Orality, Commonality, Commons, Sustainability, and Resilience

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Note

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Folklore studies of orality (sound) and commonality (commons) suggest a contribution to the current heritage discourse that emphasizes collective values rather than (economic) value, stewardship rather than ownership, and resilience as a strategy to help sustain a community's expressive culture.

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FOLKLORE STUDIES OF ORALITY (SOUND) and commonality (commons) suggest a contribution to the current heritage discourse, particularly in the area of safeguarding culture—a contribution that emphasizes collective values over economic value, stewardship rather than ownership, and resilience as a strategy to help sustain a community's expressive culture. While emphasizing individuals as tradition bearers, folklorists continue to acknowledge the roles played by communities of cultural tradition through intertextuality in the creative act (see, e.g., Glassie [1982] 1995; Cashman, Mould, and Shukla 2004:9). Valdimar Hafstein argues that creation is a social act, not an individual one (2004). Folklorists have a long history of considering expressive culture as a common group possession. Orality and commonality offer folklorists a sound basis for planning collaborative strategies of resilience meant to maintain individuals and folk groups in the face of profound cultural change.

Orality as Sounding

Oral tradition was almost always central to definitions of folklore before the 1970s paradigm shift to folklore as expressive culture communicated in performance. Orality explained the existence of versions and variants, for example. It also helped to explain another of folklore's attributes: impersonality. Oral transmission combined

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with variation ensured that folklore was not the expression of any single creator. Even if an example of traditional knowledge or cultural expression had, at one time, an individual creator, the theory of folklore's oral, communal re-creation over time blurs its origin, erases the stamp of personality, and makes it freely available to all. It is best regarded as a community resource, not as individual property with an originator (the requirement for copyright protection under present-day law). Folklore was thought to travel best orally, without the taint of high-cultural literacy and known authorship. The most important twentieth-century oral theory in folklore, the Lord-Parry hypothesis, turned on the differences between oral and written composition (Lord 1960). Later, verbal (thought to be an advancement over oral) formed the basis of Brunvand's division of folklore into "verbal," "partly verbal," and "non-verbal folklore" in the first edition of his introductory textbook (Brunvand 1968). "Verbal" was adopted for the performance paradigm (Bauman 1975) and became firmly ensconced: Toelken's influential textbook constructed a tripartite division into verbal, material, and customary folklore (Toelken 1996:9).

"Verbal art" has the advantage of including written folklore, but replacing oral with verbal inadvertently devalues orality. Indeed, one problem in turning a definition of folklore upon orality is that folklorists constructed orality in opposition to literacy. Oral cultures were said to be characterized by intimate, face-to-face encounters within small groups; literate cultures, on the other hand, were able—by means of writing and, later, the printing press—to extend their ways of life well beyond their immediate geographical boundaries and thus to greatly enlarge their communities, economies, and political units. Orality was a powerful construction—50 years ago, Walter Ong, for example, showed how powerful it was in contrasting the differences between oral and literate cultures (1967)—but I suggest that there is a different way to consider orality, and that is from a phenomenological perspective: how orality is experienced as sounding. For sound is experienced unlike other sources of sensation: sound waves vibrate our eardrums and set our bodies in motion. Sound vibrates living beings into co-presence[1] with other beings. In sound, we experience connection and co-presence. Sound travels over distance; a sound source such as a railroad train or clock tower bell may be out of sight, but not out of earshot (Rath 2003:57). Physical proximity, body to body, is not required in order to experience the presence of sound. The implication is that in a culture attuned to sound, orality extends presence beyond face-to-face into the world of the invisible.

