The Science of Folklore at the End of the 19th Century

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Jay Peters
Introduction

Mr. James Napier submitted the following story to the English journal *The Folk-Lore Record* in 1881: “Fairy Money.-A fairy belief was often told to young people by parents and guardians in my young days, say sixty years ago, that fairies took notice of good children and often hid pieces of money in such places where these children were sure to find it. As an illustration of this, when I was about twelve years of age all my spare halfpence were spent on old ballads and tales. I was sent on a message by my mother to the city, and one penny change was to be left which I was to get to keep. On my way I had a look at some ballads and pamphlets, among which was Robinson Crusoe, but the price was threepence, which put it out of my reach.”

“After I did my messages, and feeling rich with my penny, I came upon a wretched object, a blind man on the wayside, begging. My feelings were excited and I pitched my penny into his hat. I then hurried home to have an hour's fishing before the tide went too low in the river. On my way I had to get some worms for bait; for this purpose I lifted a flat stone embedded among grass, when under it there were three old penny pieces, which put me in possession of Robinson Crusoe. I had no other thought than that this was fairy money placed there for me, as a reward for giving my penny to the blind man, and even yet, at the age of seventy, I can hardly condemn the use of this pleasing superstition. JAMES NAPIER.”¹

This anecdote is instructive in several ways. First, there is the tale itself, in which a boy does a kind deed and is magically rewarded. It gives us a window into the mind of a 12 year old boy, who is occupied with matters like fishing, reading adventure stories, and going on errands.

¹ James Napier, “Fairy Money,” *The Folk-Lore Record* 4, no. 1 (1881): 176-177. http://www.jstor.org/stable/1252425 (accessed March 18, 2011). Over the course of its life, the journal published by the English Folklore Society had three names. From 1878-1882 it was called *The Folk-Lore Record*, from 1883-1889 it was called *The Folk-Lore Journal*, and from 1890 onwards it was simply called *Folklore*. Although these three names are used throughout the thesis where applicable, the reader should keep in mind that it is the same publication.
The tale also involves a moral lesson. Fairies only left money for the good children, and thus one needed to do a good deed in order to find fairy money.

One must also consider the way in which the tale is related, as well as the folklore found within the tale. This is a transcription of an oral document, a recollection from this man’s past. The folklore found within this tale, the belief in fairy money, was told to Napier and other youngsters by their parents and guardians. This is illustrative of the way in which folklore is passed down across generations. Also, Napier is recalling this incident about sixty years after it occurred, showing that growing older hasn’t diminished the impact that this piece of folklore has had on him; even at the age of seventy, he still has a soft spot for it.

A folklorist would be interested in an anecdote such as this for several reasons. He would want to know what a belief in fairy money could tell him about human nature, and what the survival of that belief to that day could tell him about the development of human nature. A folklorist might also look to see where else this belief is prevalent, to make comparisons as well as to trace the movement and the evolution of the belief.

However, looking beyond the anecdote itself, it is important to note the fact that it was submitted to a folklore journal. Just a few years earlier, Napier wouldn’t have had the option to submit his anecdote to a folklore journal. He certainly would have been able to send his story to another journal to be published, yet a folklore journal was a publication meant for folklore. It was a journal that would be interested in publishing his childhood belief in fairy money, and had a readership that would be interested in reading about it.

*The Folk-Lore Record*, the first journal devoted solely to folklore, came into existence in 1878 with the foundation of the English Folklore Society, also the first of its kind. Over the course of the 19th century in Europe, folklore increasingly became important to larger numbers of
people, culminating in the 1880’s with the foundation of numerous societies and journals devoted to folklore, of which the English society and its journal were only the first.

Yet the 1880’s are certainly not the first time one hears of folklore. The Grimm brothers, perhaps the most well known folklorists, published their first collection of fairy tales in 1812. Books and collections of folklore were made both before and after that, such as John Aubrey’s manuscript on *Remaines of Gentilisme and Judaisme* in 1686-1687, and William Henderson’s collection of folklore first published in 1866.

The societies and journals devoted to folklore that sprung up at the end of the 19th century were products of increased folkloric activity during that time. The first chapter will discuss a variety of reasons for this increase in folkloric activity. The second half of the 19th century saw a variety of social changes, causing folklorists to believe that if they didn’t act quickly to collect folklore, it would disappear forever. Ideas of the nation and nationalism led to an increased influence of the state on its people. This manifested itself through things like mandatory schooling and an increased emphasis on a central language. These had a homogenizing effect on the common people of the nation, especially the lower classes, resulting in the loss of some of their regional identities, something which was crucial to folklore. Industrialization also had its effect. The populace of these nations were constantly moving around, often migrating to urban centers to find work, and leaving their roots, and thus their folklore, behind. Furthermore, the lower classes of people themselves were also changing due to these movements. The very idea of the nation revolved around the people of that nation. The common people were increasingly having more of a say in the way things were being run in their countries, and thus a history of the common people became more appealing.
Being able to have evidence to back up your statements and theories became very important towards the end of the 19th century, and the goal of turning folklore into a science developed from this idea. As a field that was rising in importance and activity, folklorists needed to have this emphasis in order for folklore to be taken seriously. The second chapter will focus on the standards and trends that folklorists were emphasizing in order to establish folklore as a science, particularly in the area of folklore collection. Continuing in this vein, the third chapter will discuss how the folklore societies and journals accommodated and facilitated these collection efforts in an orderly fashion, in accordance with scientific methods. Being the first folklore society, a large emphasis will be placed on the English Folklore Society. Folklore will also be examined in Spain and Italy, although to a lesser degree.

As well as looking at folklorists as a group, one can also look at them as individuals. Chapter four will focus on three folklorists who had large impacts on the field: George Laurence Gomme from England, Antonio Machado y Alvarez from Spain, and Giuseppe Pitré from Italy. All three were instrumental in the foundation of folklore societies and journals in their countries. They put a heavy emphasis on establishing folklore as a science, and on the importance of the common people of their nations.

Chapter five will focus on the success of folklorists at the end of the 19th century, both in general and with specific regard to the establishment of folklore as a science. Despite rising activity and success in the 1880’s, folkloric activity reached a plateau towards the end of the 1890’s and into the 20th century. Despite this, folklorists did succeed in their goal of establishing folklore as a science.

Due to the emphasis of establishing folklore as a science, folklore became established as a respectable field by the beginning of the 20th century. Much progress was made in establishing
a framework from which folklorists could pursue their collection efforts, and compare and share their results.
Chapter 1 – Folkloristic Agendas

What is folklore? The term was first used in 1846 by William Thoms in a letter to the *Athenæum*, in a request to use that publication to help gather folklore materials. By the 1880’s, folklorists were discussing its exact meaning in the pages of the English *Folk-Lore Journal*. They were attempting to establish folklore as a science, and for that they needed to define what folklore was, determine the scope and purpose of folklore, and develop a terminology for the discussion of folklore, particularly for folktale stories and folktale incidents.² Several prominent folklorists wrote to *The Folk-Lore Journal* expressing their thoughts on the matter. Although several definitions were proposed, no one definition was really decided upon. The First Annual Report of the Council of the English Folklore Society, published in *The Folk-Lore Record* in 1879, stated that:

“Folk-Lore may be said to include all the "culture" of the people which has not been worked into the official religion and history, but which is and has always been of self growth. It represents itself in civilised history by strange and uncouth customs; superstitious associations with animals, birds, flowers, trees, and topographical objects, and with the events of human life; the belief in witchcraft, fairies, and spirits; the traditional ballads and proverbial sayings incident to particular localities; the retention of popular names for hills, streams, caverns, springs, tumuli, fountains, fields, trees, &c., and all such out-of-the-way lore.”³

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Although it wouldn’t be defined as such until much later, the concept of folklore has been in existence for quite some time. Early examples of folklore can be found using archaeological evidence such as the Lascaux cave drawings in France, which are indicative of a culture and a certain way of life. One begins to find books containing what would later be defined as folklore as early as the 16th and 17th centuries, though sparingly. By the 18th and 19th centuries, one could increasingly find materials and collections that contained folklore. In the 19th century, the semi-organized collection of folklore began to be mentioned in various journals and magazines, such as the Athenæum and Notes and Queries. However, folklore wasn’t the objective of these journals. It wasn’t until 1878 that the newly founded English Folklore Society published the first journal whose sole purpose was folklore.

Folklore wasn’t considered important until the latter half of the 19th century. Some early 19th century folklorists were even criticized for their interest in the “low class of the population.”4 As these attitudes changed, an organized and concerted effort to collect and preserve folklore began to be developed, and was going forward in full force during the 1880’s. This organized effort mainly manifested itself through the formation of folklore societies and folklore journals. Some of the factors that contributed to the development of this infrastructure at the end of the 19th century included changing ideas about the development and evolution of humanity, an increased interest in the history of the common people due to social changes, the fear of folklore disappearing forever, and the effects of stronger and more influential national governments, particularly in areas such as language and education. The short term goals of these societies and journals were to collect and preserve as much folklore as possible, before it was too late. Secondarily, though equally important, was the analysis of the collected materials. As one

folklorist put it, in a book review for *The Folk-Lore Record*: “What is the use of eternally collecting the remains of antiquity unless some day they are made the means of telling us something about the development of human thought and action?—a development that is of immense importance to the right understanding of man's history.” Folklore was to be collected for a purpose, so that something of value could be learned from it. In order for this value to be realized, both the collection and the analysis of folklore materials needed to be done in a uniform way, and thus ideas of science and the scientific method were emphasized.

To understand these motivating factors and goals, it will be helpful to look briefly at the development of why anyone would consider folklore to be important at all. Some of the roots of folklore’s importance began with Johann Gottfried Herder at the end of the 18th century. This time period was dominated by ideas of the Enlightenment, which in brief was a movement that advocated reason and tended to regard things like tradition as ignorance and fanaticism. Herder, however, believed that traditions were crucial in developing a national spirit. He thought of popular poetry as the heart of a people’s character, and considered the folk “the most genuine and unblemished part of the nation.” By gathering the popular poetry from the folk, one could bolster and solidify the nation. Though Herder’s focus was on popular poetry, his ideas could easily be expanded to include all folklore. The everyday knowledge of the folk could be part of what made up the character of a nation, and at least according to Herder, popular poetry was the core of what made up the folk. When Napoleon later invaded the German states, the idea of the nation was further emphasized. The people of the German states were under the rule of a foreign

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7 Ibid., 174
power, and a way of resisting that rule included emphasizing their unique identity. This identity, with its own traditions and way of doing things, was essentially the basis of what would later be a nation.

Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm may be considered the most well known folklorists, though it wasn’t called folklore at the time. One of their more famous works was *Kinder-und Hausmärchen*, Children’s and Household Tales, a collection of German fairy tales first published in 1812. It was intended as a serious scholarly work, with notes about the tales appended to the tales themselves. One of the important things about their collection was that they were among the first to say that their tales were recorded and printed as they heard them. Though their actual fidelity to their sources has been debated, they were among the first to introduce the authenticity of their sources as being an important factor in the collection of folk tales.\(^8\) This idea was an important forerunner for the emphasis of folklore as a science that was to follow.

The third quarter of the 19\(^{th}\) century was dominated by comparative mythology and the diffusionist theory. The idea behind comparative mythology was that all language developed a long time ago from one common language, which was termed Aryan. Eventually, the Aryans split into different nations and developed different languages, and all the old words of the Aryan language were no longer really understood. Myths developed to explain what these old words and names meant. One of the more famous proponents of this school of thought was Friedrich Max Müller. Müller put a particularly heavy emphasis on the idea that these old words and names were centered around solar events.\(^9\) The diffusionist school of thought emphasized the

\(^8\) Ibid., 227-229.
migration of tales from one area to another. It was thought that many tales originated from India and spread out from there, reaching Europe through Africa and the Middle East. Theodor Benfey expounded this theory in the preface to his translation of the Pañcatantra.\(^{10}\)

The beginning of the 1870’s saw the rise of the anthropological school of thought, which proposed the theory of polygenesis, or multiple origins. It held that humans evolved and developed in similar ways, and that similar stories and customs could be found in different places because it was some innate part of human nature to develop stories and customs in a certain way. So the core of the story would often be the same due to the analogous development of peoples, and differences and variations arose due to differences in external conditions.

Not all folklorists neatly fit into a school of thought, yet these three schools do have certain commonalities between them. They were products of the kinds of thought processes of the century in which they were expounded. They all dealt with human nature and the origins of man. The 19\(^{th}\) century saw the introduction of Darwin’s theory of evolution in 1859, with the publication of his book *The Origin of Species*. This challenged many preconceived notions, and allowed for the expansion of thought in new directions. This is related to an increased interest in folklore. These ideas resonated particularly well with the anthropological school of thought, which held that similar folklores and folktales developed in different places due to some innate way that human beings developed. Therefore, by looking at the folklore that had survived in civilized countries up to that point, one could make inferences about how people developed. Also, by studying the folklore that was extant in un-civilized countries, the folklorist could have a window back in time, and see what kind of folklore humans would have in that stage of their

development. In a similar vein, folklorist James A. Farrer concluded that “…the science of comparative folklore would corroborate the findings of archaeology in demonstrating the progress of man from savagery to culture.”\textsuperscript{11} Albeit in different ways, all these schools of thought attempted to use folklore to shed light on certain beliefs and ideas, to learn something about the development of humanity.

