongering; there is no longing without love. There is perpetual feasting, and no service to one's liege lord."

The parallel passage in Jacobs reads:

... he saw a maiden clad in strange attire coming towards him.
 "Whence comest thou, maiden?" said Connla.
 "I come from the Plains of the Ever Living," she said, "there where there is neither death nor sin. There we keep holiday always, nor need we help from any in our joy. And in all our pleasure we have no strife. And because we have our homes in the round green hills, men call us the Hill Folk." (Jacobs 1994 (1892), 1)

Tony's formal mode of speech results not from rote memorisation, but from a deliberately formalised style which seems to be inspired by the tenor of print-mediated sources, but is itself the product of simultaneous composition achieved through meticulous concentration in performance.

The effect of this parallelism, if prolonged, is a slow, gently repetitive rhythm which adds a slightly hypnotic quality to a fluent and skilled performance but prolongs and intensifies the tedium of a poor one. It is structurally redolent of the parallelism of oral narrative poetry: the *sanan virkkoi, noin nimesi* (*uttered a word, spoke thus*) of Lönnrot's *Kalevala* 8:92 (1963 (1849), xviii - xx, 44); the Beowulfian ... *mabelode, ... spræc* (... *made utterance, ... spoke*) (*Beowulf* 1215, 2510 (Wrenn and Bolton 1996 (1953), 59 - 62, 147, 191)); and the *Go saddle me the black, the black / Go saddle me the brown* of the Anglo-Scottish folk ballad (Friedman 1977, xiv). This similarity is so marked that, despite the massive cultural distance, a detailed comparative structural analysis of oral and epic poetry and revivalistic storytelling seems a tantalising prospect for future scholarship. It seems to be the case that many experienced revivalistic storytellers habitually allow this parallelism to indiscriminately permeate their performances as much as they can. It is valued for its own sake, as an intrinsic general requirement of storytelling performance. It is noticeable too that parallelism of this sort accounts for most of the formal performative elaboration noted in the pilot study in Chapter 3 above. It seems beyond question that it is emerging as a stable, general, pervasive quality of the nascent revivalistic idiom. However, as outlined fully in the following chapter, there is no evidence that the storytellers quoted are consciously concerned with parallelism as a feature of their own or of their colleagues' storytelling.¹⁹ Oral epics and folk ballads do not command especial interest as texts or as

¹⁹ It is worth noting, however, that, despite previous participant experience, the present writer did not consciously consider it or notice how widespread it was until preparing the present chapter.

sources in storytelling clubs, and are certainly not discussed in technical and linguistic detail by participants. Certainly, it is possible that this elaboration results from a general awareness of the need to build up the effective scale of the performance. Possibly, in the midst of their provisional and selfconscious experimentation, storytelling revivalists are beginning unselfconsciously to reapply the artistic strategies which, fully developed, have produced some of the greatest known examples of verbal and narrative art. The full implications of this point are developed in the conclusion to the present study.

Generally, then, the degree of plot-based and textual repetition involved in revivalistic performance significantly exceeded that involved in normal everyday oral narrative. Textual repetition goes some way towards accounting for the heightened ambiances of revivalistic storytelling, but it makes special demands on the teller's skill, commitment and energy, which must be resolved by other means.

5.5.1.2 Exaggeration and superlativity

One way of increasing the dynamic range and scale of a story is to exaggerate or even simply assert the superlativity of the matter under discussion. In the opening to item 52 at event 5 at the Camden Ceilidh, a version of a legend given as *The Black Pool of Knockfierna* in Glassie (1985), Bernard Kelly introduces his rakish hero (AE/7a):

Cahal O'Daly had the most gorgeous green eyes in the whole of Ireland. He had the blackest, silkiest hair in the whole of Ireland. He had the straightest, most beautiful nose in the whole of Ireland, and what's more he had the most kissable lips in the whole of Ireland. He was a fair beast of a man.

Helen Griffith began her Camden Ceilidh version of the Finnsburh tragedy, item 15 (event 2) (AE/3b):

People said that the reason the Frisians were such good sailors is that it was so damp and marshy in Frisia that it was drier on board boat than it was in Frisia.

Item 142, in event 10 at Tales at the Edge, was by Mike Rust, the tale of the sinking of the German battleship *Scharnhorst* by the British battleship *Duke of York* on the route of the Murmansk convoys in the Northern seas late in 1943.