Orality considered experientially enlarges our scope from speech and music to sound itself. Music psychologists, neuroscientists, and even ethnomusicologists have lately been asking: What is the role of music in human evolution? (e.g., Brown et al. 2001). Is music an evolutionary adaptation? That is, do music and musical ability confer an evolutionary advantage to human beings, or is music mere "auditory cheesecake," in Stephen Pinker's infamous phrase? (1997). This is a hard question, but I think it is also a wrong question. An ecological approach to cultural sustainability suggests a different question: What is the role of *sound* in the evolution of life on planet Earth? What is the role of sound in the natural world? The emerging field of soundscape ecology is providing answers. The acoustic adaptation hypothesis (sometimes termed the acoustic niche hypothesis) suggests that "evolution favors those acoustic signals that suffer minimal propagation losses and noise overlap" (Bradbury and Vehrencamp 2011:65). Clearly, sound is fundamental to animal communication: that is, animals

signal presence, sometimes truthfully and sometimes deceptively, to one another by means of sound. Soundscape ecology combines with the older field of zoosemiotics (that is, animal communication) to study orality in the natural world. The acoustic niche hypothesis suggests that inter-species animal sound communication proceeds in a particular soundspace, in terms of timbre, frequency, duration, melody, and so forth (Pijanowski et al 2011:206). What about sound, co-presence, and cultural sustainability? There is a lively debate among ethologists and philosophers over whether animals have consciousness, and to what extent they may be said to transmit socially learned behavior and therefore have one of the characteristics of culture (see, e.g., Dugatkin 2000; Griffin 2001; van Schaik 2009; Whitehead and Rendell 2014). Thinking about sound and co-presence in combination with orality in an ecological approach to performance communication can only enhance our understanding of the ways in which cultural sustainability is dependent on the environment and can offer humans the opportunity for stewardship. Of course, animals communicate in ways other than sound, but sound communication is one of the principal forms; this suggests that if we broaden orality to include all sounding, our subject becomes not merely what humans do with sound, but what all creatures do with it.

Commonality

From orality in sound communicating co-presence, I move to commonality, and then to commons. Folklorists have long been concerned with both orality and commonality. Throughout the paradigm shift to folklore as performance, commonality as shared resources remained embedded in the concept of the folk group, in networks and in community. In addition, a few folklife specialists have investigated commons: forest and ocean resources, as well as cultural commons embodied in such things as seed saving and sharing, narrative, traditional knowledge, and foodways (e.g., Hufford 1997, 2002). The word "recipe" contains the root for reciprocity.

In an earlier period of folklore studies, communalism and orality were partners in the argument over whether folk poetry consisted of debased relics of what had once belonged to literary culture, and thus whether it had originally been the product of individual authors, or, instead, of a communal folk creation. Before this tired old argument had exhausted itself, scholars had made some useful observations concerning the shared cultural basis for folklore. From this literature on commonality, I choose one extended example: George Lyman Kittredge's once well-known introduction to the one-volume selection of *Child Ballads* that he co-edited with Helen Child Sargent (Sargent and Kittredge 1932). In the 1904 edition, Kittredge admitted that communal creation itself was unlikely, and instead postulated a single author—but one who was fully representative of an undifferentiated folk community.

Musing on how ballads were composed in the ancient past, Kittredge wrote that "the author draws freely on a large stock of commonplaces which are public property. These are, of course, entirely familiar to every person in the company [audience]" (Sargent and Kittredge [1904] 1932:xxv). For Kittredge, the author must have "belonged to the folk, derived his material from popular sources, made his ballad under the inherited influence of the method described, and [given] it to the folk as soon as he had made it," whereupon the folk must have "accepted the gift and subjected it to that course of

oral tradition which . . . is essential to the production of a genuine ballad" (Sargent and Kittredge [1904] 1932:xxvii). Kittredge argues that oral tradition involves modification of the ballad text and tune as it passes through various singers and over time and space and yields versions and variants, and so, ultimately, the author becomes anonymous. But, significantly, Kittredge claims that the song itself began among open (public) sources and remained there, despite once having had an author. This, of course, means that folklore stands entirely outside the Euro-American concept of copyright law, not just that it is unqualified for protection under it. Unlike the fine artist, who strives for originality, the author of the ballad has a