In addition to the development of humanity, folklorists were also interested in the history of humanity, particularly the history of the common people. In a paper read at an early meeting of the English Folklore Society, Reverend W. S. Lach-Szyrma commented that “the history of the peasantry of Europe has yet to be written. We have plenty of histories of kings, nobles, ecclesiastics, and even of the great middle classes; we have military histories, and constitutional histories, and ecclesiastical histories, but I hope the peasants of Europe may have their turn.”\textsuperscript{12} Among other things, he held that by analyzing folklore and traditions one could see what effects history had had on the popular mind.\textsuperscript{13} The history of the common people was essentially their culture, which could be found in their folklore.

During this time period, the field of history itself was also going through a process of standardization. As history became more professionalized, its practitioners began to focus on things such as politics, diplomacy, and warfare, thereby excluding factors such as culture, customs, and social life that had previously been studied by amateur historians.\textsuperscript{14} This change allowed for these kinds of studies to be picked up by disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, and folklore.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{14} James A. Winders, \textit{European Culture Since 1848: From Modern to Postmodern and Beyond} (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 21-22.
\end{itemize}
In addition to this, there was also a movement among historians to move away from a reliance on oral sources, and a heavier emphasis was placed on written sources. In 1897 two French Historians, C. V. Langlois and Charles Seignobos, wrote a book titled *Introduction to the Study of History* in which they claimed that “the historian works with documents … For want of documents the history of immense periods in the past of humanity is destined to remain for ever unknown. For there is no substitute for documents: no documents, no history.” Oral sources had certainly been used by historians in the past, and its use wasn’t entirely stopped during the 19th century either. Yet the use of oral history had fallen into disrepute, and it was no longer considered well founded evidence by the end of the 19th century. This resonated with the spreading influence of the ideas of science and the scientific method. The main idea that was taken from that and applied to numerous other fields was that everything needed to be backed up by evidence.

This was true for folklorists as well as for historians, except that folklorists accepted and relied upon oral sources, and so folklorists helped fill the gap that historians were tending to overlook with their increased focus on written sources. In folklore, one rarely had documents or written sources; it was almost exclusively oral. For folklorists, unwritten history was not irrevocably lost. They believed that through folklore, there was still the potential to learn something about the people that had come before them.

The attitude of recording the history of the common people is similar to the emphasis on social history that one can find in more recent times. With their interest in what the average,

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16 For more on oral and written sources, see Jack Goody’s *The Interface Between the Written and the Oral* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1987).
everyday person was doing, folklorists were in a way predecessors of this movement. Part of this increased interest was related to social changes that were happening across Europe. Two of these changes that caused folklorists to be more interested in these things were the increased voice of the common people and the increased inclusion of all the peoples of a country into the nation.

The 19th century saw the common people slowly starting to get more of a say and have more of an influence in the way things were being done in their countries. The idea of the common people having an influence on the state became popularized with the French Revolution, when the people showed that they had the potential to be a powerful force. The idea was further emphasized with the multiple revolutions that occurred mid-century. The increased power and rise of parliamentary bodies in some countries was another indication that the common people were becoming increasingly important. Previously, nobody cared about the traditions of the common people because they felt that the common people were unimportant. Now, however, these attitudes were changing. In the beginning of his book *Customs and Habits of the Sicilian Peasants*, published in 1897, folklorist Salvatore Salomone-Marino wrote a dedicatory letter to a local prince, in which he said that “in recent years many have been interested in the Sicilian peasant mostly from an economic and social aspect, but generally unaware of his precise sentiments, traditions, customs – in short, the whole life he really lives; and without that, it is clear that judgments cannot be in agreement, or exact and fair.”17 Those that considered themselves as the elites and educated people of society were developing a desire

to know more about this class of people that was slowly gaining the power to have significant influence on their lives.

Furthermore, the concept of the nation was now actually beginning to affect all of the common people. In fact, the very idea of a nation revolved around the people who composed that nation. Central governments took more of an interest in the people of their countries being a homogenous whole, particularly in making the uneducated masses more like their educated selves. Among other things, this manifested itself in mandatory schooling, and, to a certain degree, in the primacy of one language in a country. Mandatory schooling increased literary rates and attempted to put the peasants and poorer people of society on a roughly equal playing field by giving them a minimum level of knowledge. Schooling also forced children to learn the official language of the country, being the main way that countries would emphasize the mother tongue as a main language and down-play regional languages and dialects. Knowing the official language also became a useful and desired skill, allowing people to get around and communicate more easily in their country. Yet the degree to which this was a factor varied from country to country.

In France, for example, French was not the language used by most Frenchmen at the beginning of the 19th century. Most Frenchmen considered their regional patois as their mother tongue, and French was more like a foreign language. However, over the course of the 19th century, French was increasingly being taught in schools, and the value and usefulness of being able to use one language anywhere in the country caused French to become more prominent.
This was a slow and long process, that began earlier than the 19th century and was still in
progress for a bit afterwards, yet it made great strides towards the close of the 19th century.18

In Italy, however, the trend towards a standardized Italian only really began with the
country’s unification in 1861. The process has been influenced by such factors as increased
social mobility, conscription, and the media. While this process began during the time period
under examination, it was still ongoing and evolving into the 20th century. Thus, while trends
towards a standardized Italian may have had some influence at the end of the 19th century, the
degree of influence would not have been as great as in other countries.19 20

The increased importance and relevance of the common people to the state and to
themselves made their traditions and ways of life more interesting to study. Another reason why
folklorists were interested in finding out and recording the traditions of the common people was
because some of their roots were from the common people themselves. Most folklorists
considered themselves to be cultured, and the people that they were collecting folklore from to
be uneducated. In the first chapter of her collection Some West Sussex Superstitions Lingering in
1868, folklorist Charlotte Latham wrote that “… superstitious prejudices … [grow] up with us at
a time when they take the fastest hold and make the most lasting impressions, become so
interwoven into our very constitutions, that the strongest good sense is required to disengage
ourselves from them. No wonder, therefore, that the lower people retain them their whole lives
through, since their minds are not invigorated by a liberal education, …”21 Latham is making a
clear distinction between herself and those from whom she has collected her folklore materials.

19 Anna Laura Lepschy and Giulio Lepschy, The Italian Language Today (New York: New Amsterdam Books,
1988), 34-38.
21 Charlotte Latham, “Some West Sussex Superstitions Lingering in 1868,” The Folk-Lore Record 1, no. 1, (1878):
The folklorist has managed to rise above her superstitions, whereas the uneducated ‘lower people’ are unable to do so. Latham also shows a tone of incredulity when some educated people still retain superstitions. “I have heard even well-educated persons confess, not quite without a dash of superstitious belief, to having borne part in this strange ceremony.”\(^{22}\) She uses similar language four other times in her collection. This is indicative of how even the educated people still had roots in the world of folklore and superstition.

Yet these cultured folklorists had a certain respect for the uneducated common people and their knowledge, as is evidenced by their interest in said knowledge. With their increased importance, the ways of life of the common people were exciting. Folklorists were partly motivated by a desire to record their own history, explore their own roots.

However, these same factors which made the common people more interesting to study were also having a detrimental effect on their storehouse of knowledge, which in turn is what made folklorists intensify efforts to collect that knowledge. The most often cited reason for collecting folklore was that it had to be preserved before it disappeared forever. In the preface to his book *Notes on the Folk-Lore of the Northern Counties of England and the Borders*, William Henderson wrote “that old habits and customs, old laws and sayings, old beliefs and superstitions, which have held their ground in the universal mind from the remotest antiquity, are fast fading away and perishing.”\(^{23}\) Many folklorists echoed his sentiments in the prefaces to their own collections and books. Folklorists frequently commented on how important it was that they were making these collections now while they still could, and folklore journals often encouraged members to go out and collect folklore.

\(^{22}\) Ibid., 31.
The main blame for the decline and disappearance of folklore rested with changing times. Due to the aforementioned modernizing/homogenizing effects of language, education, and the increasing control and influence of the national government on the entirety of the nation, regional traditions were losing their emphasis. By its very nature, many of the details of folklore are regional. Folklore sometimes evolves around natural objects like mountains or bodies of water, and can be influenced by things like climate. Folklore could also be built up around a person’s occupation, ways of doing things, or daily tasks. Folklore of that nature isn’t easily transferable from one locality to another. Rather than a book on the folklore of England, one sees publications such as *Notes on the Folk-Lore of the Northern Counties of England and the Borders*.

In many ways, these modernizing nationalistic factors were crushing regional folklore, making parents less likely to pass on their traditions. One of the ways that this manifested itself was through the decline of regional languages and dialects. A lot of the folklore of the people was tied into their language, and with local languages and dialects becoming less and less important, so too the traditions that would have been related in those languages were less likely to be passed on.

In the preface to *Northern Counties of England and the Borders*, Henderson cited two reasons for the decline in oral traditions being passed on. The first of these reasons was “the more generally diffused education of the people, and the fresh subjects of thought supplied to them in consequence.”

Folklore involved a lot of traditions, superstitions, and tales, which, if thought about logically, often don’t make any sense. For example, why should it be unlucky to encounter a black cat? And furthermore, why should subsequently throwing an old iron nail at
that black cat ward off evil?\textsuperscript{25} At the end of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, with mandatory schooling, more of the common people were becoming educated. With education, people were more likely to think critically about their traditions and superstitions, and perhaps come to the conclusion that black cats don’t really have any correlation to unlucky events.

Therefore, education contributed to a slowly growing feeling among the common people that their traditions were backwards and deficient. Sometimes, when folklorists would go collecting, the people would pretend that they didn’t know any folklore. \textit{The Handbook of Folklore} suggested that “…it is the first instinct of the folk to deny all knowledge of superstitious practice, out-of-the-way customs, or curious legends. They are afraid of being laughed at.”\textsuperscript{26} Now embarrassed by their traditions, the common people were sometimes reluctant to relate them to outsiders. This trend also affected the passing on of their traditions to their offspring. Since they now felt that their customs had less merit, they were no longer worth passing down. By educating the common people, the state was contributing to the decline of the passing on of folklore.

The second reason that Henderson gives for the decline of folklore being passed on was “the migration of families which has taken place since the working of collieries (coal mines) and the extension of railways.”\textsuperscript{27} Today, we would call this the Industrial Revolution. In the latter half of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, one finds large numbers of people moving around, migrating to find work and moving to cities and industrial centers. With improved roads and travelling conditions, it was easier to get around than ever before. As previously mentioned, folklore is often tied to

\begin{thebibliography}{10}
\bibitem{Gomme} George Gomme, ed., \textit{The Handbook of Folklore} (1887; repr., Germany: Kraus Reprint Limited, 1967), 168.
\end{thebibliography}
things like regions and occupations, and when people entered new locations and took up new jobs, they were no longer in direct contact with the folklore that had been specifically tied to their home region. This too made it less likely that they would transmit these traditions to their descendants.

The pressing need to collect folklore that was caused by modernization wasn’t restricted to Europe. These changes were happening on a global scale. In a proposal on how to best preserve folklore in Asia, a member of the Royal Asiatic Society said at the Congress of Orientalists “That the collection, interpretation, and publication of the proverbial literature, songs, and folk-lore of the East is urgent at the present time, when Oriental society is in a transition state.” The irony of this, both abroad and at home, was that these transitions that were causing the transmission of folklore to decline were being caused by the same class of people that were trying to save these traditions. This concept of trying to preserve what you are helping to destroy is easy to see abroad, yet it had just as great an effect in the home countries of these educated people, albeit more subtle. It is no coincidence that alongside attempts to educate the uneducated and better the life of peasants, one sees efforts to preserve the culture of those uneducated, poor peasants.

This all contributed to a larger trend, that the impact of a person’s family, parents, and locality was decreasing, and being replaced by the increasing power of the state. A nation is a contrived entity, and in the process of building a nation, the state chooses certain traditions to represent itself. The nation building process dampened regionalism and regional folklore in

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favor of the greater nation. Regional folklore was essentially being replaced by a national folklore.

