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Introduction

Pauline Greenhill and Diane Tye

WHAT DO THANKSGIVING TURKEYS, ROCKABILLY AND BAR FIGHTS, and Chinese tales of female ghosts have in common? Each offers an example of how tradition and gender can intersect—sometimes with modes of drag—to unsettle assumptions about culture and its study. These topics, along with many others—a nineteenth-century French antiquarian, selkie stories, a fairy tale, films about the Grimm Brothers, Dutch-Danish ethnicity, a noisy Mennonite New Year’s celebration, *The Distaff Gospels*, a kilt-wearing pipe band, Kentucky tobacco farmers, and international adoptions—are the subjects of this book. In the contributors’ hands, these topics offer opportunities to trouble all three areas—tradition, gender, and drag—especially in terms of their intersections. Thus, each chapter not only questions taken-for-granted presumptions about them but also shows how traditional and popular culture can both (sometimes simultaneously) instantiate and resist hegemony. Whether coded or uncoded, folklore can demonstrate heterosexism, heteronormativity, and the complexities of patriarchy, but its many modes and forms also leave space for alternative understandings. And in traditional and popular culture, drag—the representation of oneself as another—can go beyond sex/gender into other aspects of identity.

Unsettling Assumptions began with the editors’ desire to address the lacuna in teaching collections for courses on women/gender/sexuality and traditional and popular culture. (We do, however, hope this book will be of interest beyond those areas and disciplines, and so contributors foreground [inter]disciplinary preconceptions.) While students in our classes still found relevance in *Undisciplined Women: Tradition and Culture in Canada*, a volume of articles on interconnections of folklore/ethnology¹ and gender that we coedited in 1997, we thought it was time for something new. Since that date exciting research in gender and traditional/popular culture has resulted in numerous books,² but with the exception of Norma E. Cantú and Olga Nájera-Ramírez’s *Chicana Traditions: Continuity and Change* (2002), focusing upon one specific group of women, there have been no essay collections

in feminist folklore/ethnology studies sampling a broad range of current research linking gender studies with traditional and popular culture studies.³

When we first discussed the need for a new collection in 2009, we envisioned a broad-ranging and comprehensive group of papers that would address folklore's intersections with sex, gender, and sexuality. We hoped it would take a feminist look at cisgender⁴ women and men as well as transpersons; hetero, homo, and bi sexualities; masculinities and femininities. We wanted to include examinations of archival and published collections of traditional and popular culture and ethnographic studies in various genres of tangible and intangible cultural heritage from different world regions and ethnocultural groups. And the chapters take theoretical and analytical perspectives not only from feminism but also from masculinity studies, queer theory, gender theory, transgender studies, and cultural studies.

UNSETTLING/RETHINKING TRADITION/TRADITIONS

Although this collection unsettles assumptions about folklore/ethnology and its study, *Unsettling Assumptions* is firmly situated within the discipline. Thus, the chapters draw on and develop the terms that comprise *Eight Words for the Study of Expressive Culture* (Feintuch 2003), a benchmark work that extends folklore/ethnology's relevance into cultural studies. Expanding and revising a special issue of the *Journal of American Folklore* published in 1995, Burt Feintuch's edited collection drew on Dell Hymes's understanding of expressive culture as "the capacity for aesthetic experience, for shaping of deeply felt values into meaningful, apposite form, . . . present in all communities" (Hymes 1975b, 346). Feintuch suggested that the symbolic and conceptual "common ground" (2003, 1) for talking about expressive culture in its social contexts lies in eight central ideas: group, art, text, genre, performance, context, tradition, and identity. "Together, they stand for expressive culture's social base, its aesthetic nature, its categories, and its relationship to time" (4). These core concepts remain at the heart of *Unsettling Assumptions*.

Feintuch indicated that the very idea of expressive culture "sweeps across scholarly disciplines and fields of criticism" (2003, 2). Thus, contributors to *Unsettling Assumptions* explore their territories from a variety of academic locations, including women's and gender studies, communications, cultural studies, film studies, literary studies, anthropology, and history. The perspectives are interdisciplinary, although contributors do not ignore established disciplines. But all chapters simultaneously link to folklore/ethnology, joining its pursuit of the local and vernacular, which has often challenged the canons of Western academic thought. "From long

before it was fashionable, folklorists claimed that culture is plural . . . Our gaze tends to rest on cultural continuities, and it seems that we are advocates for creativity wherever it happens” (3). The chapters take up these preoccupations in new ways, unsettling established notions and asking readers to reconceptualize and reimagine the locations of, and possibilities inherent in, expressive culture.