> subject [that] is not his own—it belongs to the folk. It is a popular tradition of immemorial antiquity, or a situation so simple and obvious as to be a matter of general experience, or a recent occurrence which has been taken up in the mouth of common fame. He has no wish to treat the theme in a novel way,—no desire to utter his peculiar feelings about it or to impress it with his individuality. . . . He takes no credit to himself, and deserves none. What he does, many of his neighbors could do as well. Accordingly, he is impersonal. . . . He utters what everybody feels. He is a voice rather than a person. (Sargent and Kittredge [1904] 1932:xxiv)

Obviously, such a voice has no claim to make that the ballad is his or her intellectual property. It is the common wealth of the folk.

Commonality is an old theme in folklore studies not only insofar as folklore represents communal art, but also as it is possessed by "common" people, whether peasants, proletariat, or citizens that make up a nation. Kittredge wrote: "As civilization advanced, [folklore] lived on among the humble, among shepherds and ploughboys and 'the spinsters and the knitters in the sun,' until even these became too sophisticated to care for them and they were heard no more" (Sargent and Kittredge [1904] 1932:xii). The Lomaxes, John and Alan, championed a democratic folklore that belonged to all Americans, including cowboys and miners, late-arrived immigrants, and the descendants of African slaves. As late as 1978, Brunvand introduced folklore as "the unrecorded traditions of a people," which reveal "the common life of the human mind below the level of high or formal culture" (Brunvand 1978:1). Folklorists were studying the expressive culture of so many social groups—occupational; local, regional, and national; that of seniors, children, college students; ethnic groups, religious communities, the working class, the middle class (trial lawyers telling tales was one of the highlights of the 1986 Smithsonian Folklife Festival)—that, plainly, every social group appeared to exhibit folklore.

Folklore as Commons

Communication, community, and commons share the same Latin root: *communis*, meaning "common," or to share common duties. *Munis* means "task" or "duty" but also "gift," and that points to the obligations that arise in gift relationships, as well as to the reciprocity involved in rights and duties. For every right, there exists a corresponding obligation. Today, commons is regarded as a freely shared resource, contrasted with those resources to which access is restricted, either by individual owners, organizations, or the state. The most familiar historical examples of commons are those of

medieval European villages, where agricultural strips of open land were cultivated by families until fall harvest, when they were managed for grazing village livestock, until the following spring planting when the cycle repeated. Gary Snyder emphasizes that commons always were regulated and never completely free for whatever use anyone wished to make of them:

> In the peasant societies of both Asia and Europe there were customary forms that gave direction to the joint use of land. They did not grant free access to outsiders, and there were controls over entry and use by member households. The commons has been defined as "the undivided land belonging to the members of a local community as a whole." This definition fails to make the point that the commons is both specific land *and* the traditional community institution that determines the carrying capacity for its various subunits and defines the rights and obligations of those who use it, with penalties for lapses. Because it is traditional and *local*, it is not identical with today's "public domain," which is land held and managed by a central government. (Snyder 1990:30–1)

Agricultural commons may be largely gone from Euro-American societies, but cultural commons is very much present in our globalizing world. Today, we hear a great deal of talk about commons: digital commons; information commons, on the Internet; creative commons, as an assertion of limited copyright; and the more general cultural commons, not to mention town commons and agricultural and fishery commons and, not so long ago, the so-called tragedy of the commons (Hardin 1968). Folklore itself may be regarded as an expressive cultural commons; that is, ideas and networks and performances shared informally among people in a folk group. In this spirit, the American Folklore Society's website features a "folklore commons" page with links, which it describes as "resources we can all share, cultivate and use" (http://www.afsnet.org/?FolkloreCommons). This Internet realization of a folklore commons is meant to serve folklorists, with job announcements, a wiki, and news (the *AFS Review*). In calling folklore itself a commons, however, I am suggesting something different. The AFS folklore commons is to folklore as a dictionary is to speech. Snyder's description of commons as traditional, local, and regulated by community fits expressive culture as well as land, whether agricultural, pastoral, or wilderness. In conception, folklore as commons is close to Lewis Hyde's idea of cultural commons as a combination of science and art—of being, knowing, and doing—that is learned and transmitted as heritage.