However, at the same time that nationalistic and modernistic forces were destroying regionalism, this regional folklore was being used to bolster nationalism. Part of nationalism was defining exactly what it was that composed a nation. A common language, a shared history, geographic proximity, a central government of sorts. Part of the answer was that the people make up the nation. But what are the people? How does one define them? Folklore contributed to nation building by helping to establish a national character. A good example of this would be the flamenco in Spain. Originally more of an Andalusian tradition, it rose in popularity during the latter half of the 19th century, becoming representative of Spanish culture even in regions where it hadn’t originated.\(^{31}\)

However, while using folklore to establish a national character, folklorists chose to look at certain aspects over others. They tended to look at everything that they collected in a positive manner. It was rare to find folklorists being critical of the material that they collected about the folk. They were trying to show how the folk fit into the nation, and negative aspects of folklore didn’t really have a place in that mindset.\(^{32}\)

By using folklore to help build the nation, folklorists were choosing to focus on their past, as opposed to the present or the future. In *The Past is a Foreign Country*, David Lowenthal discusses the benefits and the value of the past, and some of those benefits apply to folklore as well. A nation’s folklore could help provide them with a sense of identity. Using folklore to supplement the nation’s history would give them a richer heritage, which could lend to their

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\(^{31}\) For more on the interplay between nationalistic and regionalistic tendencies, see Stéphane Gerson’s *The Pride of Place: Local Memories & Political Culture in Nineteenth-Century France* (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 2003).

prestige and lineage. Folklore also provided a sense of continuity, that they’d been there developing these traditions for a long time. Perhaps it gave them comfort that they might be there a long time thereafter as well.33

In *Invention of Tradition*, Eric Hobsbawn wrote that “the very appearance of movements for the defense or revival of traditions … indicates” a break in continuity. With the establishment of folklore societies and journals to preserve folklore, folklorists acknowledged that folklore was disappearing. Yet folklore wasn’t disappearing completely. Rather, folklore was changing, as it always had. There certainly were traditions and superstitions that were disappearing, and that is what folklorists wanted to collect and record before it was gone forever.

While the fear of folklore disappearing forever was one of the direct reasons for the increased folkloric activity, the reason why it was important to collect this folklore was also important. Folklorists wanted to use folklore to better understand the lower classes, themselves, and humanity. However, in order for their efforts to be recognized and taken seriously, folklore had to grow from being an amateur’s hobby into a respected field. To gain this respect, many folklorists emphasized the establishment of folklore as a science. The first step in that process would be the establishment of a set of standards and guidelines for collectors and interpreters of folklore.

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Chapter 2 – The Pursuit of Folklore

In order for folklorists to achieve their objectives, they needed to be able to collect and analyze folklore. This may seem to be the obvious function of the folklorist. However, the end of the 19th century is when folklore really began to develop as an academic field. The folklorists of this time period were trying to codify and standardize the folklore collection processes, to make it into a science. This organized collection of folklore was an outgrowth of the primacy of science. In the 19th century, ideas of science, rationalism, and the scientific method were beginning to hold more sway in many fields and disciplines. Thus, folklorists were also pushing to establish folklore as a science. One needed to have evidence in order to make scientific statements, and the evidence of the folklorist was the folklore that he or others collected.  

However, in order for collections to be useful and comparable with one another, folklore needed to be collected in a uniform way. Therefore, folklorists needed to establish a set of standards, something which hadn’t existed before.

Over the course of the 19th century, many fields and disciplines worked towards becoming professionally organized. In science, this developed through scientists becoming more specialized in certain fields and the increasing amount of research being done in universities. Scientists also worked on training new members to carry on their work.

The effects of professionalization and standardization had a profound impact on the newly forming human or social sciences. As mentioned in the previous chapter, these changes affected the practice of history by leading historians to focus more on the doings of the state and

36 James A. Winders, European Culture Since 1848: From Modern to Postmodern and Beyond (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 19.
on written documents. Similar effects could also be seen in the fields like linguistics, sociology, anthropology, and psychology. These new fields were looking to create themselves on a scientific basis, so that their results could be taken with a degree of seriousness. The attitude of having a scientific foundation intensified as the reputation of science grew over the course of the 19th century.  

Folklore was no exception to this trend, as it too attempted to establish itself on a scientific basis. The development of standards and guidelines were important to the field of folklore, for they helped give form to the increased levels of folkloric activity. The issue of fidelity to the sources was of great concern to folklorists, leading to a large emphasis on the reliability of collected information, how it had been recorded, and where it came from. There were also ideas of what kind of qualities would be helpful in order for a folklorist to be effective, and distinctions were made between collectors and interpreters of folklore, as well as between active and passive collectors. There was a great variety of sources for folklore, and there were many opinions on whom it was best to collect from. A folklorist also had to account for the challenge of people denying having any knowledge of folklore, as well as specific issues related to the collection of folktales. Lastly, once a folklorist had located a source of willing information, there was the issue of how to best extract the desired folklore. Some advocated asking a series of questions, though other methods, such as simply engaging them in conversation and recording whatever was heard, were also acceptable.

One of the most important of these standards was that a folklorist should record things as close as possible to the way it was related to him. Previously, collectors would sometimes alter

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38 James A. Winders, European Culture Since 1848: From Modern to Postmodern and Beyond (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 19.
folktales so that they sounded better. Now, however, such adjustments would have been viewed as a serious departure from the norm, vastly lessening the value of the collection. In his paper *Notes on Folk-Tales*, published in the first issue of the *Folk-Lore Record*, folklorist W. R. S. Ralston wrote that “the temptation to alter, to piece together, and to improve, is one which many minds find extremely seductive; but yielding to it deprives the result of any value, except for the purpose of mere amusement.” Altering collected materials was altering the evidence, and with the emphasis on making folklore into a science so prevalent, tampering with the evidence would make the collected materials worthless for drawing inferences from.

There were also efforts to develop ways to effectively collect folklore from the common people. In 1880, French folklorist Paul Sébillot wrote a “questionnaire” outlining the important qualities a collector should have, and how collectors should proceed in their collection process. In his own collection efforts, he had felt that “for want of some scheme, … I have doubtless missed many curious facts, or neglected to obtain sufficiently definite explanations from my story-tellers.” He thought that a short guide to field collectors would be in order, so as to help others avoid the difficulties that he had encountered. The questionnaire was well received, being translated into English, Spanish, and perhaps even other languages.

Sébillot wrote that “it is no easy task to collect folk-lore. Tact, patience, and sympathy are required. Unless the confidence of the narrator be fully gained, and all ridicule of his belief and superstitions carefully avoided, nothing will be obtained but made-up stories and irrelevant facts.” These qualities that Sébillot was advocating for indicate a desire for a certain level of

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41 Ibid.
professionalism for folklorists. By developing these attributes, folklorists would not only have an easier time collecting folklore, they would also help enhance the reputation of all folklorists as respectable and competent people.

Sébillot also wrote that “another condition of success … [was] a knowledge of the local dialect.”  

As previously mentioned, the language in which folklore was related was often an integral part of the folklore itself. Some of the originality and uniqueness of the folklore would inevitably become lost in the translation. Additionally, if the local dialect was unknown, the folklorist might be forced to ask the narrator for the meaning of certain terms, and “the storyteller, if perpetually stopped to explain these, loses his thread or endeavours to make his meaning clear in the, to him unfamiliar, literary idiom. The raciness and verve of his narration are thus lost, and a colourless translation takes the place of a spirited original.”  

Thus knowing the local dialect increased the authenticity of the materials collected.

Not everything that a collector heard would necessarily be worthwhile, and patience had to be exercised yet again. Sébillot thought that it was best for a collector to record everything that they heard, from tales and songs to riddles and customs, for everything had the potential for being useful later on. He wrote that “for one complete and interesting tale, a dozen well nigh worthless ones will be heard. The narrator, as a rule a poor judge in such matters, is seldom aware of the really curious points; and it is well to let him exhaust his stock, taking good and bad together, and leaving the sifting to a later time.”  

This is an interesting perspective on the view of the narrator of folklore. Sébillot is saying that the narrator of folklore isn’t able to distinguish what portions of his own knowledge were of interest to the folklorist, and he should just be

42 Ibid.
43 Ibid., 196-197
44 Ibid., 197
allowed to say everything that he knows. This is the view of a cultured folklorist looking down at an uneducated narrator. It is an interesting contrast between the value placed on the knowledge of the narrator versus his ability to relate that knowledge.

Sébillot also noted that the sifting of collected materials should be left to a later time, and not done on the spot. There were ideas that not only should interpretations not be done at the same time as collections, but that perhaps it needed to be done by different people. In *Notes on Folk-Tales*, Ralston wrote that “the functions of a collector and a commentator differ widely, and it is seldom that the one is capable of accomplishing the other's special work.” Those who were collecting would require “patience, industry, and conscientiousness,” while a person who wanted to use collections to make inferences and learn from them would additionally need “wide and deep learning, matured judgment, and well trained skill.”

Though they were essential to the process, Ralston believed that those collecting folk-tales (and by extension folklore) should not be automatically entrusted to interpret and extrapolate from their findings. Such work should be left to other, more qualified folklorists. Collector H. Rivett-Carnac began her notes on folklore from India by writing that “though the scientific folklorists are few, there are many who might contribute interesting jottings, … It is with this hope that the following anecdotes have been collected.”

*The Handbook of Folklore*, a publication which was put out as a guide to field collectors in 1887 by the English Folklore Society, notes that: “the best collecting is that which is done by accident, by living among the people and garnering up the sayings and stories they let fall from

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time to time.”  However, that still wouldn’t give a person a complete collection – for that, one
would have to actively seek out folklore.  This is indicative of the development of two types of
collectors – those who collected because they were in the area for other reasons, and those who
went out for the sole purpose of collecting folklore.  This division was also related to the
distinction between collectors and commentators.

Of course, these weren’t iron clad categories, and they overlapped in many instances.
William Henderson, author of Notes on the Folklore of the Northern Counties of England and
the Borders, was both a collector and a commentator.  Henderson wrote that he initially became
a folklorist because his imagination “was bound up with the sayings and doings which gave zest
to the life of [his] forefathers”  He would carefully note down “every morsel of folklore that
came before [him].”  As well as collecting materials, Henderson would also give reasons for
why certain lore developed the way that it did.  For example, when discussing death omens “such
as the death-watch, the croaking raven, or the solitary magpie,” Henderson notes that he is not
surprised “that when the mind is impressed by the awe of sickness and impending death in our
household we are prone to notice and brood over sounds and sights which seem to connect
themselves with our anxieties and sorrows.”

Another collector of folklore, George Stephens, recounted some of his experiences in a
letter to the Folk-Lore Society: “When I collected Swedish ballads and folk-tales, I did it chiefly
in Stockholm, often in poor-houses, almshouses, &c., dropping in to the old people often on a
quiet Sunday, telling them such tales, and thus getting at their variants or old stories-all over

48 Ibid.
49 William Henderson, Notes on the Folk-Lore of the Northern Counties of England and the Borders, 2nd ed. (1879;
50 Ibid., ix.
51 Ibid., 48.
coffee, to which I invited the delighted people. There are a thousand ways, in town and country (in cottages)."\textsuperscript{52} Here we see Stephens describe where he was collecting, who he was collecting from, and we get a feeling for the laid back atmosphere that was created while he was collecting.