Unsettling Assumptions spans what folklore/ethnology once considered the major genres: narrative, song, material culture, custom, and belief. But while the idea of genre remains in the language of folklore/ethnology, genre classification is no longer a primary analytical goal. “As a way of naming forms, genre is never finished; it is always changing, as ways of knowing shift” (Feintuch 2003, 5). Not only do many folkloric practices and texts bridge categories (Sims and Stephens 2005, 18), but the idea of genre is troubled by linguistic, cultural, and conceptual limitation. The history of the use of genre in folklore/ethnology studies is one in which initial efforts to stabilize the concept in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century beginnings of the discipline gave way in the mid-twentieth century to recognition that any system of classification is ever evolving, ever subject to new subgroups and new categories (Harris-Lopez 2003, 99–100).

The diversity of forms taken up in this collection—from music and ritual to food and narrative—reflects the eclecticism of contemporary expressive culture as well as the difficulty of assigning texts and ideas to simple, simplistic categories. The contents examine a broad generic and topical span: dress (Fehr and Greenhill, Tye), family folklore (Sawin), folktale (Greenhill and Anderson-Grégoire, Møllegaard, Magnus-Johnston, Xie), food (Roth), heritage (Wallin), humor/legend (Tye, Vaughan, Pooley), mumming/custom (Fehr and Greenhill), personal experience narrative (Ferrell, Sawin, Tye), music/song (Fehr and Greenhill, Mullen), and occupational folklife (Ferrell).

Most chapters defy efforts to classify their subjects within a single genre, speaking again to expressive culture’s complexity. They reflect the degree of blurring (Geertz 1980) and overlap between genres that characterizes contemporary life. Concepts that speak to cultural interactions and interconnections, like intertextuality (see, e.g., Allen 2000)—the idea that texts influence and reflect one another—and paratextuality (see, e.g., Genette 1997)—the significance of material surrounding, explaining, and contextualizing any given text that influences its interpretation—have long permeated folklore/ethnology studies. From the 1960s, American folkloristics enjoined attention to folklore’s textures—form and structure—and contexts—performative and sociocultural—as well as to texts (see, e.g., Ben-Amos 1971; Dundes 1964). Thus, for example, Magnus-Johnston argues

that understandings of Grimms' fairy tales overlap with the cinematic treatments of the collectors themselves and vice versa; their filmed lives enmesh with the materials they collected.

Magnus-Johnston is only one contributor who explores the complexities of a variety of media that extend beyond face-to-face transmission. Roth considers the gendering and sexualization of the American Thanksgiving turkey through various sources—from prescriptive literature and Norman Rockwell paintings to contemporary films and videos. Tye's study of men wearing kilts draws on humor in personal experience narratives, legends, generalization narratives (Greenhill 1994), and sayings (L. D. Small 1975) shared among members of a pipe band. But all are prompted and supported by the online circulation of a larger body of narrative and visual humor.

Even historical texts' diffusion and communication become complicated. Xie examines folktales that have been reissued in many literary editions, while Vaughan explores how the fifteenth-century *Distaff Gospels* reveal a complex blending of the oral, literary, and vernacular that in turn draw on ecclesiastical traditions. She nevertheless discovers that by looking beyond contemporary literary conventions that caricature female narrators, the wisdom shared offers a more nuanced view of medieval women's lives. Greenhill and Anderson-Grégoire consider how one traditional folktale type explores issues of transgender and transsex, allowing for the imagination of gendered and sexual possibilities very much beyond the hegemonic and conventional. Similarly, in the cinematic and novelistic representations of selkie legends and folktales taken up by Møllegaard, traditional cultural forms act to check and balance mass-mediated ones; each is rarely untouched by the others. The chapters in *Unsettling Assumptions* suggest that the interconnections of traditional and popular culture have become even more intertwined and complicated since Peter Narváez and Martin Laba conceptualized the popular-traditional culture continuum in 1988. Indeed, the relationship might be better visualized as a series of intersections in three dimensions rather than as a two-dimensional line.