Hyde presents his defense of cultural commons in his book, *Common as Air* (2010). Folklorists, ethnomusicologists, and anthropologists, in response to instances where traditional medical knowledge was exploited for financial gain by pharmaceutical companies, and music the same by the "world music" industry, have been asking the question "Who owns traditional culture?" (Feld 1996; Brown 2003), pointing out that the Western legal concept of ownership was not widely shared by indigenous groups. Hafstein summarized the debate between the indigenous peoples and the developed countries taking place at the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) conferences, as this UNESCO-sponsored international agency explores ways to protect traditional knowledge and expressive culture through international copyright law (2004). He pointed out that the official US position, that items of folklore always had an original creator but in time passed into the public domain, makes it impossible to protect it by copyright from

financial exploitation, thus giving comfort to global corporate capitalists. He suggests that, on the contrary, if the creation of folklore is regarded as a collective social act, as an earlier generation of folklorists regarded it, then the US position is unsound. In this way, Hafstein supports indigenous societies' claims that their knowledge and practices should fall under copyright protection as group—not individual—intellectual property (Hafstein 2004). Hyde goes even further, and in suggesting that not only folklore but all culture is traditional, offers a historical and legal Euro-American context, not an indigenous one, attending to concepts of commons, enclosure, copyright, and public domain. He offers a brilliant analysis of the preponderantly collective (rather than individual) nature of science and art, and an extended treatment of his concept of "collective being," as embodied by the scientific discoveries of Benjamin Franklin and the music of Bob Dylan, and in their attitudes toward their creative work. Franklin, for example, refused to patent the "Franklin stove" or take credit for his discovery of electricity because he felt that he had not invented anything, but rather had synthesized insights and ideas that were shared and emergent in the techno-scientific community. Hyde also unearths the lively debate over copyright and patent law that took place among the founders of the American Republic, with Franklin opposed to it.

It is helpful to trace the idea of commons to Roman law. After all, English and American law derives from Roman law, and Roman law had a category for commons. Roman law distinguished objects, or things, in terms of ownership. Some things were owned, others not. Some were capable of being owned, and others not. Thus there were *res nullius*, things that could be owned but were not yet "captured," such as wild lands and wild animals. There were *res privatae*, things that could be owned privately. There was a category called *res publicae*, or public things, owned by the general public and regulated by governments; the usual examples were roads and bridges. *Res communes*, or common things, were those that by their very nature could not be owned but must be shared. The usual examples given in Roman law were the ocean and the air mantle. Out of this is derived our idea of commons: something that by the nature of its being is shared by all, common to everyone, such as the air we breathe (Rose 2003).

Res communes existed alongside private property in a Roman economy that was not a market economy. They had no such concept as "economic man" to rationalize trade and the accumulation of material wealth. Instead, exchanges took place within the other spheres of social life: patronage, friendship, gift exchange, the generosity of the emperor, and so forth (Finley [1973] 1999). No Roman wrote a treatise on economics. Instead, Cicero wrote three books "on obligations," and Seneca wrote seven books "on benefits." Obligations and benefits characterize exchanges based in social relations. Anthropology tells us that economic man is not universal. Roman history tells us it is not even part of Europe's so-called classical heritage.