One of the convenient things about folklore was that almost anybody could be a source for it. In his address to the International Folklore Congress of 1891, president of the English Folklore Society Andrew Lang said that “In these studies of ours every one may help us; from the mother who observes the self-developed manners and the curious instincts of her children, to the clergyman who can record the superstitions of his flock, or the rural usages that survive from a dateless antiquity.”\textsuperscript{53} Although a collector could ask virtually anybody to tell them of folklore, certain types of people were considered to be better sources than others. When first beginning collection in an area, the \textit{Handbook} advised speaking with the parish clerk, sexton, or village innkeeper. Through them, one would be able to determine the people in the area most likely to have knowledge of folklore, particularly the elderly.\textsuperscript{54} One of the best situations for a collector would be if they could get an older person to tell tales of “old times.” The collector could then guide the person to talk about folkloric topics of interest, like annual festivals and the customs connected to them, old sayings, and local legends.\textsuperscript{55}

In addition to the elderly, it was usually the “lowest of the people” who kept folklore alive best – such as chimney-sweepers, brick-makers, besom-makers, hawkers, tinkers, and other professions where work was irregular. Many villages also had a doctress, who would combine

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\item[\textsuperscript{54}] George Gomme, ed., \textit{The Handbook of Folklore} (1887; repr., Germany: Kraus Reprint Limited, 1967), 170-171.
\item[\textsuperscript{55}] Ibid., 172.
\end{itemize}
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an element of superstition with her remedies.\textsuperscript{56} Another good place to go was the school during recess, where one could see what games the children played as well as ask them about other local legends.\textsuperscript{57} In Germany, schoolmasters would regularly ask their children to stand up and tell of any tales that they had heard at home, thereby allowing many versions of the tales to be recorded. In 1889 Karl Blind wrote a letter to the English Folk-Lore Society proposing that they initiate the same process in England.\textsuperscript{58} In a similar vein, Stephens wrote in his letter that “I am sure that lots of people, clergy and ladies, and school-mistresses and masters, and others, could soon pick up rich harvests.”\textsuperscript{59}

A collector could also put a query in the local newspaper, which would usually elicit a reply. Sometimes the newspaper staff themselves were quite knowledgeable about local folklore.\textsuperscript{60} When among uncivilized peoples, the process was considered to be relatively the same. However, one had to be careful, for the savage might give the answer that they thought the collector wanted to hear rather than what they themselves actually believed.\textsuperscript{61}

Although folklore was more prevalent among the lower classes, it was sometimes considered harder for a collector to question them directly, for they didn’t necessarily understand the concept of superstition. For them, it was part of their way of life. In those cases, it was better to ask their employers, who were somewhat more cultured.\textsuperscript{62} In this vein, the \textit{Handbook} considered it good to question people like lawyers, doctors, land-agents, gentlemen-farmers – educated people who had extensive contact with the uneducated due to their professions. The

\begin{footnotes}
\item[56] Ibid., 170-171.
\item[57] Ibid.
\item[61] Ibid., 172.
\item[62] Ibid., 171.
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clergy were sometimes not the best people to ask, because they tended not to believe in superstition.63

It is interesting to note this idea of using intermediaries to elicit folklore alongside the contradictory idea of obtaining information as close to verbatim as possible. The use of intermediaries may relate back to the idea that the people the folklorist questioned might tell the folklorist what they thought the folklorist wanted to hear, and not what they themselves actually believed. However, if someone they would be more familiar with, such as an intermediary, did the inquiry, then the person would be more likely to tell the intermediary what they truly believed. Data directly from the source was considered crucial, and the best way to get quality data would be when the subject was at ease. Some folklorists may have felt comfortable conversing with the lower classes, and if the folklorist was at ease, then the peasant would likely be at ease as well. Folklorists less comfortable with this direct approach may have been the ones to utilize intermediaries. Either way, if the parties involved were comfortable, it would allow the folklorist to be more exact in their recording, and thus the data collected would be more reliable. Ralston further emphasized this point in *Notes on Folk-Tales*, writing that “it is impossible to impress too strongly on collectors the absolute necessity of accurately recording the stories they hear, and of accompanying them by ample references for the sake of verification.”64

Sébillot continues in his questionnaire by writing that one of the difficulties that a folklorist might face is that “Men will frequently protest their ignorance, and assert that tales, traditions, and songs have completely died out from their part of the country.”65 There were two

63 Ibid., 169-170.
main reasons for this phenomenon. The first was that they genuinely believed that any knowledge that they possessed wasn’t really folklore, or that they actually didn’t remember any folklore. With work, the persistent folklorist could aid the memory, and would find that a man who claims “that he knows nothing, is in reality a mine of information.” The other cause was the previously mentioned trend of a more educated populace feeling that their lore no longer had a place in the modern world. Again, by showing patience and persistence, folklorists could overcome this obstacle and convince the common people that they truly were interested in their knowledge.

_The Handbook of Folklore_ noted the same problem. Of course, one could just ask people to tell them about folklore. However, there were certain problems associated with that approach. When asked directly about folklore and superstition, many people would simply not comment on it. Sometimes people were ashamed or embarrassed that they knew these things, and were reluctant to divulge information, or would deny that they knew anything at all. This kind of attitude was in itself a contributing factor to the decline in folklore being passed on. A source might also have been reluctant to divulge information depending on the circumstances that they were in. An old woman who once told a ghost story to Miss Charlotte Burne later denied all knowledge of the tale when asked about it by the clergyman’s wife. The old woman apparently didn’t want the clergyman’s wife to think of her as a superstitious or backwards person.

In folktales, a more specialized area of folklore, this problem was more prevalent. People sometimes considered them childish, and thought they’d be laughed at for telling tales. One had to persist and be patient, putting them in a comfortable atmosphere so that they wouldn’t be

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66 Ibid.
68 Ibid., 169.
ashamed to tell tales. In order to get them started, it was sometimes considered a good idea for
the collector to tell them a story. “Nothing is more contagious than tale-telling among those who
can tell tales.”69 One folklorist, Ella Leather, followed this practice by priming the storyteller
with a story of her own: “like travelers of another sort, it is well to carry samples, for your old
countryman loves to hear a story: having heard, he longs to tell you one as good, or better.”70

Folktales were important because they “…embod[ied] the ideas of the world, and the
nature of things entertained by those who [told] them.”71 Folktales were considered an offshoot
of the mental state of people, which was exhibited through customs and superstitions. Therefore,
tales would preserve customs and superstitions through description or allusion to them.72

Once one had established who to ask about folklore, the next concern was how to ask
them. The Handbook of Folklore suggested that when collecting folklore, one should record the
“1. Locality – town, county, country; tribe, village, or settlement; 2. Date when last observed or
collected; 3. Whether still in use or related; 4. From whom collected – name, occupation, social
position.”73 Without this information, the value of the collection would be diminished, though
not knowing these details shouldn’t stop a collector from recording it. The Handbook also
provided a series of questions that could be used to lead a source to relate the desired
information. As a sample, under the heading of Lakes, Pools, Wells, and Springs, the Handbook
suggests that you ask and discover: “20. Are there spirits of pools? give their names. 21. Are
there spirits of wells? give their names. …”74 All told, the Handbook contains seven hundred

69 Ibid., 114-115.
70 Ella Leather, The Folk-Lore of Herefordshire (Hereford, 1912): xvi, quoted in Richard M. Dorson, The British
72 Ibid., 114-115.
73 Ibid., 167.
74 Ibid., 13-14.
eighty four questions meant to guide a person in collecting folklore, so that they wouldn’t miss anything.

Sébillot’s questionnaire had a similar aspect to it. After giving advice about collecting folklore, he proceeded to provide people with guidelines, topics, and questions about folklore that could be asked of the common people. He divided his questionnaire into several categories, one of which was historical traditions. The historical traditions section contained the following questions: “1. What tales are current concerning the former inhabitants of the country? By what names are they known? 2. Is there any memory of former battles? 3. Are stories told about the old houses of the district? Is there any reminiscence of feudal rights? 4. What are the legends current about the historic personages of the district?” These questions were designed to elicit information about local personages and happenings, and are thus a further indication of folklorist’s interest in using folklore as a way to record the history of the common people.

Yet questions weren’t the answer to everything. A book reviewer in *The Folk-Lore Journal* commented that in order to collect folklore, “the collector must proceed as one of the people. No system of question and answer; no cut and dried formula or method of proceedings is applicable.” Questions may have been good as a guideline, but they were no substitute for truly interacting with the people.

These were the issues that folklorists discussed in their efforts to establish folklore as a science. Fidelity to the source materials, who to collect folklore from, how to collect it from them, and even the demeanor of the folklorists themselves while collecting – all were subject to debate in this process. However, in order for these standards to develop and have any value and

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effect in the field, they needed to be heard and debated. The formation of folklore journals and societies in the 1880’s helped fulfill this need.
Chapter 3 – Folklorist Infrastructures

The development of folklore societies and journals at the end of the 19th century was an outgrowth of the need to make folklore into a science. Folklore societies and journals played an important role in the formation, and even more so in the dissemination, of all the aforementioned standards for the collection of folklore in the field. The societies and journals constituted the building of an infrastructure for communication between folklorists, giving folklorists the capability to share information in ways and quantities that couldn’t have been done in previous generations. This helped folklorists to accumulate enough information on any particular topic, as well as to disseminate their findings to the general public.

The folklore societies tended to fulfill three main functions: they advocated the collection of folklore, they facilitated communication between folklorists, and they aided the dissemination of folklore works and standards. This gave folklorists an easier means through which to share and exchange collected materials and ideas, especially these ideas of how to best collect folklore.

Prior to the folklore societies and journals, folklore was certainly being collected. Books were being published about the customs and traditions of places, and many newspapers, magazines, and journals had articles or sections about folklore in them. However, there were no organized efforts to collect or organize folklore. An important part of the folklore movement was turning the study of folklore into a science, and the structure that folklore societies provided greatly contributed to that.

The idea for an English Folklore Society was first proposed in the journal Notes and Queries in 1876. The idea was revisited again in 1877 by W. J. Thoms, with an invitation for any interested parties to contact him in order to form the society. A few months later, in 1878, the society was effectively formed. The English Folklore Society was mainly dominated by
anthropological folklorists. The primary purpose of the Folklore Society was to collect and preserve folklore, the first article of the Rules of the English Folklore Society stating that: “I. The Folklore Society has for its object the preservation and publication of Popular Traditions, Legendary Ballads, Local Proverbial Sayings, Superstitions, and Old Customs (British and foreign), and all subjects relating to them.” The fact that it served as a hub for folklorists to exchange information and ideas was an extremely beneficial byproduct of that primary purpose.

The English Folklore Society was one of the first folklore societies to be established, and thus was influential in the formation of other societies as well. In the ensuing years, more and more folklore societies and journals were founded. A South African Folk-Lore Journal was published from 1879-1881. 1882 saw the beginning of Swedish and French folklore journals, and the foundation of folklore societies in Spain, Portugal, and Norway. The list goes on.

One of the first Spanish folklore societies, El Folklore Andaluz, was founded in 1882. In the introduction to the first volume of its journal, written by one of its founders, Antonio Machado y Alvarez, it frequently referred to the English Folklore Society, an indication of its influence. In that same introduction, the reason for the collection of folklore was explicitly stated. The society considered “the materials that it [was] going to collect as indispensable elements for the scientific reconstruction of the until now unwritten native history.” Here again we see that they are interested in something that nobody had been interested in before – the culture of the common people. Also of note are the words ‘scientific reconstruction.’ In line

with the attitudes of the time, El Folklore Andaluz attempted to utilize scientific methods in order to interpret the folklore materials that they were collecting.

The introduction goes on to say that they wanted anything and everything related to the topic of folklore, from anyone at all. They wanted their society to have “representatives and workers in all villages and hamlets, and, if possible, on all estates, farmhouses, and settlements; that wherever there is at least a rustic Spaniard, there is knowledge and feelings and desires that we care to know and bring to life.”\(^{80}\) Again we see the notion that everybody had the potential to contribute their knowledge to the study of folklore.

That first issue of *El Folklore Andaluz* had a declaration inviting and encouraging other regions in Spain to form folklore societies as well. These regional folklore societies would be loosely united in a larger entity, a Spanish folklore society. The dominating factor for inclusion was that the locales where these folklore societies were being established speak Spanish. Thus, the invitation was also extended to Spanish colonies where Spanish was spoken, such as the Canary Islands, Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines. Two years later, in 1884, Galician and Castilian folklore societies were established. However, not everything ran smoothly. The journal *El Folklore Andaluz* did not last long, running only from March of 1882 until March 1883, when it was incorporated into a Frexnense folklore journal, which itself only lasted until December 1883.\(^{81}\) While discussing folkloric activity in Spain, the English Folklore Society

\(^{80}\) Ibid., 8.

commented that the Spanish folklorists were making great strides, “notwithstanding the somewhat lukewarm support they are getting from their countrymen.”  

Italy had an independent folklore journal called *Archivo per lo studio delle tradizioni popolari*, which was first published in 1882. Its preface stated that its purpose was to give “scholars of different nations … a means of communicating and disseminating their studies and collections.” *Archivo* also hoped to “highlight the various forms of oral literature and the multiple manifestations of physical and moral lives of people in general and that of Italy in particular.”  

The Society for the Study of Popular Traditions in Italy was founded later in 1884. The purpose of the society, as stated in the first article of their rules, was “the collection, publication and study of folk traditions in Italy: … songs, legends, fairy tales, novels, short stories, riddles, customs, ceremonies, … and all that is preserved in oral tradition and written records about life past and present of the Italian people.” The society was to be based out of Palermo. 

The English and Spanish folklore societies differed significantly in their structure. The English Folklore Society was a single entity that encompassed all the counties in England. The Spanish Folklore Society, on the other hand, was more like a loose association of regional folklore societies. One of the reasons for this difference was the regional element of folklore. Even though the details of folklore are focused on a regional level, folklore manifests itself on a

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national scale as well, as is evidenced by the creation of national folklore societies. The difference in the structure of the English and Spanish Folklore Societies derives from different emphases on nationalism and regionalism. The English Folklore Society had more of an emphasis on being a national center of folklore, while the fragmented Spanish Folklore Society developed from a combination of a variety of regional folklore centers.

As previously mentioned, the main way that the folklore societies interacted with the world, and within themselves, was through the journals that they published. These journals often shared the same name as their societies, and they published collections of and articles about folklore. The journals also served as an important communication tool between folklorists. They often had sections in which readers could send in queries, asking if anybody had heard of such and such a custom, or if anybody could send them information regarding a certain tradition or folktale.