Given these complexities, the chapters unsettle what constitutes a traditional text. Building on Jeff Titon's notion that a text is any object of interpretation (Titon 2003), some writers focus on subjects that until recently would not have been considered folklore but classified instead as heritage (Wallen) or literature (Vaughan). Meanings take shape in context and in performance as the analyses beg the question: where is expressive culture based and to whom does it belong? In her entry on "group" for *Eight Words*, Dorothy Noyes wrote that folklore/ethnology's "influence as a discipline has often come from arguing for small groups against big groups" (Noyes

2003, 7). Some contributors indeed explore expressions of relatively small groups—a pipe band (Tye) or a rural community (Fehr and Greenhill). However, it is no longer possible to locate all expressive culture in intimate contexts. Tobacco farmers (Ferrell), Americans who celebrate Thanksgiving (Roth), and parents, agencies, and governments brought together by their stakes in transnational adoption (Sawin) also share (sometimes conflicting) traditions within their populous and geographically extensive communities.

Indeed, some chapters point to the many intersections of small and large groups. As Tye notes, wearing a kilt ties a man to other members of a particular pipe band at the same time as it creates commonality with men worldwide who seek a distinctive Scottish dress. Roth finds that American Thanksgiving celebrations create shared expression and opportunities for exchange and interpretation that extend from family to community to nation and beyond. Published versions of folktales (discussed by Vaughan and Xie) offer further examples of intersections between elite and folk traditions as well as between mass and personal communications. Together the chapters question the desirability and even the viability of such boundaries. Indeed, they suggest, with Noyes, that the idea of networks better suits the social grounding of expressive practices: “The community exists as the project of a network or of some of its members. Networks exist insofar as their ties are continually recreated and revitalized in interaction” (Noyes 2003, 33).

In their reexamination of expressive culture’s social base, chapters in *Unsettling Assumptions* also question the location of the fieldworker/ethnologist. While Magnus-Johnston and Pooley do so through exploring others’ techniques, practices, and modes, Fehr and Greenhill, Mullen, Sawin, and Tye cast the gaze toward their own cultures and experiences. Working within their own social networks and/or examining familiar places, they are linked with their subjects in time, space, and cultural location. Their analyses reflect a growing influence within folkloristic practice not just of reflexive ethnography but also of autoethnography (see Tye 2010). Dating from the 1970s, autoethnographic writing takes many forms, from fiction and poetry to photographic essays to fragmented and layered writing, as well as social scientific prose (C. Ellis 2004, 38). Such work intersects autobiography and ethnography, focusing at once on the self and on culture. Carolyn Ellis and Arthur Bochner describe how during the autoethnographic process, the researcher’s gaze zooms backward and forward, inward and outward, so that distinctions between the personal and cultural become blurred, sometimes beyond recognition (Ellis and Bochner 2000, 739). Whether discussing Mennonite *Brommtopp* mumming, rockabilly, transnational adoption

narratives, or kilt-related humor, writers here merge the ethnographic with the autoethnographic.

Unsettling Assumptions' contributors share a postcolonial commitment to grappling with the difficult questions of representation in reflexive field-work practice and autoethnographic writing. They reach beyond the goal of documenting historically othered cultural practices toward a respectful exploration of a multiplicity of voices that offers alternatives to dominant discourses, explored in particular by Møllegaard. But while contributors strive neither to appropriate nor to speak for their subjects but rather empathically to acknowledge an absence and work it into presence, they recognize that even marginalized discourses can be problematic. As Fehr and Greenhill show, though the margin can be a site of resistance (see hooks 1990, 2000), oppression can also be reproduced there. And as Sawin argues, narratives can offer common ground for respectful dialogue between disparate groups on difficult problems. *Unsettling Assumptions* challenges readers to imagine expressive culture in a broad range of locations and to reflect on how its basis in social acts leads to both continuity and change.

UNSETTLING SEX/GENDER (UN)CONVENTIONS

All chapters explore intersections of traditional expressive culture with sex/gender systems by challenging their conventional constructions and/or by using sex/gender as a lens to question, investigate, or trouble concepts such as family, ethics, and authenticity. Traditional and popular cultural expressions and performances can simultaneously communicate and counter established, hegemonic ideas of what makes women and men.⁵ Often drawing on Judith Butler's famous concept of gender trouble (1999), contributors further disturb modes for constituting sex/gender that move beyond inter/national, class, and sexuality divisions—and even the divide between life and death. The chapters also underscore expressive culture's centrality to what Butler terms the performativity of gender (1990, 1993, 1999, 2004)—the idea that gender and indeed sex are created and re-created, not as overlay on a preexisting biological base but rather as an effect of continuous enacted reiteration. Thus Ferrell, considering Kentucky tobacco farmers, describes “traditionalized performances” of gender, noting that what constitutes (hegemonic) masculinity⁶ not only changes through time but can be appropriated and then redefined by women as well as men.