Mike begins, in a low tone of mounting tension (AE/15a):

And the *Scharnhorst* slunk out of the fjord. Now whether something that's twenty-nine thousand tons, that's got nine eleven-inch guns, twenty-two of the secondary armoury, designed specifically just to sink ships in a convoy, can slink anywhere, is beside the point ...

All these passages tend towards the parallelism noted above, but in a larger sense each also constitutes a digression in which a single, striking figure of their subject is elaborated at some length. These digressions are often not strictly necessary for the plot: Cahal O'Daly's story is of a supernatural encounter which has little directly to do with his erotic charisma, and Frisia's dampness has little to do with the Migration Age feud which flares up at Finnsburh. These digressions are atmosphere-building devices intended to make the story-world more vivid, and, possibly, to separate the act of storytelling performance off from other kinds of talk by investing it with a specific defining texture. Revivalistic exaggeration is distributed across the board; it is an enduring characteristic of the emergent revivalistic style, and a pervasive superlativity is a noticeable feature of the resulting tale-worlds.

5.5.1.3 Imitation of sources

Another textual device for elaborating and heightening a storytelling performance is to imitate the heightened elaboration of the source. Violet Philpott follows closely in Duncan Williamson's footsteps in her version of his story *Jack and the Sea Witch* (item 176, at event 12; AE/23a; Williamson 1989, 31 - 47). In this story Jack's foolhardy attempt to capture and marry a mermaid misfires, and he catches a sea-witch, a bestial ocean-going hag. The latter part of the story recounts Jack's attempts to rid himself of the sea-witch; he is eventually successful, and ends the story greatly relieved, and much the wiser for his misadventure. Although Violet narrates in her own southern English accent, she assumes a Scots accent for characters' direct speech. Character and motive are built up by a fugue-like repetition of simple central ideas, such as the oft-levelled accusation that Jack is mad to want a mermaid, and Jack's indignant response. These are central and effective, and the storytelling is character-driven, to the point that the familiar folktale plot emerges naturally, as if spontaneously, from the interplay of characters, without in any way interrupting or obscuring the typically folktale-like clarity of forward plot movement. This quality of character-driven fullness is typical of Duncan Williamson's own storytelling style. Here parallel excerpts are given from the published text, a transcript of Duncan's spoken performance, and from Violet's telling. Jack returns home, having obtained a magic net which he thinks will allow him to catch the mermaid. The left-hand column reproduces the published version, an edited transcript of Duncan's performance, which would have been entirely in Scots. The right-hand column is Violet's version, in near-standard southern English, with passages of assumed Scots underlined.

Fig. 11. Comparison of versions of "Jack and the Sea Witch"

Original text (Williamson 1989, 41 - 42)	Violet Philpott's version (event 12, item 176, AE/23a)
<p>And his mother was surprised to see him.</p> <p>"Well, laddie," she said, "ye've been away a long while."</p> <p>"Aye, mother," he said, "but it was worthwhile."</p> <p>"Maybe," says the old woman, "maybe it was worthwhile, maybe it wasna. Did ye see Blind Rory?"</p> <p>"Aye, mother," he says, "I saw a lot o folk. And they all gien me the same advice. What is it about the mermaid that youse folk dinna like?"</p> <p>She said, "Jack, ye're too young to understand."</p> <p>He says, "I'm no young, I'm twenty years of age. And I'm bound to ken what I want - I want the mermaid!"</p> <p>"Right," says his mother, "you go ahead and you catch your mermaid, but remember, ye paid nae heed tae naebody. So whatever happens to ye when ye get a mermaid and what ye do wi it is up to yersel!"</p> <p>"Well," says Jack, "can folk no let it be that way? And let me do what I want!"</p>	<p>His mother hears him, actually, singing, coming up the path.</p> <p><u>"Ah, Jock, Jock, you've been a long way.</u></p> <p><u>Did you see Blind Rory?"</u></p> <p><u>"Oh, I did, Mam, I did, I'm going to catch me a mermaid."</u></p> <p><u>"Oh, is that a fact!"</u></p> <p><u>"Aye."</u></p> <p>Anyway, um, he was, by the time he got there it was dark, it was a long way, as I say. And so she said, <u>"Oh, you're looking tired, you'd better go to bed."</u></p>
<p>So his old mother gives him his supper and he goes to his bed, and he takes his net with him in case his mother would destroy it! Up to his bed with him, puts the net below his head. All night he couldna sleep, he couldna wait till daylight till he got back to the beach.</p>	<p>So he went to bed, he couldn't sleep, tossing, turning, thinking, he stuffed the net under his pillow, because he thought his mother might be looking for the net, and if she knew what he was about she might destroy it. And he woke very very early at dawn ...</p>