The journals would also serve as a source of news for what was going on in the folklore world. They gave reviews of folklore books that were recently published, talked about where folklore could be found in non-exclusive folklore sources, and commented on the publications and doings of other folklore societies. Advances in communication allowed folklorists the opportunity to amass the data that they needed to write articles and publish their collections. The folklore journals helped here as well by exhorting members to send in any folklore that they had collected.

"The Council hope that the Members will always make a point of communicating to the Honorary Secretary any scraps, even the smallest, relating to Folk-Lore. Such scraps may not be used immediately on all occasions, but they will be classified and arranged for use
when opportunity shall arise. As a parallel to this, Members who are engaged in making
collections of any particular branch of Folk-Lore are invited to communicate with the
Honorary Secretary, so that at the first opportunity their objects may be made known to
the other Members, thereby creating co-operation in the work of the Society.”

In this way the folklore society hoped to maximize the usability of collected folklore. In
addition to help from the journals, one frequently finds authors of folklore collections thanking
their friends for sending them information, without which their publications would have been impossible.

One of the main reasons that all these societies and journals were sprouting up at the end
of the 19th century was the fear of losing folklore due to onrushing modernity. During this time,
folklorists often expressed concern that if they did not hurry and record folklore, it would soon be gone. Yet this was hardly a new issue. In the same letter in which he introduced the term folk-lore back in 1846, Thoms expressed these same concerns, that if folklore wasn’t collected now, it would soon be too late. However, as the century progressed, the pressure of these modernizing forces increased, leading to a need of folklore to be collected and recorded faster and faster. It is possible that organized forms and methods of collecting folklore were developed in order to keep up with the need for a quicker job.

By printing articles and books about the collection of folklore, the societies helped to
form and disseminate the folklore standards discussed in chapter two. Both the English and Spanish folklore journals printed Sébillot’s questionnaire, so that their readers would benefit from it. Alfred Nutt, who translated the questionnaire for the *Folk-Lore Record*, wrote that he

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thought it “would be of interest to those readers of the Folk-Lore Record who have not seen the
original.” The very publication of a work like The Handbook of Folklore demonstrates a desire
by the society to influence and aid the collector of folklore.

The English Folk-Lore Journal was also actively used by some of its members in the
1880’s to discuss and flesh out scientific terminology and definitions that could be used in the
field of folklore. The discussion was begun by then secretary of the Folklore Society George
Gomme in the Notes section of the journal. Gomme wrote that: “It seems a little curious that
after six years of existence for the Folk-Lore Society we should not yet have satisfactorily settled
the proper meaning of the term "Folk-lore." … there can be no doubt that the subject wants
taking up in this way; and I shall be happy to lead off the discussion in these columns by printing
my own definition of folk-lore, if by so doing I can obtain the opinions of other Members of the
Society, and by this means thrash the question out.” (Interestingly, Gomme was inspired to
write this from the French folklore oriented journal Mélusine, which had put out a call to
determine “the terminology of the science of comparative mythology,” a field which some
found indistinguishable from folklore. One of Gomme’s purposes in this was to make that
distinction between folklore and what he felt were other fields.)

Gomme’s call was taken up by other members, and multiple definitions of folklore were
proposed to the readership of the journal, mostly under the heading of The Science of Folk-Lore.
This is one of the clearest examples of how the societies and journals were advocating for the
establishment of folklore as a science. It is also an excellent example of how the journal

88 Ibid.
facilitated easy communication between folklorists. The annual report at the end of the next year concluded that while “Differences of opinion exist as to the scope and functions of the study, … the writers are practically unanimous that folk-lore should be henceforth recognised as an independent science.” Folklorists in the 1880’s were committed to establishing folklore as a science, and the standardization of folkloric activity would be pursued in this effort.

A good example of the trend towards standardization can be found in the English Folklore Society’s efforts to establish a uniform tabulation of folktales, (mainly those that had already been collected,) a way of organizing them with the essential details. The purpose of the tabulation was to establish a “means of arriving at a standard scheme of classification” The council of the Folklore Society felt that there was “great importance of this branch of the Society’s work-a work that will furnish materials for the scientific study of Folk-Lore, …”

The following is an example of a tabulated folktale from the *Folk-Lore Journal* of 1889:

**Title of Story.**—The Lioness and the Antelope.

**Dramatis Persone.**—Lioness.—Her cub.—Antelope.

**Abstract of Story.**—In old times there was a lioness, and she was with young, and bore a cub; and when she had borne her cub she was seized with hunger seven days. And she said, "I will go outside and look for food." And when she went outside she saw an antelope feeding. And she crept up to it. And the antelope turned its head and saw the lioness, and said to her, "Welcome, cousin!" And the lioness was ashamed, so that she did not seize it; because it called her cousin.

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Alphabetical List of Incidents.

Animals, kindness for each other.

Antelope, calls itself cousin to lion.

Cousin, antelope considered as, to lion.

Lion, called cousin by antelope.


Nature of Collection,-whether:-

1. Original or translation.-Translation from Swahili.

2. If by word of mouth, state narrator's name.-Told to Dr. Steere by Munyi Khatibu, a native of Mtang'ata, a place on the mainland, opposite the island of Pemba.

3. Other particulars.

Special Points noted by the Editor of the above.--Nil.

Remarks by the Tabulator.-Nil.

(Signed) JANET KEY. 92

This tabulation exemplifies the attempt to establish folklore as a science. First, the tabulation required recording the title of the story, the people or entities involved, an abstract of the story, and an alphabetical list of the incidents. In addition to that, the tabulator needed to record where it was published, the nature of the collection, and any notes made by the editor. The recording of these details would allow subsequent viewers to get a brief understanding of the tale and give them the ability to quickly and easily make comparisons between different

folktales. Lastly, there was a space for the tabulator themselves to make any remarks about the tale or the collection of the tale that they deemed necessary or pertinent.

Another important aspect of the tabulation effort was that the society asked for members to volunteer their time to help complete the project. “…new workers are urgently needed to aid those already in the field, and thus help to bring the results of the Committee's plan more quickly before students of this important branch of Folk-Lore. The Committee cannot begin to classify and arrange until at all events all the principal collections of Folk-Tales are completely tabulated.”93 We see here that this was not a project for an individual folklorist; it was a job that would require many to be accomplished successfully. We again have the journal of the society being used to place this call for assistance to members. The English Folklore Society also pushed for their method to be adopted abroad. They wouldn’t have minded if others suggested improvement on it – the main idea was that there would be a uniform way of doing it. The idea was proposed to the attendees of the first International Folklore Congress in 1889, and was also proposed to other folklore societies.

Another scientifically oriented effort begun by the English Folklore Society was the compilation of a bibliography of folklore works. Such a bibliography would be useful in informing folklorists what had previously been done in the field, and thus what areas still needed collections and what avenues still needed to be explored. This effort was led by Gomme in his capacity as secretary of the society. Gomme wrote that the “ultimate object is to print an alphabetical list under authors names of all the books printed in English on Folk-Lore, and by means of a full, classified, and analytical index, to give a thorough guide to the Folk-Lore

literature of this country.” 94 Again we see this obsession with organizing folklore materials in a scientific way, in this case so that information could be found easily and used as stepping stones to other endeavors. Being aware of the work that had already been done in the field of folklore would make sure that future folklorists wouldn’t unnecessarily expend effort in areas that had already been explored, thus allowing them to pursue new ideas.

As with other folkloric projects, the compilation of a bibliography could not be effectively pursued by any one individual folklorist, and thus appeals were made to the general membership for assistance. “Members may aid this effort by sending full titles and contents of books as arranged in the specimen lists, or if they cannot do this, a simple short title with the author’s name will enable me to obtain particulars of the book.” 95 They soon began printing portions of the bibliography in the journal in order to obtain feedback. “The object of printing these sections in the Journal is to ensure correction of any errors, and the addition of titles not included by the Editor, and members may materially help the Society in this branch of its work.” 96 The success of the bibliographical project was based on active participation from numerous folklorists, and these folklorists were reached through the folklore society via its journal.

This enthusiasm for the collection of tales, the standardized organization of them, and the bibliographical initiative are indicative of the trends that were defining folklore at the end of the 19th century. These activities, part of the general increase in folkloric activity, could only have been successfully accomplished through vehicles such as folklore societies and journals. The

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95 Ibid.

societies and journals, whose stated purposes were the collection and preservation of folklore, provided a medium in which these group folkloric goals could be achieved. They were also instrumental in the creation and dissemination of standards for folklore collection, a development that was influenced by the rising scientific standards of the time. Thus by the end of the 19th century, a strong infrastructure for the study of folklore had been established in Europe.
Chapter 4 – Case Studies of Three Folklorists

An in depth look at some of the folklorists who were involved in the process of establishing folklore as a science will help illuminate some of the details that may have been lost in the bigger picture. This chapter will do a case study of three folklorists, one from each of the countries that this thesis is focusing on: George Laurence Gomme, from England, Antonio Machado y Alvarez (Demófilo), from Spain, and Giuseppe Pitré, from Italy. These three individuals were very active and influential folklorists, and one can obtain a better understanding of folklore events in these countries at the end of the 19th century by examining their lives and their contributions to the field of folklore. Each of them will be discussed in turn, with an emphasis on their personal motivations and how their actions contributed to the establishment of folklore as a science.

George Laurence Gomme, one of the founders of the English Folklore Society, was born in 1853. Gomme played an influential role in the society, acting as its honorary secretary from 1878 – 1885, its director from 1885 – 1890, and its President from 1890 – 1894. In addition to his efforts on behalf of the folklore society, he also served as a statistical officer and a clerk to the London County Council, was a fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, a member of the Anthropological Institute, and a lecturer at the London School of Economics, to name a few of his many activities. He also helped to edit the Camden Library and the journals The Antiquary and the Archaeological Review.

As a folklorist, Gomme was particularly interested in the prehistory of English village institutions, with a focus on early British man and how his racial roots could be traced back
through the surviving folklore of the people. Some of the books he published on this subject include *Primitive Folk Moots* and *Folk-Lore Relics of Early Village Life*. In *Primitive Folk Moots*, the first folklore book he published, Gomme first used the method of using current folklore to reconstruct past customs and traditions. He also had an interest in the history and government of London, which perhaps was either facilitated by or led to his positions on the London County Council. Like Gomme, many folklorists would have their own particular interests within the field.

Gomme was one of the strongest advocates for the establishment of folklore as a science, helping to make it characteristic of the folklore movement at the time. He once wrote that one of the first questions a folklorist should ask himself after completing work in the field was “What does my collection illustrate in the life of primitive man, and how, therefore, can it best be fitted in with what is already known?” This question shows us much about his thought processes. There is a purpose to collecting folklore; it’s not just done on a whim, or because you think it’s interesting. We want to be able to learn something, such as what this collection might tell us about primitive man. Gomme would also have the folklorist think about his findings in relation to other people’s collections and other folklorist’s opinions and theories. Both of these ideas are eminently scientific, and reflect a definite method in how one should go about being a folklorist. However, these two functions, that of collecting folklore materials and that of analyzing it, could be separated. There were many people who collected folklore or sent folklore to their folklorist

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101 Ibid.
friends without analyzing it, and conversely, folklorists would receive this information and utilize it not having gotten it firsthand.

In a paper that he read to the Society in 1898, Gomme set out a system of folklore comparison. Gomme believed it was more important to look for ethnological survivals in folk customs, beliefs, and rituals rather than in folk literature. He also sought to use folklore as an independent source to discover things about mankind, and not to be restricted within the boundaries of historical record. “Folklore should not be used to confirm already known facts derived from history. It is an independent science with its subject matter…”

Gomme saw folklore as encompassing the culture of the common people, a record of which was absent from mainstream history. Gomme felt that in order to compare modern savage customs to modern peasant customs, they both had to be traced back to their roots in ancient savagery. After that, he would map out the location of particular customs, and from the ensuing patterns, be able to follow folklore survivals from their current fragmented state to a racially separate, clear cut past. Though his methods were well thought of, the ideas he formulated with those methods were criticized.

The field of folklore was in a constant flux as folklorists were trying to establish exactly what folklore encompassed, and this was reflected in Gomme’s changing attitude towards what should and should not be included in folklore. The first annual report of the Folklore Society, which Gomme helped compose, gave a rather long list of what folklore should encompass:

“Folk-Lore … represents itself in … customs; superstitious associations with animals, birds, flowers, trees, and topographical objects, and with the events of human life; the belief in

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105 Ibid., 228-229.
witchcraft, fairies, and spirits; the traditional ballads and proverbial sayings incident to particular localities; the retention of popular names for hills, streams, caverns, springs, tumuli, fountains, fields, trees, &c., …”¹⁰⁶ As folklorists were still trying to identify what folklore would encompass, a rambling list like this wasn’t really so strange. Several years later in 1884, Gomme initiated a discussion in the pages of the Folk-Lore Journal as to what the exact definition of folklore should be. The definition that he himself put forth was that folklore was: “The science which treats of the survivals of archaic beliefs and customs in modern ages.”¹⁰⁷ By now Gomme felt that there was a distinct difference between folklore and anthropology, though many other folklorists disagreed with him. Gomme felt that folklore should be confined to “the lore of the uncultivated classes of a civilized state,” and should be treated differently from completely uncultured savages.¹⁰⁸ He was essentially more interested in the folklore that could be found in his own country than in folklore that could be found abroad, though he did do some comparative work with Indian peasants.¹⁰⁹ Gomme’s views in this vein were by no means shared by all folklorists.