As is well known, the history of the Euro-American commons is one of increasing enclosure, commons captured as private property or, in some cases, as *res publicae* regulated by government. Agricultural commons were gradually "enclosed" or fenced, beginning in the twelfth century through the eighteenth, restricting more and more land for the control of the manorial lords who owned them. Anthony McCann, drawing on a view of craftsmanship that goes back at least as far as the ideas of William Morris, as Henry Glassie has often reminded us, mounts an argument against enclosing the folklore commons by means of copyright protection, pointing out that it places

folklore into the commodity market, which devalues craftsmanship and personal relations between producers and consumers (McCann 2002). Even before Morris, Henry David Thoreau had expressed these same ideas, in relation to commons; he well understood the relationship between commons and economic man. In an unfinished essay, "Huckleberries," which he was working on as he neared death in 1862, he wrote:

> Among the Indians, the earth and its productions generally were common and free to all the tribe, like the air or water, but among us who have supplanted the Indians, the public retain only a small yard or common in the middle of the village. . . . What sort of country is that where the huckleberry fields are private property? When I pass such fields on the highway, my heart sinks within me. . . . Nature is under a veil there. . . . I cannot think of it ever after but as the place where fair and palatable berries are converted into money, where the huckleberry is desecrated. . . . As long as the berries are free to all comers they are beautiful, but tell me that this is a blueberry swamp which somebody has hired [and we] commit the berries to the wrong hands, that is to the hands of those who cannot appreciate them. This is proved by the fact that if we do not pay them some money, they will cease to pick them. They have no other interest in the berries but a pecuniary one. Such is the constitution of our society that we make a compromise and permit the berries to be degraded, to be enslaved, as it were. (Thoreau 2001:493–4)

Among contemporary folklorists, Mary Hufford is most Thoreau-like, exploring commons in what she has been calling a narrative ecology, the relationships among humans and with nature, mediated by language and narrative, in those highland Appalachian commons where inhabitants hunt and gather plants such as ginseng, morel mushrooms, and ramps. In spite of enclosures resulting from timber harvesting, mountaintop removal, and even from gentrification, mountain people continue these traditional practices along with the conversation that surrounds them, while through "narrative the commons becomes a public space, its history played out before audiences who know intimately its spaces. . . . Inhabiting the commons through practice and narrative confers social identity and makes a community of its occupants" (Hufford 1997:15; see also Hufford 2006; Reid and Taylor 2010). Elsewhere, she writes: "Through incessant conversational practices of genealogizing, etymologizing, naming, nicknaming, and telling stories, people lay cultural claim to land" (Hufford 2002:116). We realize from Hufford's insights that not only is folklore bound up with physical commons, its performance enacts a cultural commons. Because of the ongoing history of our field, folklorists enjoy a special relationship with commons, commonality, and community; from that standpoint, we may contribute to the contemporary public dialogue on sustainability, emphasizing the importance of the shared and collective. And, as Hufford is doing, we can encourage citizen science initiatives to gather local knowledge and input it into policymaking debates where it counters the non-grounded conclusions of bureaucrats relying on experts far away.

Sequestration, Sustainability, Resilience

Orality and commonality relate to cultural sustainability insofar as they suggest both a means of resistance to privatizing culture, and also a means of resilience during

periods of profound cultural change. In theory, a system is sustainable if it can continue to cohere indefinitely, utilizing only renewable resources. Economic development, energy, and the environment are the usual arenas in which sustainability discourses occur, but in the past decade or so, folklorists have developed the idea of cultural sustainability (see, e.g., Feltault 2006; Titon 2006, 2009).[2] Cultural sustainability invigorates a public folklore practice (cultural conservation) that has been in place for several decades (Loomis 1983; Feintuch 1988; Baron and Spitzer [1992] 2007; Hufford 1994). It also positions folklore in the international arena of intangible cultural heritage and cultural tourism, where it allies itself uneasily with sustainable development (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998; Seeger 2009; Throsby 2010; Noyes 2014:16–9). At the same time, ecological tropes from environmental sustainability have, not uncontroversially, been relied upon to theorize cultural sustainability (Spitzer [1992] 2007; Titon 2009; Keogh 2013; Schippers 2015).