The last few decades have seen an exciting upheaval of conventional ideas about sex, gender, and sexuality.⁷ Fundamental concepts include the recognition not only of womanhood and femininity but also of manhood

and masculinity as socioculturally constructed, and the idea of intersectionality, which understands gender as multiply imbricated with race, nation, ethnicity, ability, sexuality, and so on.⁸ Arguably, folklore/ethnicity studies have been at the forefront of ethnographic research into masculinities. For example, Stanley Brandes's landmark work *Metaphors of Masculinity: Sex and Status in Andalusian Folklore* (1980) did not simply deal primarily with men, presuming them to instantiate humanness unmarked,⁹ but instead located and represented masculinity in its sociocultural manifestations. Works as disparate as Michael Robidoux's *Men at Play: A Working Understanding of Professional Hockey* (2001) and Simon Bronner's edited collection *Manly Traditions: The Folk Roots of American Masculinities* (2005) explore how traditional and popular culture constitutes and enables the performance of Euro–North American¹⁰ (and other) masculinities. These studies recognize that some forms of maleness become hegemonic—most often those masculinities associated with young, heterosexual, White, middle and upper class, able men. Such masculinities, then, become a standard against which all men are measured, with nearly all found wanting. Because the actual content of hegemonic masculinity shifts constantly, its measure can never be truly and permanently reached by any individual.

Ferrell's and Mullen's chapters, in particular, explore questions associated with the multiple masculinities found in Euro North America, dealing respectively with “tobacco men” and rockabilly music. Using queer theorist Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's terms, Mullen explores male homosocial desire¹¹ by looking at social class, race, gender, and sexual representations in vernacular music lyrics. Often the homosocial is intersectionally inflected with class and race. For example, clubs that allegedly admitted only White men actually did so only in terms of their public performance or front stage (to use Goffman's [1959] terminology). Such places usually employed men of color and women workers backstage to cook, clean, and/or provide sexual services. The invisibility of men of color—many of whom actually served in the front stage in “all-White” clubs—and the fact that some women's presence does not undermine the sex/gender prescription “all-male” in similar locations, underscores intersectionality's reach and power. For example, politician Elsie Wayne, as mayor of Fredericton, New Brunswick, attended several events at a men-only club—as a server, cross-dressed, and even jumping out of a cake—underlining that the club did not actually exclude women, it only excluded them as members and guests in positions of power (discussed in Greenhill, Tye, and Cantú 2009, xxvii). Ferrell examines how Kentucky tobacco farmers negotiate their growing economic marginality and the perceived threat of feminization of their agriculture: from women

who participate in the business, from increased mechanization, and because the crop they grow has less and less sociopolitical and economic power.

Magnus-Johnston explores cinematic representations of the Brothers Grimm. She notes that folklorists' ideas of Wilhelm and Jacob Grimm as sober, politically astute scholars seeking to gather and promote German national language and traditions have been replaced in American film representations with very different figures. For example, strongly homosocially identified and queerly inflected, the Grimms of Terry Gilliam's (2005) *The Brothers Grimm*, the most recent and possibly most popular of the four she discusses, are bumbling con men concerned pretty exclusively with their own self-interest.

Pooley also considers how masculinity inflects the practice of folklore/ethnology, considering the nineteenth-century French collector François Bladé's relationship with his primary male informant, Guillaume Cazaux. Sometimes reading between the lines in the materials Bladé collected, and sometimes invoking the ethnologist's own commentary about the folk with whom he worked, Pooley explores the adversarial connection between the two men. He argues that Bladé's concept of authenticity multiply implicates concepts of gender, including a class-inflected "combative masculinity." His touchstone is the complex legend text, "My Uncle from Condom," which Pooley understands as a gendered "conversation about place, time, and language."