In continuance of his definition, Gomme went on to categorize folklore into different sections. First was traditional narratives, which would encompass tales, ballads, songs and legends. Second was traditional customs, which covered customs, festivals, ceremonies, and games. The third section was superstitions and beliefs, and the fourth was folk-speech, which

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¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 226.
included sayings, nomenclature, proverbs, rhymes, and riddles.110 These categories were later used as a basis for *The Handbook of Folklore*, a publication which was put out by the Folklore Society as a guide to those collecting folklore. Gomme became the principal editor of the *Handbook* after the Folklore Society asked him to undertake the endeavor. The book was initially geared towards the collection of English folklore, again a reflection of Gomme’s interest and focus on the people of his homeland. However, a later edition of the *Handbook* prepared by Charlotte Burne was more conducive to usage overseas.111

Gomme was a leader in the effort to establish folklore as a science. As secretary of the society, Gomme initiated both the folktale tabulation and bibliography projects discussed in the previous chapter. Gomme was a proponent of finding folklore in places that it had previously been printed and making it known (in conjunction with the collection of new materials). To further the tabulation of this previously printed material, he included a section at the end of the *Handbook* geared towards this, entitled library work.112 It exhorted people to look through old collections of folklore and folktales and to record all the pertinent details in a uniform way, in accordance with the scientific leanings of the times.

One of his most climactic works was *Folk-Lore as an Historical Science*, written in 1908 eight years before his death. In the book, he attempted to show how history and folklore were interrelated. He wrote that “Custom, rite, and belief treated in this fashion [with analysis] become veritable monuments of history – a history too ancient to have been recorded in script,

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and too much an essential part of the folk-life to have been lost to tradition.” Gomme is again showing his belief here that folklore can be used to flesh out the history of the common people. Later on in the book, he writes that “Not only is it necessary to ascertain the proper position of each item of folklore in the culture area in which it is found, but it is also necessary to ascertain its scientific relationship to other items in the same area; … Before we can compare we must be certain that we are comparing like quantities.” Gomme is again emphasizing that folklore must be treated as a science.

However, folklorist Andrew Lang criticized Gomme’s book in a review for *Folklore*. Lang agreed that folklore could be used to show the prehistoric condition of the mind and prehistoric institutions. However, when it came to more modern history, he disagreed with Gomme. Gomme held that folklore could reveal facts and inklings about actual historic events. Lang countered this, saying that while folklore couldn’t be completely ignored, it wasn’t useful in recent history because it couldn’t prove any facts. It would need to be backed up by true historical evidence to be given any credence at all. In many instances, popular traditions could be proven to be nonsense by documentary evidence.115

Neither Gomme nor Lang was necessarily right or wrong. Folklorists were constantly proposing theories and disagreeing with each other. This was a healthy part of the process of academia and science, in which by this time folklore had a decent foothold. In turn, Gomme criticized the work of those like Lang and Jacobs who were producing fairy tale books geared

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114 Ibid.
towards children, saying that “the folk-tale loses much of its own charm now that it has become the sport of literature.”116

Gomme’s death in 1916 was much lamented by the Folklore Society. In one of the societies evening meetings, a resolution was passed honoring Gomme for his dedication to and efforts in folklore, a copy of which was sent to his widow, a folklorist in her own right. As well as an obituary, the journal also published a bibliography of all Gomme’s works shortly after his death.

Gomme was an important folklorist, having helped found the society and being at the forefront of the efforts to establish folklore as a science. In addition to that he had his own areas of focus, such as the idea of folklore as a historical science and the exploration of the folklore of the peasants in his own country. As folklore was a newly expanding academic field, there were many avenues for folklorists to explore and pursue, resulting in a wide range of opinions and theories about folklore. Gomme was but one folklorist among many, some of his ideas and theories having more merit than others. The idea of folklore as a science, however, was a group effort pursued by many folklorists, and though Gomme’s contribution was significant, one must recognize that he was only a leader in a movement that was larger than him.

Antonio Machado y Alvarez was born in 1848. Over the course of his life he was an attorney, a judge, and an assistant professor at the Sevillian University.117 Machado’s interest in popular traditions first manifested itself in his writings for a magazine that his father helped to found, Revista mensual de Filosofía, Literatura y Ciencias de Sevilla (Monthly magazine of

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Sevillian Philosophy, Literature, and Science). One of the more important early works he published, in conjunction with his teacher Federico de Castro, in 1873, was a brochure titled *Cuentos, leyendas y costumbres populares* (Popular Stories, Legends, and Customs).

However, *Revista mensual de Filosofía, Literatura y Ciencias de Sevilla* ceased publication in 1874, leading to a temporary halt in Machado’s work on popular traditions. In 1877, another scientific-literary journal called *La Enciclopedia* was founded by some students at the University of Seville, and in 1879 Machado created a section on popular literature in the magazine. He was strongly influenced by Spencer and evolutionary ideas. In an article that he wrote, Machado stated that:

“It is not enough to say that there is a popular literature and its forms are such and such, it is necessary to study these forms and identify the nature and linkage with what comes before and what comes after: It is not possible to give, for example, a scientific theory of the story, the song or the saying without knowing the stories, sayings and verses, this could have happened in other times, but not now, when we know that things will only be understood by studying them, and that the prestige and value of dogmatic statements has been subdued. The songs can’t be studied nicely, nor the ballads and capriciously, nor the riddles ingeniously, nor for rare and curious traditions and legends: songs, riddles,
traditions, legends, ballads, proverbs, sayings, proverbs, dialogues, games comics, stories, quirky phrases, idioms, turns, etc., Have to be studied as scientific material.”

Machado insisted on taking folklore seriously as a science, and making sure that it was placed in the proper context before being analyzed. Machado also notes that in the past, people could have gotten away without doing these things, but now, in this age, having evidence to support your theories was becoming more and more important. Incidentally, this was also the first time he used the pseudonym Demófilo.

Early in 1880, Machado learned of the foundation of the English Folklore Society in 1878. Inspired by this, he thought to do something similar for Spain, and in 1881 he published The Foundations of the National Organization, which was to be called El Folklore Español. In a departure from the English model, Machado called for the formation of regional societies, which would be loosely associated under the larger organization of El Folklore Español. Following his own words, he facilitated the foundation of an Andalusian Folklore Society, El Folklore Andaluz, towards the end of 1881. He later moved to Madrid for three years in order to further promote folklore throughout Spain.

Establishing folklore in Andalusia was Machado’s initial objective, yet he didn’t allow his regional preference to stop him from promoting folklore in other regions of Spain.

Machado was also one of the driving forces behind the publication of the Biblioteca de las Tradiciones Populares Españoles, a work that published folklore material from all the

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regions in Spain and eventually reached eleven volumes. The Biblioteca published some of his own works as well, such as his *Popular Spanish Stories, Recorded and Compared with the other collections from Portugal, Italy, and France*. Machado also worked to make sure that his work would be recognized and received. For example, Machado got the Ministry of Education to purchase forty copies of Biblioteca for distribution to public libraries (although it took three years from when he requested it until the books were purchased).\(^{122}\)

Machado was also a member of the English Folklore Society. When Gomme invited members to debate how folklore should be defined, Machado was one of the folklorists who responded. Machado defined folklore as having two branches: “demopsychology, or the science which studies the spirit of the people, and demo-biography, which is … the description of the mode of life of the people taken in the aggregate.”\(^{123}\) Machado also made another notable point: “To me it seems evident that if folk-lore … is to form a universal science, it is necessary that men of all nations should contribute to its progress, in order that the meaning which this science receives in Italy, France, Russia, Germany, or Portugal, may not be divergent, but only aspects and tendencies-phases of one and the same order of studies.”\(^{124}\) Machado was very much an activist in the cause to establish folklore as a science. He recognized the need for this not only nationally, but internationally.

As with Gomme, Machado also had critics. The church didn’t like his views on origins and formations of tales and customs, particularly customs related to the church itself. Readers of Machado’s articles were excommunicated by the synod of Seville and the bishop of Jaén.

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\(^{122}\) Ibid., 185.
\(^{124}\) Ibid., 113-114.
However, those efforts only encouraged Machado. It is interesting to see that despite the church’s attempt to exert its power, it had little effect on Machado. While this may be reflective of the state of the church, it can also be reflective of Machado’s personality. Machado would pursue folklore in the way he saw fit, and not be intimidated to deviate from his course. Machado was also criticized years after his death by J. M. de Navascués, who found fault with Machado’s borrowing of the word folklore, as well as many other ideas, from the foreign country of England. He was also said to have focused too much on collecting materials, and not enough on analyzing what he had amassed.

Machado died in 1893, at the age of 47. Many lamented his passing, saying that had he had more time on earth, he would have been able to do so much more for the cause of folklore. Over the course of his life, Machado made a strong effort to establish folklore in Spain, as well as to establish it in a scientific manner. Although folklore in Spain didn’t fare as well as it did in other countries, Machado’s efforts in the field are illuminative of the attempt that was made.

Giuseppe Pitré was born in Sicily in 1841. He was interested in folklore as a young boy, especially collecting materials from his mother and other family members. In 1860, he left school to enlist in the navy under the Romantic soldier Garibaldi, though he never saw any fighting. The next year, Pitré entered the University of Palermo to study medicine. During this time, he began publishing articles on proverbs in Sicilian journals.

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126 Ibid., 226.
127 Ibid., 228.
After graduating in 1866, and a brief stint teaching literature, Pitré began practicing medicine as a private doctor. At this point in his career, Pitré was able to collect lots of material from the people of Sicily. As a medical doctor, Pitré had lots of opportunity to be with the common people, and this greatly facilitated his collection efforts. Pitré is the quintessential example of a folklorist who collected folklore from people while being in the area on other business. Though he was visiting people primarily as a doctor, that by no means meant that he didn’t take folklore seriously. Pitré was extremely devoted to the study of folklore – he even had his coach converted into a miniature study so that he could work on his notes and write books while he was travelling from patient to patient. By 1868, he was able to publish his first major book, *Canti popolari siciliani* (Sicilian Folk Songs).130

One of Pitré’s most lasting and monumental works was his *Biblioteca delle tradizioni popolari siciliane*. Comprising twenty five volumes, he began it in 1871 and continued it until 1913. The volumes covered practically all topics of folklore, from folksongs, fairytales, and proverbs to customs, beliefs, legends, and festivals. Though *Biblioteca* was Pitré’s largest and most well known work, and by itself would have been a major achievement, he also published numerous other folklore works. Additionally, in 1882, Pitré co-founded and co-edited the first exclusive Italian folklore journal, *l’Archivio per lo studio delle tradizioni popolari*, which ran until 1907. Another particularly important work of Pitré’s was his *Bibliografia delle Tradizioni Popolari d’Italia*, a bibliographical work which was possibly the first of its kind. It contained 6,680 entries about the study of folklore in Italy through the 1890’s.

Pitré considered bibliographical work very important, and wanted to have bibliographical work accomplished on an international level. Pitré sent a letter to Sébillot, then the Secretary

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130 Ibid., 3-4.
General of the International Folklore Congress of 1900 in Paris, asking delegates to work together to achieve an international folklore bibliography. Pitré asked that Sébillot “announce this proposal to the Paris Congress, and affirm the urgency of having a bibliography of folk traditions and usages. We need to know what has been done in order to know what remains to be done, and also to avoid the useless repetitions of work already done … Definitive results of our science can be attained only with the knowledge of similar traditions and customs among diverse peoples, and without a bibliography, no one would be able to effectively undertake this work.”

As Pitré stated so clearly, having a record of what had already been done in the field of folklore would be a very important asset to folklorists. After several failed attempts, an international folklore bibliography was begun in 1917 by a different folklorist. These attempts to establish folklore bibliographies were important to the development of folklore as a science. They show a desire by folklorists to form a body of literature, a base which would be important for a developing science.

Pitré was born and grew up in Borgo, one of the lower class districts of Palermo. Having grown up among the folk, Pitré really identified with them. He once wrote that “history should not be a list of men, in which their outstanding acts are registered, but the revelation of ideas, passions, customs and civil interests, in short, of the life of a people, a nation.” Pitré believed in the importance of collecting folklore to help build a history of the common people.