As with Tony Addison's adaptation of Jacobs' *Connla and the Fairy Maiden*, the similarities of style and tone are more significant than the *verbatim* correspondences. Violet has abridged her source text, and especially she has made no attempt to reproduce the lively and complex dialogue of the source. Incidentally, if Duncan and Violet's handling of action rather than dialogue is compared, through the example of Jack's fishing with the net the following day, a slightly different picture emerges:

Fig. 12. Comparison of versions of "Jack and the Sea Witch"

Original text (Williamson 1989, 42)	Violet Philpott's version (event 12, item 176, AE/23a)
<p>Now this place where Jack's supposed to see the mermaid was a long narrow lagoon where the water came in, it was awful awful deep. And there was a narrow channel in between. And every time he seen her playing in this wee round pool, when he ran down to get close to her she escaped through the channel. And he made up his mind that he was going to get a net that he could set in the channel, so that when she went back out - she wouldna see it coming in - but he would catch her on the road back out.</p> <p>Right, so the next day was a lovely sunny day and away he goes. And he sets his net,</p>	<p>And without any porridge, no breakfast, he went out, he went down to the shore. And there's a deep lagoon near the cottage, very deep and very narrow, and that's where he always sees the mermaid. And sometimes in the daytime, more often in the evening, but he has to be sure so, he sets this, this um, net, at the entrance to the lagoon, but he doesn't pull the cord which will open it, and it would be invisible from the water, he knew.</p>
<p>and he sits and he sits and he sits, he sits and sits till it gets kind o' gloamin dark, and a mist comes down. He hears splishing and splashing in the water. He says, "That's her!" Then he pulls the string ...</p>	<p>So then he sits and he waits. And the day seems awful long to him. He waits and he waits, no mermaid. He whistles a little less, and he, he's quite quiet, staring out to sea, and glittering. (<i>Several syllables inaudible</i>) starting, late evening sunshine, it's (<i>one syllable inaudible</i>) flaming water. Then it gets, slightly dusky grey, mist creeping over the sea, and his head begins to nod a bit. And then there's a</p>

	splashing. A splash, and he thinks, “Yes, yes, yes, my mermaid!” And its getting quite dark by now. And he sees the splash of a tail, he sees some long hair, and he thinks “(<i>Inhales</i>), she should be swinging back out of the lagoon,” and he pulls the cord ...
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Whereas Duncan’s version dwells on the practicalities of catching the mermaid, Violet pays more attention to the atmosphere of the landscape, Jack’s internal psychology, motivation and state of mind (also a preoccupation in the foregoing extract), and the tension of the long wait. It is noticeable that Duncan allows his characters’ psychology and motivations to emerge in dialogue, whereas Violet truncates and standardises the dialogue of the original, and relies more on description of internal states to narrate psychology and motive. This apparently reflects an unconsidered difference between the habits and assumptions of a more oral, rhetoric-driven, externalised, public and communal source tradition, and the more literate, reflective, internal, private and atomised consciousness of the revivalist. Duncan’s narration of the final catch is also more laconic. It is clear, however, despite these slippages, Violet is following her source fairly closely, both in terms of structure and tone, and many of the artistic resources and textual and textural strategies she uses are directly appropriated from Duncan. Her performance combines her own habits of thought and speech with those of the source text to produce a new, hybrid kind of oral narration.

5.5.1.4 Irony and bathos

Without testimony by the performers, it is impossible to say if ironic or bathetic moments were always deliberately contrived, but they happened several times. As noted above, one of the regular Camden tellers, Richard Neville, had a special preference for long Russian folktales; five of his eight contributions to the analysed sample, and four of his six floor performances at the Camden Ceilidh, fell into this category. One of these was item 172 at event 12, a version of AT Type 519 *The Strong Woman as Bride (Brunhilde)*. The story concerns a prince who has to perform heroic feats to win the hand of a warrior princess, as her father the King explains in the following terms (AE/22b):

Ah, prince Ivan! How nice of you to come! I suppose you've come to marry my daughter. Well, first of all, you have to do a few tests, and if you pass them you can marry her. And if you don't pass them, well, we'll just have to cut your head off. I'm sorry; those are the rules, my hands are tied. (*audience laughter*) It's the National Curriculum. (*audience laughter*)

Vasilisa's beauty is described, apparently extempore, in similarly ironic terms:

She was beautiful. And she was huge. She was hugely beautiful. (*audience chuckle*) And she was beautifully huge (*audience chuckle*).

