

7: Ideologies, Authenticities, Traditions Quotes, Texts and Sources

Traditional Songs and ‘Tradition(s)’

Peter Coe, quoted on mainlynorfolk.info

‘The probable writer of *Poverty Knock* was Tom Daniel, a weaver from [Batley]. I met him in about 1970, shortly before he died. He was born around 1890, left school at 11 and worked in various mills around Western Yorkshire and did other jobs too, outside of weaving. The story he apparently told was that he’d remembered bits of the song from his early years. However, the song bears striking resemblance to many of the poems that he did write. The collector of the song, Tony Green, reckons he wrote it too. I’m told there’s no surviving relatives to claim royalties so as it’s been designated a ‘traditional’ song for so long, that’s how it’s usually referred to.’

<https://mainlynorfolk.info/folk/songs/povertyknock.html>

‘Invented tradition’: ‘a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules 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’ (Hobsbawm [1983] 2003: 1)

Invented traditions *are* real, ‘establishing or symbolizing social cohesion or the membership of groups, real or artificial communities’ ([1983] 2003: 9).

‘[a] tradition is obviously both real and imagined at one and the same time’ (Brocken 2003: 12)

‘there is a paradox at the core of [tradition]. It looks back to a long lost past and, in doing so, transforms and reconstructs that past as the image is being realised’ (2003: 29)

Discourse and Discourse Archives

‘Archive’ as a concept in discourse:

- ‘the law of what can be said, the system that governs the appearance of statements as unique events’ (Foucault 1972: 129)
- ‘the macro-sociological forces and formations that define and determine what can be said, expressed, heard, and understood in particular societies, particular milieux, particular historical periods’ Blommaert 2015: 102)

‘History reveals our (often confused) sense of identity, and the notion of nostalgia is a foundation for much of this historically appraised identity [...]the writing of history is actually a corporate, politicised activity and what appear to be absolute standards usually have roots in compartmentalised ideologies, preferences and metaphors’ (Brocken 2003: 1)

‘Folk-songs and folk dances, *in days gone by*, played an important part in the social life of the English village. *That life is now waning*, and with it are passing away the old traditions and customs. It is, happily, still possible here and there, and in out-of-the-way nooks and corners, to come upon peasant men and women old enough to remember *the village life of sixty, seventy, or even eighty years ago*, and they will sing to you the songs and explain to you the dances that, in their young days, and *on summer evenings, were sung and danced on the village green*. The folk-singers of today ... are the last of a long line that stretches back into the mists of far off days. (Sharp 1907: 106; my italics)

Folk Worlds

Quote from Boyes *The Imagined Village* (!)

‘...customs were organised jointly by ‘*gentleman amateurs*’ and *local publicans* – each, however, keeping to ‘separate spheres’ of sociability and ‘business’. Perhaps the most telling description of this earlier form of ‘communal’ participation is Mary Russell Mitford’s comments on the May festival in Three Mile Cross in Hampshire: ‘the band struck up in the May-house, and the dance, after a little demur, was fairly set afloat – an honest English country dance ... with ladies and gentlemen at the top, and country lads and lasses at the bottom; a happy mixture of cordial kindness on the one hand, and pleased respect on the other’. (Boyes 1993: 32 our italics)

Authenticy/ies

‘The purpose of scholarship, including scholarly criticism, is to instruct. That of performance is to delight. Instruction can be delightful. Delight can be instructive. But instruction can require actions that are not always conducive to delight, and delight can merely “divert”’ (Taruskin 1995: 30).

‘One definition of authenticity, used in the realm of art and antiques, refers to the clear identifiability of maker or authorship and uniqueness of an artifact, relying on the “made by one’s own hand” etymology’ (Bendix 1997: 15).

‘the call for “authenticity” implied a critical stance against urban manners, artifice in language, behaviour, and art, and against aristocratic excesses; it promised the restoration of a pure, unaffected state of being’ (Bendix 1997: 16).

By the middle of the century, the good ship authenticity – under threat not only from philosophical critiques but also the baleful lessons of fascism and Stalinism – seemed definitely holed below the water, and yet so pressing, still, appeared its demands, as God, reason, progress lay dead or at least unconscious, that in another way it steamed ahead even faster, into the turbulence of the ’60s, folk revivals, rock purism, punk nihilism, and world beat just some of its musical manifestations. (Middleton 2006: 218)

A Practical Example: The Cruel Mother

Table 6.1. *Textual variants of 'The Cruel Mother'*

Main version (mainly based on Hammond)	alternative elements (mainly from Bronson)
1. there was a lady lived in York all alone-y alone-y she was proved with child by her father's clerk down by the greenwood/burn sidey-o	there was a lady in yonder town fine flowers in the valley she was courted by her father's clerk and the green leaves they grow rarely
2. she leaned her back against an oak but first it bent and then it broke	
3. she leaned herself against a thorn and there she had two pretty babes born	
4. she had a penknife long and sharp and she pressed it through their tender hearts	
5. she wiped the knife upon the grass the more she wiped it the blood ran fast	
6. she washed her hands all in a spring thinking she would be a maiden again	
7. a) and she was sat at her father's hall oh there she saw two pretty babes playing at ball	b) and as she was going to the church she saw two pretty babes playing in the porch
8. oh babes sweet babes if you were mine I would dress you up in scarlet fine	
9. oh mother oh mother we once were thine you did not dress us in scarlet fine	
10 the coldest earth it was our bed and the green grass was our coverlet	
11 babes sweet babes come tell me true what's the death I must die for you	
12 a) seven long years a bird in the wood and seven long years a fish in the flood/brook	b) oh Mother oh Mother for your grave sin heaven's gate you shall not enter in
13 a) seven long years a tongue in a bell and seven long years a porter in hell	b) there's a fire burning beyond hell's gate where you shall burn both early and late

References

- Bendix, R. 1997. *In Search of Authenticity: The Formation of Folklore Studies*, Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press.
- Blommaert, J. 2005. *Discourse*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Boyes, Georgina. 1993. *The Imagined Village: Culture, Ideology and the English Folk Revival*, Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Brocken, Michael. 2003. *The British Folk Revival 1944–2002*, Farnham: Ashgate.

Coupland, Nikolas. 2010. 'The authentic speaker and the speech community', In Llamas, C. and Watt, D. (eds.), *Language and Identities*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp. 99–112.

Foucault, M. [1969] 1972. *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith. New York: Vintage Books.

Middleton, R. 2006. *Voicing the Popular: On the Subjects of Popular Music*, London: Routledge.

Sharp, C. 1907. *English Folk Song, Some Conclusions*, London: Simpkin and Co.

Taruskin, R. 1995. *Text and Act: Essays on Music and Performance*, New York: Oxford University Press.