Perhaps secrecy is the oldest way of sustaining folklore. One resistance strategy social groups have employed over the years is sequestration, or forbidding outsiders from obtaining traditional knowledge. Some indigenous groups require that members undergo initiation before they are permitted to receive knowledge and power. Old Regular Baptists practice a kind of sequestration, in the sense that their traditional ways of experiencing grace are unavailable to outsiders; one must experience life as an Old Regular Baptist in order fully to know what they know and do what they do (Cornett 1997). Sequestration has also protected group knowledge and property against outside exploitation; Native North American nations' governing councils, for example, restrict access to Native culture and property. When the governing structure itself is functional and sustainable, wise stewardship of this kind succeeds. In the face of cultural genocide, not to mention extreme economic and environmental pressures, external sequestration may be a wise insurance policy. Archives may function, wittingly or not, as cultural stewards, sequestering tradition on behalf of the cultural groups whose property they hold in trust. Wayne Newell, a member of the Passamaquoddy Nation in Maine, spoke at a conference on applied ethnomusicology about how he had been using the recordings of Passamaquoddy music that J. Walter Fewkes had made and deposited with the Smithsonian Institution in the 1880s (Newell 2003). A musical repatriation project has been underway since 2008 at Columbia University, wherein ethnomusicologists are partnering with Alaskan Native American groups to re-introduce music that was recorded by Laura Boulton in the 1940s and that has been sequestered in the Columbia archives since the 1960s.[3] At times, such trusteeship has been challenged by cultural groups who claim them as their own—invoking ownership, whereas they might more persuasively make a moral rights claim based on their wiser stewardship.

Not all sequestration attempts achieve the intended results. Guitars first came to Hawaii after about 1830, with Mexican *vaqueros* hired by King Kamehameha III (1813–1854). His father, King Kamehameha I (1736?–1819), had been sequestered at birth; and after his death, his body was buried in a secret place, because of his sacred *mana*. Slack-key guitar music (*kī hōʻalu*) was sequestered among certain families in Hawaii, where it was performed at family gatherings. Throughout the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth, slack-key guitar tunings and playing techniques were kept private, handed down within families. This secrecy kept it not only from the general Hawaiian public but also from the worldwide craze for Hawaiian music,

with steel guitar and ukulele and hula dancing, that began in the late 1800s and lasted through the World War II era (Beamer n.d.; Winston n.d.). Asked how he learned to play slack-key, 1987 NEA Folk Arts National Heritage Award winner Raymond Kāne (1925–2008) answered that when he first asked a *kī hōʻalu* musician to show him, the guitarist refused because Kāne did not belong to the musician's family. Eventually, he bartered with the guitarist, bringing him fish in exchange for an opportunity to learn. Some think slack-key might have become extinct after World War II, had it not been for professional musicians, such as Sonny Chillingworth, who at that time began to incorporate slack-key into island entertainment bands playing for tourists and the general public. Meanwhile, a few others, notably Gabby Pahinui, were making commercial recordings of it, thus ending the sequestration as the tradition entered the larger media soundscape. Although slack-key is still played privately in family gatherings, today it is also fully in a public revival stage, with concerts, festivals, tours, recordings, and music camps that attract students from all over the world.[4]

Conservation and stewardship converge in environmental and cultural sustainability (Marshall 2003). Anyone practicing organic gardening soon learns how sustainability is based in diversity, interdependence, limits to growth, and stewardship of the soil (Titon 2009:119, 121). A steward cares for an asset in the interests of conserving the asset, in the process setting any personal interests aside. In that sense, the steward's relation to the asset is impersonal, as the folklore scholarship surrounding orality and commonality claimed a century and more ago. Trusteeship places legal obligations on the steward. Whereas a steward has moral obligations only, a trustee is also legally bound to care for the asset. A trustee must exhibit undivided loyalty and transparency, while aiming to preserve the asset's integrity (On the Commons 2005).