Focus shifts to femininities with Vaughan's discussion of *The Distaff Gospels* as they decenter conventional male depictions of femininity and offer a female-centered view of medieval life. Her work shows that male-authored texts sometimes, perhaps unwittingly, give voice to women's traditions and perhaps even their opinions. That the women's views were intended to be taken as jokes by the original fifteenth-century male audience does not mean that audiences today should ignore them or doubt their significance. Even when traditional texts and practices appear conventional, they offer opportunities to glimpse other possibilities.

Sawin's postcolonial narrative analysis approaches international adoption through a lens that combines feminist and folkloristic paradigms. Rather than dealing with masculinity or femininity specifically, her work queries notions of parenthood and family as taken-for-granted, presumed universal concepts. In her chapter, personal experience and narratives about it connect with United Nations conventions and the often combative and unequivocal statements by adoptees and their receiving families. Rather than seeking compromise and unified narrative closure, Sawin looks for respectful dialogue between the parties.

While *Unsettling Assumptions* focuses around and about more or less conventional notions of masculinities and femininities, it frequently strays deliberately beyond those binaries into territories that question the sex/gender system so eloquently critiqued by Gayle Rubin (1984). Her description of the structures that make some forms of sex and sexuality socioculturally normative, and thus generally understood as both worthy and normal, while simultaneously making others evil and deviant is further elaborated and nuanced, rendered transparent in order to undermine its conventional taken-for-grantedness.

The Euro–North American conventions implicated in its sex/gender systems are undermined in Xie’s chapter, which discusses Chinese folktales in which living men marry female ghosts. Sexual relations in these stories cross the boundaries between the living and the dead. Both tales she discusses specify the consummation of the marriages, and one ghost woman gives birth to a male heir. Such relations, economically valuable for the peasant men who marry dead noblewomen, offer kinship advantages for the female ghosts. Yet contrary to Vaughan’s recuperation of *The Distaff Gospels*, Xie sees little room for women’s perspectives. She argues that in these narratives, the sexual and economic benefits primarily direct toward male characters. Yet these stories undoubtedly divert from presumptions about marriage as a simple kinship exchange and about sex and sexuality as confined within the limits of mortality.

UNSETTLING/RETHINKING DRAG

Contributors address modes of representation of self as other that include men dressing as women and women as men, White Euro North Americans dressing as (often stereotypical) others (including blackface and whiteface), and humans dressing as animals (and vice versa) to explore the cultural transformations that result from such performances. The extension of the term *drag* to domains beyond sex and gender is deliberately provocative, but it productively assists contributors in bringing assumptions about cross-dressing to bear upon many aspects of identity. Roth’s and Møllegaard’s chapters open the question of transbiology as drag when it involves animals dressing as humans or humans as animals. Transbiology messes with sex/gender, using representations of animals or humans who masquerade or transform, particularly as another species, and/or who dislocate hard-and-fast distinctions between species, including between human and nonhuman.¹² The turkey sex/sexuality that Roth explores connects human-animal (highly proscribed), queer, and straight relationships. She contends that

turkey sexuality implicates various forms of human sex, but also American culture's ethnoracial and social class inclusions and exclusions. This perspective becomes all the more convincing given its presence across a wide range of media and genres, including but not limited to blockbuster and independent films; advertisements; custom and ritual; and song parodies.

In transbiology, as contributors indicate, the concepts of biology and humanity both transform, and the allegedly rigid boundaries between species become permeable. Social anthropology has explored in depth how animal metaphors and taboos actually express notions about human culture (e.g., Douglas 1966; Leach 2000; Willis 1974). Disguise as an animal is not uncommon in traditional culture, but again, its transbiological implications have been underexplored (e.g., Greenhill 2008). As Halberstam argues, "Popular culture has already imagined multiple alternatives to male and female, masculine and feminine, family and individuality and . . . contemporary popular culture, specifically horror film and animation, can provide a rich archive for an alternative politics of embodiment, reproduction and non-reproduction. Such alternatives are important to visualize and recognize" (2008, 266). Notably, one of Roth's central examples comes from popular culture: the faux movie trailer from Robert Rodriguez and Quentin Tarantino's horror pastiche/parody *Grindhouse* (2007).

Also drawing on popular culture but in addition on traditional narratives about seals who transform into humans (and sometimes return to their nonhuman form), Møllegaard's work on selkie stories brings in Neil Jordan's *Ondine* (2009) and other films as well as Solveig Eggerz's novel *Seal Woman* (2008). Møllegaard's postcolonial analysis shows how the traditional transbiological narratives can be used in zones of contact between national groups. Biological difference can stand in the place of cultural difference. And again, a variety of genres—film, novel, and traditional narrative—speak to a common subject.