Initially, Pitré focused on the folksongs of the common people, and he felt that the true expression of the character of the people could be found in their folksongs. Also, the origins of tales and customs weren’t a particular concern or emphasis for him. He thought it was more

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133 Giuseppe Cocchiara, Pitré Las Sicilia E Il Folklore (Messina: Tipografia Ditta D’Amico, 1951), 142.
important to focus on what the people felt about a song rather than on how the song got there (though he certainly didn’t consider information of that nature to be useless). Besides that, he also felt that the obscurity of who wrote the song was part of what made it popular. The fact that no one person could be considered the originator of a song was what allowed it to become a song of the people.\textsuperscript{134}

Despite the fact that the only time that Pitré ever left Sicily was when he was in the navy, he still had a prolific correspondence with many other folklorists on the European continent. He was also very well read and kept up to date on all the most recent folklore theories.\textsuperscript{135} Pitré’s methodology also made him stand out. He was very insistent on recording things exactly as he heard them, publishing variants of tales, and on classifying what he had collected. He also tried his best to render the Sicilian dialects into a form of spelling, something which there were no guidelines for.\textsuperscript{136} His insistence on these points reiterate the drive of folklorists to establish folklore as a science. One needed details and evidence in order to make scientific claims, so folklorists had to adhere to certain standards in their collection processes in order to obtain valid evidence.

Pitré has also been criticized by scholars for over-romanticizing Sicilian customs, depicting Sicilians as innocent and pure and downplaying their faults. This attitude is hinted at in an obituary for Pitré written in the English \textit{Folklore} by Evelyn Martinengo Cesaresco. “He could not bring himself to do what his conscience did not approve: thus, in spite of the exhortations of some eminent German professors, he would never allow the publication of a

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collection he had made for scholars of the undesirable part of popular traditions as it exists in the folklore of his native island. For this volume, and for this alone, he was offered a good sum of money, but in vain.”

This passage indicates that Pitré was holding back material that he thought would be damaging to the image of Sicilians. One of the interesting parts of this piece is that it portrays Pitré’s actions in a positive light. This is part of a larger trend of highlighting the positive and overlooking the negative aspects of the folklore that folklorists tended to engage in.

One would think in a journal like *Folklore*, and in a time where folklore was being established as a science, that this type of one-sidedness would be frowned upon. In this case, it seems to have been overlooked by his contemporaries in England, perhaps due to the great volume and importance of his other works. In defense of Pitré, Jack Zipes wrote that people making this claim had not really taken the time to read Pitré’s collection. “Pitré allow[ed] for ‘vulgar’ language and stories with risqué and comical scenes, for instance, one in which a woman is made out of shit, … If the majority of the tales are not as erotic, bawdy, and scatological as they might have been, it may be due to the fact that many of the tales were told by women with a different mindset than men.”

In 1884, Pitré was made a knight by King Umbert. The English Folklore Society took pleasure in the achievement, commenting that it was “certainly the first instance of a folklorist having been knighted for his special studies.” Pitré was also involved a bit in politics. He was elected as an independent councilor of the Commune di Palermo, and later became a Senator in 1915. In 1909 Pitré established a folklore museum in a former convent near Palermo. Over the

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years, Pitré had collected many artifacts, and this museum now became their home. In 1911, he was appointed the first Professor of Demopsicologia (psychology of the people) at the University of Palermo, where he taught an introductory course on the history of demopsicologia.¹⁴⁰

Pitré’s later years were marked with tragedy, with two of his three children dying before he did. Interestingly, when his daughter died, one of the things that Pitré did to help himself cope with the grief was to print as a memorial some kindhearted swallow legends that she had collected.¹⁴¹ The fact that he could use folklore to help memorialize his daughter is an indication of how much folklore really meant to him. Pitré himself died in 1916.

Gomme, Machado, and Pitré were all instrumental in the development of folklore in their respective countries. Their actions displayed a dedication to establishing folklore a science, as well as a strong love for the common people of their respective countries. By looking at these three folklorists, we can see some of the reasons why they chose to pursue folklore, their methods and methodologies, and a sampling of some of the folklore ideologies that were present in this time period.

Chapter 5 – A Measurement of Success

While folklore societies and journals were initially very successful in their efforts to promote folklore, folkloric activity began to plateau by the turn of the century. Despite this cessation of growth, the folklore societies still succeeded in their goal of establishing folklore as a science. The English Folklore Society has a wealth of information due to its annual report of the council which was published in its journal, and thus this analysis will have a heavy focus on that society. The membership levels of the society, and the activity levels of that membership, will be indicative of the society’s success in promoting itself and achieving its goals. The financial standing of the society is also relevant as an indication of the society’s ability to function. Although the society’s efforts to tabulate folktales and compile a bibliography petered out, the very fact that these projects were started was in itself a kind of success. Another indication of folklorist success can be found in the volume of folklore materials that were being published. Although there was a slight decline in the publication of folkloric literature, again due to its stagnant growth, the very existence of such a literature is indicative of the strides being made in the field. We will also take an in depth look at the Second International Folk-Lore Congress of 1891 as a culmination of folkloric efforts at the end of the 19th century. Lastly, we will look at how the attitude of folklorists themselves toward the establishment of folklore as a science contributed to its establishment as a science.

The membership levels of a society are an important yet simple way to gauge the interest in that society. High membership levels were also considered important because of the large number of folklorists that the society needed to viably carry out its projects, projects which were helping to establish folklore as a science. When the English Folklore Society was in formation, its preliminary list of members included 129 people, and by the time of its first annual report in
May of 1879, that number had grown to 220 members. After that, the society slowly continued to grow, until in 1883 it had 301 members. However, for the following three years, the Annual Report of the Council did not mention the current membership of the society. The next time membership levels are mentioned again, in 1887 and 1888, the report does not give definite numbers, stating only that there were net increases of 24 and 19 members in those years, respectively. In 1889, the council reported the membership of the society to be at an all time high of 346 members. By subtracting the net increases of the previous two years, the resulting membership level is at 303, which is very close to the last recorded membership level of 301. Since this calculation doesn’t include the change in membership in 1889 itself, (which was likely a net gain, since the council was bragging about it) it seems likely that there was a decrease, or at least very insignificant increases, in membership during these three unrecorded years.

The council may have chosen not to explicitly state the declining levels of membership, yet the number of members and their level of activity within the society were both very
conscious concern for the leaders of the society. In 1887 an article was written in the *Folklore Journal* by Charlotte Burne on how to promote the study of folklore and to extend the membership of the society. Burne lamented that she herself had “only met with one person who had heard of the [Folklore Society] before [she] mentioned it, and he thought its object was the study of dialects.” Later in the article she says that in order to spread knowledge of the society, every member could start by personally delivering two to three copies of the society’s prospectus into the hands friends of theirs who might be open to the ideas of the society. She also suggested the extensive utilization of newspapers in order to reach the more general public. While that last point was meant more for the enhancement of collection efforts, it would also have the potential to attract new members.

As can be seen in the chart, the membership levels from the 1890’s into the 20th century were rather stagnant, with not much in the way of increased or decreased membership. In 1897, the council expressed its displeasure with the situation in the annual report: “The Council would emphasise the inadequacy of the number of members in view of the population and wealth of the Empire, and of the scientific importance of the study.” However, only four years later in 1901, the council seemed more resigned to the situation. “There are now 382 enrolled members as against 386 at the end of 1899; a state of affairs which, although it affords little room for congratulation, is by no means unsatisfactory, considering the many urgent calls on public

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143 Ibid., 63-64.
attention and on the individual purse during the past year." The council put the blame for the society’s lack of increased membership on external factors, and while that certainly may have been a factor, it is indicative of a defeatist mindset.

After 1903, the council again ceased mentioning the number of members explicitly, though it did indicate net values. The next time the council mentioned a number was in 1910, when it said that the society had over 410 members. Though this increase is small, it is still an increase. Even in years where membership levels seemed the same there was still changes. Members died or resigned from the society, while other new members would join.

Another reason that membership levels were so important to the leadership of the society was because the subscription fees that members paid were the main source of the society’s income. The society needed money to publish the journal and other folklore works, to pursue collection activities, and other miscellaneous activities, all in a scientific fashion. The council’s annual report of 1883 stated that “gradually the field of folk-lore is being enlarged, and a future of great interest and value lies before the Society, if only it is able by the labours of its members to increase its workers and funds.” The council would frequently exhort its current members to get others to join the society, as well as to retain their own membership. By having more members, the society would be able to increase the scope of its work by having more individuals to do the work and by having more funds to pay for the work and finance all the projects that needed to be done.

The more members the society had, the easier it would be able to accomplish its goal of establishing folklore as a science. Although membership levels weren’t shooting up like they did

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in the first few years of the society, there was generally a very slow increase in membership over time. However, it is difficult to postulate how many members would actually have been needed in order to successfully carry out these tasks.

In the same vein, if the society was unable to sustain itself monetarily, it would be unable to perform the folkloric functions for which it was created. One of the rules of the society stated that “The accounts of the receipts and expenditure of the Society shall be audited annually by two Auditors, to be elected at the General Meeting.”\(^\text{147}\) In accordance with this rule, the society was audited every year, and its books were published as part of the report of the council in each year’s volume of the journal so that all the members of the society would be able to review it. The council did this not only to show how the monies from subscription fees were being spent, but also as a basis for appealing to members to attract new members and to contribute more funds. “The Council present the Cash Account of the Society for the year ending 31st December, 1879, and they hope that the Members will use every effort to increase the income of the Society, so that the work to be done may be done well and expeditiously.”\(^\text{148}\) A few years later, the council used the presence of manuscripts waiting to be printed as a reason for why it needed more money. “The need for renewed assistance both in money and labour can best be shown by the following statement of the MS. in hand waiting to be printed,” followed by a list of five manuscripts.\(^\text{149}\)

Despite the fact that the council wished that it had more members, and consequently more funds, it still managed to stay financially afloat. To be a member required payment of one

guinea annually (1 Guinea = 21 shillings, or 1.05 pounds). Although the society’s main income was from subscriptions, it also made revenue from selling copies of some of the books that it published. The society’s main expenditures were to the printer, for printing the journal and the aforementioned books.

Although the society’s membership and income levels were sufficient enough for them to survive, this didn’t hold true for some of their projects. The English Folklore Society’s method of folktale tabulation was begun enthusiastically and had the support of the first two International Folklore Congresses, but by the mid 1890’s the project had ceased to go forward. Looking back on the effort, a later president of the Folklore Society commented that “Meantime a foreign classification, which appears to some students, at least, to be based on thoroughly unsound principles, has been steadily applied to collection after collection, and seems likely to hold the field without a rival simply on account of our failure to proceed and the unremitting hard work of the foreign classifier.”

Although the English system failed to take hold, it is significant that another system took its place. Even if this system was based on ‘unsound principles,’ (since this source has a preference for the English system, his opinion on the foreign system may be biased) it was still ‘steadily applied to collection after collection.’ The uniformity of the system being applied to all folktales is what gives it value in this scenario. It allows folklorists to make comparisons between folktales by looking at similar sets of characteristics, thus furthering the goal of establishing folklore as a science.

The English Folklore Society’s bibliographical project met with a fate similar to that of its folktale tabulation project, and one does not see mention of it in the pages of the journal.

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during the 1890’s. However, ideas for bibliographies didn’t die. Although they stopped their efforts in creating a bibliography for past folkloric works, the 1890’s saw *Folklore* begin a bibliography of current works being published in that quarter. (An effort which only lasted into the beginning of the 20th century.) Another system for a folklore bibliography was proposed at the International Folklore Congress of 1900 in Paris, and was generally adopted by those in attendance. One also has the example of Pitré, an individual folklorist who succeeded in his efforts to publish a bibliographical work for Italy. Although not all efforts ended in success, the continued attempts show that the ideas for the need of bibliographical works and an established literature were firmly entrenched in the minds of folklorists, ideas which would be necessary for folklore to develop as a science.

Membership in the English Folklore Society started out strongly, and the fact of the society’s creation and its ability to sustain itself and survive are indicative that the society had successfully established itself. Even though increasing membership levels slowed after its first decade of existence and some of its projects were abandoned, the English Folklore Society still carried on, staying financially afloat, and is still in existence today. Despite the fact that the folktale tabulation and bibliographical projects were abandoned, it is more important that these ventures were begun, and that the ideas behind them were planted. It was the ideas behind these projects that helped folklore develop as a science.