Richard is here satirising folktale genre conventions even as he reproduces them, and in both cases the audience's positive response seems to draw him further into ironic digression. Ironic distancing could be deployed at several levels: directed at plot motifs, as above, or at lexis and syntax. A contrasting example is found in item 170 at event 12 at the Camden Ceilidh, a version of the Greek legend of Antigone, interwoven with folktale elements recalling AT

Type 780 *The Singing Bone*. It was told by a woman in her twenties, not a regular teller during the fieldwork period, and, as the event was in part a showcase following one of Jenny's one-day storytelling workshops, it seems likely that she was a workshop participant. She told rather hesitantly, but in a heightened style, and used humour to recover from hesitations. Here, Thebes is under a curse resulting from the King's impious refusal of funeral rites to Antigone's brother Polynices (AE/22a):

And so it happened, that the evil took its full force; the sun never shone, from that day on; and the winds howled, and the (*smiles*) so did the dogs (*chuckles; audience chuckles gently*) and the sea was rough, and all was turmoil.

Antigone, deliberating whether to risk execution by burying her brother, meets an angel-like helper (AE/22a). (Ellipsis indicates omissions; punctuation is otherwise typographic.)

That very second she had a tap on her shoulder. She looked round. There was a little man, about that high, with a white beard, and that very second the sun peeped through the clouds, and lit up the little man's face, so that he looked almost like an angel. ... And with that he disappeared in a puff of smoke. Antigone was spaced! (*chuckles; audience chuckles*)

This chuckle is apparently generated by a sudden stylistic bathos (the colloquial and contemporary *spaced*, i.e., bemused) occurring at a crisis of tension, when the narrative style has hitherto been rather heightened.²⁰ Irony and bathos were available to storytellers as calculated techniques, but they were also associated with extemporisation in performance, and sometimes with loss of control and extempore tactics for recovering it.

²⁰ I myself slipped accidentally into bathos while telling item 221 at event 15 at the Camden Ceilidh.

5.5.2 Metatextual devices: pitch, volume, speed and gesture

Among the featured guests, Michael Dacre at Tall Tales at the Trip, and among the regular floor tellers Karl Liebscher and Wilson Boardman at Tales at the Edge, told stories in a chatty, moderate tone which seemed fairly close to, if not indistinguishable from, that of their ordinary conversation. Others tended to choose between, or combine elements of, two general strategies. Tellers either spoke with greater speed and volume and exaggerated gestures, approaching grandiloquence and eventually burlesque, or they spoke more quietly and often more slowly, limiting their gestures and cultivating a kind of poised intensity. Some extreme examples are furnished by the items already cited. Sandra Wye's myth of the shooting of the sun, and Richard Walker's tale of the hare drinking the boiling water, both involved the teller pacing around the room, homing in momentarily on individual listeners, declaiming the story very quickly and loudly, and gesturing extravagantly. Jacek Laskowski's guest appearance at event 11 at Tales at the Wharf was similar. Mike Rust told his *Scharnhorst* story from his seat, quickly, but rather quietly; there was an almost incantatory intensity in his tone. Tony Addison's meticulous concentration resulted in physical stillness: he sat almost motionless in his chair as he told, with eyes closed, speaking slowly, quietly and intensely. Bernard Kelly also told slowly and quietly. Tellers generally therefore sought to heighten the intensity of their performances, but they did so either by becoming more intensely introverted or more intensely extroverted, and either was recognised as an admissible approach to the act of storytelling.