Along with transbiology, transgender—indicating a lack of correspondence between gender identity (social, cultural, psychological) and sex identity (biological, physiological)—also appears in *Unsettling Assumptions*. Susan Stryker argues the need to distinguish feminist, queer, and sexuality studies from transgender studies: "If queer theory was born of the union of sexuality studies and feminism, transgender studies can be considered queer theory's evil twin: it has the same parentage but willfully disrupts the privileged family narratives that favor sexual identity labels (like *gay*, *lesbian*, *bisexual*, and *heterosexual*) over the gender categories (like man and woman) that enable desire to take shape and find its aim" (2004, 212). She adds that "all too often *queer* remains a code word for 'gay' or 'lesbian,' and all

too often transgender phenomena are misapprehended through a lens that privileges sexual orientation and sexual identity as the primary means of differing from heteronormativity” (214).

Transgender’s place in folklore shows that imagining and enacting gender contestation has never been exclusively the province of the elite but has long been part of the heritage of the common and everyday. Much current literature on historic cross-dressing in European and Euro–North American cultures has focused on upper-class groups and individuals. Historic fictional and folkloric cross-dressing women have received considerable attention.¹³ Male to female transgender, often considered in terms of contemporary drag and camp, has also been discussed historically.¹⁴ Folklore/ethnology research again shows not only the historical depth and geographical breadth of cross-dressing, but also that it was by no means limited to a few class-privileged folks.

Thus *Unsettling Assumptions* ventures into the territory of queer and trans studies, explored by some folklorists/ethnologists (e.g., Greenhill 1995, 1997; see also Turner and Greenhill 2012) but by no means to the extent it has been analyzed by literary and historical scholars.¹⁵ The concept of female masculinity (see, e.g., Halberstam 1998) is invoked in Greenhill and Anderson-Grégoire’s work on a folktale about a girl who dresses and acts like a boy and eventually transforms physically into a man. In their work on “The Shift of Sex” tale type, the authors note that although the “girl’s” magical transformation into a man is exactly what s/he wants, it comes as a result of the worst curse an evil character can conceive—that a man be turned into a woman or a woman into a man! In spite of the association of this “curse” with an evil character, it remains transgressively balanced. That is, despite the cross-cultural privilege associated with men (see Ortner 1974), such that a man being turned into a woman might arguably be more of a hardship than vice versa (discussed in Mills 1985), the curse evenly and fairly offers the transformation to both sex/genders.

Transgender enters Tye’s work when she addresses how members of a Scottish pipe band negotiate masculinity in the context of wearing kilts—too easily coded as skirts and thus as female dress forms. Simultaneously, she explores the cultural obsession with the presumptive male genitalia under the kilt, marked by the traditional abjuration against wearing underwear when kilted. Fehr and Greenhill look at yet another primarily homosocial male practice, that of Manitoba Mennonite *Brommtopp* performers. Their rowdy behavior, by including female dress and sometimes even feminized roles, underscores gender by countering the traditional circumspection expected of males in that cultural and religious tradition.

Tye's and Fehr and Greenhill's work negotiates transgender via dress. Male Scottish pipers and male *Brommtopp* performers alike work to undermine any possibility that, despite apparently being dressed in women's clothing, they want to be understood as female. Cross-dressing, or drag, is most often understood in terms of gender: that is, involving a man dressing as a woman or a woman as a man. Yet the concept of intersectionality—the complex construction of identity in multiple and interlocking modes—raises the possibility that aspects other than sex/gender could be sociocultural constructions multiply inflected with other facets of identity (see, e.g., Somerville 2000). For example, the concept of race was long misconceived—and indeed culturally enjoined—as biological.¹⁶ However, current scholarship not only recognizes race as a cultural construction but also attends to the cultural constructedness of Whiteness as an unmarked social location (see, e.g., Frankenberg 1993; Greenhill 1994, 2002). Concomitantly, then, masquerade and drag involve more than just sex/gender.