Beyond cultural sustainability, resilience holds promise. Resilience refers to the ability of a system to move back toward its previous state in the face of disturbance. The term comes from mechanics (a branch of physics): a spring, for example, exhibits resilience when compressed and then released. A string exhibits resilience when vibrating atop a sounding board on a musical instrument. Today, resilience is employed as a therapeutic metaphor when discussing personal trauma and recovery. Here and elsewhere, I use resilience in the social realm to describe a culture's ability to retain its cohesion while recovering from disturbance (Titon 2015:158–96).

Resilience theory arose, in part, to address the issue of system coherence in the face of inevitable change. A resilient system continues to perform its core functions despite disturbance (Gunderson, Allen, and Holling 2009:xiv–xvi). Resilience theorists have critiqued sustainability insofar as it is allied with, or implies, an abandoned ecological paradigm, the balance of nature (Pickett and White 1985:155–6). Ecological scientists no longer believe external nature left to its own devices tends toward and maintains the stability of a dynamic, balanced state of equilibrium, as in a climax forest. Instead, nature is thought to move through different states, temporary equilibria, some more desirable than others, in response to an inevitable series of disturbances (Worster 1993:149–50). Environmental conservationists, as a result, no longer attempt to restore ecosystems to a balanced and stable equilibrium, but rather they manage them in the face of inevitable disturbances so as to preserve their cohesion. Cultural conservationists acting as stewards or trustees with the goal of cultural sustainability usually will be more effective in the long run by employing resilience strategies

instead of attempting cultural restorations to an earlier (actual or imagined) state. If stewardship of a folklore commons is a wiser path toward cultural sustainability than are attempts at restoring and maintaining traditions as if they consisted of cultural property assets, then we may come to understand why the prevailing strategy of coupling folk arts to sustainable development by promoting heritage and encouraging cultural tourism has sometimes, despite good intentions, resulted in such unintended negative consequences. Critics of heritage work have pointed to such negative effects as freezing traditions and stifling innovation, rewarding promoters and politicians more than tradition bearers, causing disputes among cultural groups over the right to claim a tradition as their own, and the conflating of cultural values with economic value (see, e.g., Noyes 2014:16–9; Yung 2009:140–68; Seeger 2009).

Coupling resilience theory to sustainability encourages the practice of what ecologists and others call adaptive management. Environmental studies professor Lance Gunderson writes: "Adaptive management . . . was developed from theories of resilience [and] acknowledges the deep uncertainties of resource management and attempts to winnow those uncertainties out over time" (Gunderson, Allen, and Holling 2009:xx). Adaptive management identifies the vulnerable and resilient aspects of a system, ecological and/or cultural, formulating strategies to strengthen the vulnerable and promote the resilient. Adaptive management anticipates disturbance, responds to change, and understands that different conditions require different responses. Adaptive managers expect to make mistakes and learn from them.

Moving beyond sustainability to resilience offers possibilities for a pragmatic cultural policy that would seek tradition's continual cultural nourishment. Taken together, orality conceived experientially, folklore conceived as a shared commons, and resilience theory and adaptive management directed into expressive cultural communities offer folklorists and community scholars a path to sustainability and an applied folklore alternative to the heritage-tourism model that for several decades has dominated public folklore.

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Notes

1. The term "co-presence" was introduced in 1963 by Erving Goffman, who defined it as face-to-face communication in which humans are "accessible, available, and subject to one another" (13–22). In using it here and elsewhere, I emphasize the experience of co-awareness as a pathway toward empathy among all animals, not just human beings. Also, I include communication at a distance, and virtual communication such as over the Internet; I do not limit co-presence to physically proximate, face-to-face communication.

2. The Goucher MA degree program in cultural sustainability began in 2010. Cultural sustainability was the theme chosen for the 2013 American Folklore Society conference, in Providence, RI.

3. http://music.columbia.edu/cecenter/basc/.
4. See http://dancingcat.com/slack_key_info_book_01a.html.

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