Another indication of the success of folkloric activities is the volume of folklore works published and printed at the end of the 19th century. Having a body of literature was important for the development of folklore as a science. It shows that new ideas and theories were being explored, and that they were being presented to the folkloric community for examination. The back pages of many folklore journals would mention and review folklore works that had been
published that year. This would often include books, other folklore journals, articles about folklore in non-folklore journals, and bibliographical information. The Italian folklore journal *Archivo per lo studio delle tradizioni popolari* had several sections in which it reviewed folklore literature, including a section called journal literature and a section called bibliographical bulletin, which encompassed sections entitled recent publications and summary of newspapers (journals). As *Archivo* devoted considerably more time and space listing folklore works than some other journals, it has been chosen for this analysis. The following graph shows the number of works that *Archivo* listed in the recent publications section of their bibliographical bulletin each year over the course of the journal’s existence.

In the 1880’s, the number of publications ranged between 90 and 123, excluding the outlier year of 1885, in which 154 publications were recorded. Without anything to compare it to outside of the field, it’s hard to determine whether this is a healthy level of publications or not, although I believe that it is. The beginning of the 1890’s saw an uptick in the number of
publications, with recorded values ranging from 134-151. However, from 1895 through the journals end in 1903/1907, the volume of publications only ranged from 67-108. (After 1903, Archivo ceased publishing for several years, published one last series of volumes in 1907, and then ceased publishing again.) If one had to plot a best fit line using this data, the slope of that line would be slightly negative, indicating a slow overall decrease in the number of publications over the course of the journals life. The fact that Archivo itself ceased to exist could be related to this trend.

While this is again indicative of the increased folkloric activity of the 1880’s reaching a plateau, folklore works were still continuously being published. Reviews of books continued to be published in the English folklore journal during this period and beyond. Even if the rate of the increase of folklore works was slightly declining, folkloric works were still being continuously published. A continuously increasing body of literature is important for a field that wants to establish itself as a science. It shows that new studies are being undertaken, new materials and evidence are being collected, and that progress is being made in the field. Folkloric activity had reached a plateau, yet the continuous flow of new materials is evidence for folklore’s establishment as a science.

Folklore in the form of fairy-tales was also popular with children. In a book review on a collection of fairy-tales, the reviewer commented that “Fairy tales for children are … the most acceptable amusement, and it is a sign of the times, and of the influence of the Folk-Lore Society, to see that it is thought worth while to give our children the real traditional story, instead of fictional nonsense. Here is the earliest education of the folk-lorist, …” The reviewer is

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happy that folkloric tales, which he considers the heritage of the people, were being told to children instead of fictional literature. Many collections of tales were printed to be geared towards children. The fact that these books were published and continued to be published indicates that there was a market for them. Also interesting is the reviewer’s comment that these fairy-tales are educating youths in the ways of the folklorist. By exposing children to folklore at that young age, they hoped that the fairy-tales would make folklorists out of some of them.

An important marker in the development of the establishment of folklore as a science was the occurrence of international folklore congresses. Congresses were venues for the various attendees to gather together and exchange ideas. Certain ideas might receive praise, while others might be criticized, and thus certain standards would develop among the attendees of the congress. International congresses, which by definition are meant to be attended by people of multiple nations, attempt to increase the scope of this process even further. The occurrence of international folklore congresses indicate a desire to develop a set of international standards in the field of folklore, and thus help to establish folklore as a science.

The first International Folk-Lore Congress took place in Paris, during the Great Exhibition in 1889. At the end of the congress, it was proposed that “An international congresses of folk meet every two or three years and that the next meeting be held in London.” (Que des congrès internationaux de traditions populaires se réunissent tous les deux ou trois ans et que la prochaine réunion se tienne Londres.) The idea was communicated to the English Folklore Society, and an Organizing Committee was formed in the spring of 1890 to plan for this next international folklore congress.152

The congress had two intended functions; it would be a social event as well as a scientific one. So in addition to papers being read and discussed, two social events were planned: an outing to Oxford and an evening of entertainment, called a Conversazione. The congress was to last five days, and papers were divided into four sections to be given on four days. Those four sections were: 1. Folktales, 2. Mythological, 3. Institutions and Customs, and 4. General Theory and Classification. The Saturday in the middle of the congress was reserved for the trip to Oxford.

The congress opened on October 1, 1891. Andrew Lang, then President of the Folklore Society, gave the opening address, which was well received. After the speech, C. G. Leland, an American folklorist, praised Lang for the “catholic and liberal tone of the address.” Leland went on to say that as the field of folklore grew, and people’s opinions became diverse, that “some allowances must always be made for differences of opinion.” Indeed, within the congress there was a multitude of different opinions among the folklorists, from anthropologists and diffusionists to the historical aspect of folklore. Though there was debate, the people in the different schools were willing to respect each other and work together. This was a good indication for the future of the folklore field.

Also on that first day, members for an International Folklore Council were chosen. The establishment of such a council was one of the objectives of the Organizing Committee, who found it desirable “that one of the outcomes of the Congress should be the constitution of a permanent body representing all schools of folk-lore research and all existing folk-lore organizations.” The main purposes of the council would be to create union among folklorists

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153 Ibid., 12.
154 Ibid., xiv.
worldwide, be a final judge in all folklore matters, and to regulate future folklore congresses. Gomme, Machado, and Pitré were all proposed to be on the council, along with about eighty other folklorists.

Most reviewers considered the congress to be successful. The list of attendees found in the collected papers and transactions of the congress totaled 212 people. In a review of the congress written for Revue des traditions populaires, Loys Broueyre wrote that there were “more than 200 members, including many ladies…” However, he goes on to say that “Foreigners were few in number … There were no Germans or Italians.” He felt that there was not enough international representation for an event that was being called an international congress. However, this fact makes logical sense, for although transportation was much easier than it had been in the past, it was still a long distance for many people to travel. It was rather natural that the majority of folklorists present would be Englishmen. Despite that fact, Broueyre greatly enjoyed all other aspects of the congress. He ended this section of his review about the congress being too English by saying that “it’s the only criticism we sent to the organizers who had methodically set a schedule of work both attractive and informative and welcomed their guests with courtesy…”155

The London newspaper The Times also devoted a decent amount of press coverage to the congress. The Times printed what had happened in the congress every day, relating what went on and summarizing some of the papers and speeches. After the first day of the congress, The Times printed the majority of Lang’s opening speech verbatim.156 The congress was perceived

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as successful, both by folklorists and by outside sources. By achieving this recognition, folklore
took a step forward in its development as a field and as a science. The success of the congress is
indicative that the folklorists who attended were able to work together, and would thus be more
likely to be successful in their attempts to set standards and establish folklore as a science.

The two social events of the congress, the trip to Oxford and the Conversazione, were
meant to further these feelings of working together and getting along. Both events were
considered successful. Broueyre wrote that the trip to Oxford to see the museum there was the
highlight of the congress for some of the visiting foreigners.157 A reviewer for *The Journal of
American Folklore* wrote that “It is impossible to speak in terms of too high praise of this unique
collection”158 in regard to the museum. The Conversazione was an evening of entertainment,
involving, among other things, folksongs, folktales, children’s games, and mummer’s plays.
Regarding the Conversazione, *The Times* reported that “the idea of presenting these object
lessons in folklore proved so popular that the demand for tickets was far greater than could be
met with due regard to the accomodation afforded by the hall, and as it was every available inch
of space was eagerly occupied.”159

While the Second International Folklore Congress was a successful event, its legacy did
not continue as its planners would have liked it to. In 1893 there were actually two International
Folklore Congresses, both held in the World’s Fair in Chicago. One was hosted by the Chicago
Folklore Society and the other by the American Folklore Society. The English Folklore Society

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considered the first of those congresses to be “a decided success, in spite of many preliminary
obstacles.”\textsuperscript{160} A fourth (or fifth) congress, which was held in Paris, didn’t occur until 1900.\textsuperscript{161}
After that there were plans for a subsequent congress to be held in Geneva in four years time, but
that congress never occurred.\textsuperscript{162} The next international folklore congress didn’t occur until 1928,
celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the English Folklore Society.\textsuperscript{163} This is further indication
of the plateau of folkloric activities after the end of the 19\th century.

However, the fact that these congresses occurred is still very significant. The implicit
purposes of international congresses are to establish an international consensus on how things in
their respective fields should be. Participants present papers, and get to see how the community
reacts to them. This exchange helps to shape how these people will move forward in their fields.
Even though the international folklore congresses came to a temporary end, the fact that they had
four (or five) of them, and intended to have more, is no small feat. It shows a strong willingness
to establish folklore as a science and to develop standards that would be applicable across the
Western world in folklore. While they didn’t achieve that level of international cohesiveness, the
attempt to do so did leave certain standards and guidelines in its place.

Despite setbacks, the positive attitude that folklorists had towards establishing folklore as
a science were also very important. The English Folklore Society felt and acted as if folklore
had been established as a science, and thought rather highly of themselves for having
accomplished this. In one of their book reviews in the Folk-Lore Journal in 1885, the reviewer

\textsuperscript{161} Alan Dundes, ed. \textit{International Folkloristics} (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1999), 60.
\textsuperscript{162} A. R. Wright, “The Unfinished Tasks of the Folk-Lore Society,” \textit{Folklore} 39, no. 1 (1928): 27.
wrote that “it is scarcely credible that any one studying any branch of folklore should not use the Society’s books. And yet Mr. Folkard evidently has not used them.” The reviewer felt pretty strongly at this point that for a work to be academically credible, the author should at some point make reference to the society’s works. This is indicative of not only how the English Folklore Society had a strong influence (or at least perceived that they had a strong influence) in the field of folklore, but it also shows that even as early as 1885 they were acting as if folklore had already been established as a science. This act may have itself been part of how folklore was established as a science. When people consistently behave in a certain way, it becomes easier to fall into that pattern of behavior. So by acting as if folklore had already been established as a science, the English Folklore Society was helping to build and establish folklore as a science.

Slow or stagnant membership growth, the decrease in the rate of the volume of folklore publications, and the non-continuance of the international folklore congresses are all indicative of a plateau in folkloric activity after the turn of the 20th century. The increased folkloric activity of the 1880’s may have run its course, yet it left behind an infrastructure of societies and journals, a growing body of literature, a set of standards, and a positive attitude. In The Handbook of Folklore’s concluding chapter about the English Folklore Society, Gomme wrote that “Since the establishment of the Society great impetus has been given to the study and scientific treatment of those crude philosophies which folklore embodies. Hence the place now accorded to it as a science, to be approached in the historic spirit and treated on scientific methods.” In the Presidential Address of the English Folk-Lore Society just over twenty years later in 1909, President M. Gastor echoed his words: “This Society has given a powerful impetus

to the scientific treatment of those crude philosophies which are embodied in Folklore. …The Folk-Lore Society …has made the science of Folklore possible by a sustained comparison between the legends and tales, customs, and superstitions prevailing in one country with those prevailing in other countries. The example set by the Folk-Lore Society has been followed abroad, and has given rise to similar societies with kindred objects, working with us in the same spirit and towards the same end.”¹⁶⁶ By the end of the 19th century, folklore had been successfully established as a science with a strong infrastructure.

Conclusion

The increased folkloric activity at the end of the 19th century had many contributing factors. On the intellectual side, new ideas such as evolution caused people to be more interested in their past and their origins, and folklore was a good outlet for this curiosity. There were also social changes occurring among the poorer classes of Europe itself that caused their culture to become intriguing to the upper classes. The state was having an increased influence on their lives through the imposition of mandatory schooling and the standardization of language. At the same time, these social changes were causing the poorer classes to lose touch with their regional folklore. This made folklorists fear that folklore would soon disappear forever, and was one of the driving practical forces behind the increased folklore collection activities.

Due to the atmosphere of the ascendancy of science that permeated the end of the 19th century, the increased folkloric activity took the form of folklore societies and journals. The folklore societies and journals helped make folklore a science by providing a forum for standards to be created, such as staying truthful to the sources and how to best collect folklore from the folk. The main stated purpose of the societies was the collection and preservation of folklore. The fact that the societies and journals were formed is in itself an indication that there was a need for them due to the increased intensification of folkloric activities.

Folklore, as any other field, is composed of individual folklorists. An in depth look at three folklorists, Gomme, Machado, and Pitré gives more of a flavor of what the life of a folklorist would have been like during the formative years of the folklore societies in their respective countries. Looking at their lives, one can see the important emphasis that they placed on the growing importance of the common people’s culture and history and the idea of building folklore as a science.
The end of the thesis shows that while folkloric activity increased at the end of the 19th century, there were indications that the field had reached a status quo of sorts by the 20th century. The stagnating membership, the decrease of published materials, and the ceasing of further international folklore congresses are indicators that by the 20th century, folkloric activity had reached a plateau. It is possible that the initial surge in the 1880’s increased folkloric activity to a point beyond what the movement was able to sustain, thus causing a plateau and slight decline as folkloric activity sought a level that would be sustainable. Despite this, advances were still made in the goal of establishing folklore as a science. The very existence and sustainability of folklore societies and journals, a body of literature, the occurrence of international folklore congresses, and the positive attitude of the folklorists themselves towards establishing folklore as a science are all indicative of this achievement.
Bibliography