Because folklore/ethnology analysis sensitively attends to issues of reversal and inversion, contributors to *Unsettling Assumptions* explore not only constructions of gender and sexuality but also their construction and deconstruction in ethnic and gender drag. Katrin Sieg's notion of ethnic drag, which “includes not only cross-racial casting on the stage, but, more generally, the performance of ‘race’ as a masquerade” (2002, 2), addresses this issue. Examining, for example, theatrical representations in Germany, wherein White actors play the roles of people of color, Sieg outlines the alibis for this action, including a scarcity of actors of color, the alleged universality of White actors' representations, and pervading values of artistic autonomy and excellence above all other considerations. She argues that although such a practice may be orientalist, exclusionist, and xenophobic, it can also be politically progressive:

After the Holocaust, the very word race was excised from public language and political analysis. Ethnic drag reveals what this linguistic break conceals, namely the continuities, permutations, and contradictions of racial feelings in West German culture. As a figure of substitution, ethnic drag both exposes and disavows traumatic holes in the social fabric, and facilitates both historical denial and collective mourning. As a crossing of racial lines in performance, ethnic drag simultaneously erases and redraws boundaries posturing ancient and immutable. As a pedagogy, it promises to reveal the dark inside of “Germanness” by taking up an outsider's perspective. As a technique of estrangement, drag denounces that which dominant ideology presents as natural, normal, and inescapable, without always offering another truth. As a ritual inversion, it purports to master grave social

contradictions, yet defers resolution through compulsive repetitions. As a symbolic contact zone between German bodies and other cultures, ethnic drag facilitates the exercise and exchange of power. And as a simulacrum of “race,” it challenges the perceptions and privileges of those who would mistake appearances for essence. (2–3; see also Sieg 1998)

Fehr and Greenhill’s chapter concerns how the discomforts with *Brommtopp*’s representation don’t easily map onto the ethnic associations of the ethnographers. Fehr is Mennonite (as are the *Brommtopp* players); Greenhill is not. Some participants in the revival want to exclude potentially problematic references to race/ethnicity. Some do not. And ultimately, a univocal meaning cannot accurately be attached to such representations in any case. But it is telling that despite the numerous photographs clearly showing gender cross-dressing and ethnic drag by the performers, some interviewees refused to talk about this aspect of the costuming, denied it ever took place, and/or insisted that their comments be removed from the final version of the chapter.

Crucially, ethnic drag cannot be confined to situations of ethnoracial difference. Ethnolinguistic self-representations implicate postmodern socio-cultural relations in Wallen’s work on “Dutch drag” in Denmark. Though the folks who live on the island of Amager trace their heritage to Dutch settlers, the ties are in fact quite tenuous. Wallen helpfully contextualizes how Dutch ethnicity is celebrated by juxtaposing it with more problematized European responses to immigration by Muslims and other non-White-associated groups. She notes that while Dutch ethnicity can be voluntarily invoked, other ethnoracial groups may be unwilling or unable to try to pass within the mainstream.

UNSETTLING IMPLICATIONS/CONCLUSIONS

Some readers may find the most unsettling aspect of this collection the fact that the editors have declined to organize the book into thematic sections. Given their myriad overlaps and multiple inflections of our three subtopics in the chapters, our decision was simply to present each work in alphabetical order by the author’s surname, and then to develop clusters of concepts/ideas and subjects/genres. One reader/reviewer suggested that “this flexible approach to organizing the materials . . . opens up space for teachers and students, and most importantly it valorizes the essays not as individually definitive pieces but as starting points for conversations about our attitudes and practices—the positions we take, consciously or not, within and counter to hegemonic culture and its hierarchies.”

We concur!

Unsettling Assumptions calls for reexamination of disciplinary genre classification, expressive culture's relationship to popular culture and its social base, and issues of contemporary fieldwork praxis and representation characterized by a decreasing distance separating fieldwork and subject. It further draws attention to the ways in which the crossing of sociocultural boundaries has become not only a central part of everyday life for most citizens of the globe but also a central mode for exploring difference via various forms of drag—animal, cultural, and sex/gendered. Emphasizing the importance of context and performance to expressive culture's meanings, the chapters also highlight the significance of the everyday, not just in particular cultural nexuses but in larger discourses of authenticity, tradition, and identity.