5.5.3 Song, verse, music and instrumental accompaniment

A performance strategy which combined both textual and metatextual tactics was the use of verse, song, and musical or instrumental accompaniment. As stated above, the total sample of 252 items includes 24 songs, two tunes, and eight poems, excluded from the analysed sample of 178 items. However, this obscures the fact that participants interwove song and music quite closely in their practice. The lyrics of many of the songs (items 29, 48, 64, 66, 70, 74, 81, 87, 180, 136, 137, 184, 194, 195, 218, 223) told or implied stories. Jenny Pearson was the guest at event 2 at the Camden Ceilidh, Hugh Lupton at event 4 at Tall Tales at the Trip, and two duos worked in tandem as featured guests at events 6 and 9 at Tall Tales at the Trip: respectively, Michael and Wendy Dacre, and Paul Jackson with Richard Neville. All these interspersed or framed stories with separate songs and musical items to lend variety to the extended utterance. Also, of the 178 oral narratives analysed, 20 used some form of verse, song, or instrumental accompaniment as a supplementary part of the oral narrative performance itself. If one of Hugh Lupton's heroes was whistling a tune as he wandered the roads, Hugh himself would whistle a few bars of a folk tune. Hugh, guesting at Nottingham, used tunes as *incipits* or *explicitis* for oral narrative tales; so, too, did Richard Neville and one other floor teller (name unknown) at the Camden Ceilidh, and Gary Breinholt and Roy Dyson floor telling at Tales at the Trip. A variety of acoustic and traditional instruments was played: whistles, psalteries, Tibetan singing bowls, balalaika, pipe, harp and hand-drums.

5.5.4 Variation

The final point to be made about revivalistic telling styles is that, when revivalists claim not to use fixed, memorised texts, they are self-reporting accurately. Twice during fieldwork, Gary Breinholt, a regular floor teller at Tall Tales at the Trip, told an Irish legend relating the origin of the harp (items 201 and 239). Item 201, at event 14 at the Trip, begins (AE/24a):

Who made the first harp? and what was it made from? That's not hard to answer.

At event 17 at the Wharf the following month, when Gary and others from Nottingham appeared as featured guests, this was reproduced (AE/32a) as

Who made the first harp? and from what was it made? That's soon told.

Visiting event 13 at Tales at the Edge, Roy Dyson began item 197, an animal tale incorporating a mythic origin-motif for the cat's purr (AE/29a):

It was the cat, you see, the very, very, very first cat that ever existed - the cat had a drum.

The following evening, hosting event 14 at his own club in Nottingham, Roy began the same story (item 199) (AE/24a):

The very first ever cat in all the world - this cat was crazy about drumming.

The story tells how a cornered rat punched the drum down the cat's throat and into its stomach. Item 197 at event 13 (AE/29a), the first telling, ends

So when you get home tonight, and you pick up your cat, and you nurse the cat in your arms, and you turn the cat over until its tum is face up, and if you stroke the tum of the cat, you will hear (*whispers*) *Prrr!* (*audience: subdued chuckle*) That's where the drum now is, of all the cats since then.

Item 199 at event 14 (AE/29a) ends

But I'll tell you this. When you go home tonight, and you find your cat sitting by the fire, all you need to do is pick up your cat, and cradle him in your arms, stroke him gently, and you will hear (*whispers*) *Prrr!* (*audience: extended laughter*) So now you know where the drum went to!

The unusual repetition of *cat* is noticeable, as is the more enthusiastic response of the Nottingham audience to the purr, which prompts Roy to a greater verbal flourish in the conclusion. These seem to be clear examples of surface variations on deeper stable, though not fixed, structures, and are typical of the repeated items in the sample throughout. The recognition of surface variation with deep stability has, of course, been general within oral narrative study at least since the work of Parry and Lord (Lord 1960).

Repetition, parallelism and variation of a strikingly oral and tradition-like kind, exaggeration and digression, imitation of source traditional styles, heightened intensity of (intense, restrained and/or exuberant) delivery, the use of song and music and (if all else failed) irony and bathetic self-parody, all seemed to have two purposes. Firstly, they were intended to heighten the intensity of the experience of listening: to make the tale-world more vivid. Secondly, they served to distinguish storytelling talk from non-storytelling talk: they marked the act of storytelling and demarcated it from other types of communicative act. Overall, however, the application of these techniques was often provisional and experimental. They were beginning to forge a stable revivalistic performance style, but they still overlie a form of speech which is

very close to everyday conversation and has not yet fully incorporated, still less synthesised, the new stylistic techniques. For the purposes of the present study, however, the most interesting thing about these performances is the indissolubility of their incorporation within a certain communally performed interactive structure. They cannot fully be understood except as dialogic segments within the performance of this interactive structure. It is now necessary to examine the relationships between the various different kinds of communicative act involved in this total achievement of the storytelling event.