Folklorists/ethnologists have long recognized expressive culture as international, shared, collective. Such relations are the subjects of international tale-type, ballad, and motif indices, for example. Yet the (inter)discipline's contribution to wider ideas around global flows, as a window on economies and international relations, has been less obvious. In *Unsettling Assumptions* these relations become more explicit. Expressive culture emerges as fundamental to folks' sense of belonging to a family, an occupation or friendship group and, most notably, to identity performativity. Within larger contexts, these works offer a better understanding of cultural attitudes like misogyny, homophobia, and racism as well as the construction and negotiation of power. They often raise more questions than they answer. This problem reflects the difficulty of the issues and the fact that they require continuing attention and vigilance, a task the contributors to *Unsettling Assumptions* take up with scholarly rigor and enthusiasm. But the collection also offers a balanced recognition that its chapters will never be the only answer, let alone the final one.

NOTES

1. Because our French colleagues find the English term *folklore* problematic, and to recognize the different trajectories of European-based ethnology studies and American-based folklore studies, we use the term *ethnology* in addition to *folklore* (see Greenhill and Narváez 2002a, 2002b) when we refer to the area of study and research.

2. They include Bourke (1999); Burke (2004); Gaunt (2006); Greenhill (2010); Lawless (2001); Magliocco (2004); Rieti (2008); Sawin (2004); Thomas (2003); Turner (1999); Tye (2010); Ware (2007); and Whatley and Henken (2000).

3. Arguably, the *Encyclopedia of Women's Folklore and Folklife* (Locke, Vaughan, and Greenhill 2009) could be included, but encyclopedias don't make good teaching texts and are generally more retrospective than programmatic.

4. *Cisgender* refers to those whose gender identity matches the behavior or role conventionally considered appropriate for their sex.

5. For further information on women's folklore, see Greenhill, Tye, and Cantú (2009); on folklore about women, see Greenhill (2009); and on women folklorists/ethnologists, see Cantú, Greenhill, and Saltzman (2009).

6. Hegemonic masculinities are those recognized as privileged, normative, and prescriptive within a group (see Kimmel and Messner 2012).

7. In addition to Butler's aforementioned work, see Stone's "The 'Empire' Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto" (1991), which rethinks transgender and transsex, and the works of Connell (e.g., 2005), Kimmel (e.g., 2000), and Messner (e.g., 1995) on masculinities.

8. See, for example, Crenshaw (1991) and Collins (2000).

9. Markedness, an idea from linguistics, offers a useful distinction for sorting out particular kinds of relations between concepts. The unmarked element is generally taken for granted as the norm, and the marked element is usually seen as a development or a change from the unmarked norm. Marking is invariably physical, in that the marked term is longer and incorporates the unmarked. For example, *man* can often be used as a generic to talk about people or humans in general; whereas *woman*—a specific kind of man—rarely is so used. *Man* is unmarked, and *woman* is marked. One of the first feminist criticisms of academic research and scholarship pointed out that not only were women excluded from research as subjects and objects alike, but also that male subjects and objects were presumed sufficient to account for all of humanity (see, e.g., Eichler and Lapointe 1985). The fiction that *man* stands for all human beings is countered by the unlikeliness of the following description: "Man is a mammal, which means that he breastfeeds his young."

10. We use this term to underline significant differences between the cultural presumptions of North Americans of European extraction and those of African, Asian, Indigenous, and other backgrounds.

11. The term *homosocial* came into common use in gender studies beginning with Sedgwick's *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*, which examines "social bonds between persons of the same sex" expressed in fiction (1985, 1). Now applied to same-sex relationships of all kinds—not always sexual ones—it has become useful in exploring dynamics within apparently all-male and all-female groups.

12. Scholars like Franklin (2006), Giffney and Hird (2008), Halberstam (2008), and Hird (2004, 2006) have begun to map the territory.

13. Consider, for example, Cromwell (1999); Dekker and van de Pol (1997); Dugaw (1989); Greenhill (1995, 1997); Hotchkiss (1996); and Wheelwright (1989).

14. See Ekins and King (1996); Farrer (1996a, 1996b); Newton (1972); and Woodhouse (1989).

15. For example, Epstein and Straub (1991); Herzog (2009); Macías-González (2007); and Rachamimov (2006).

16. Artifacts of the racist idea that races are biological entities result in, among others, social and legal prescriptions against miscegenation—sexual relations, particularly reproductive ones, between members of different races (see, e.g., Lemire 2002); Nazism; ethnic cleansing; and apartheid. Substituting the more culturally inflected term *ethnicity* can elaborate, or alternatively obscure, the biologized concept of race.