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WATER AND SAND, THE ANATOMY OF A FOLK BELIEF

by Frank Goodwyn

ON EARTH, THE VISIBLE SUBSTANCE MOST WIDELY ABUNDANT AND MOST VITAL TO LIFE is water. Men must have observed in ancient times, therefore, that if they held a melon shell or similar container in a stream or a lake, water would pass into it and remain there. Moreover, water could be poured from one vessel to another and absorbed by sand or sponges.

Another circumstance must have been significant to primitives, concerned as they were with keeping warm. When a stone is placed in hot sand, it will get hot. Ancient men and women must have soon come to think of heat as an invisible fluid which could pass from sand to stones in the same way water could pass from streams to shells, from vessel to vessel, from sponges to sand.

DEEP IN EARLY OR PREHISTORY, the lodestone was discovered. It possessed magnetism, which could be communicated to any piece of iron that touched it. Later, electricity was found to act in a similar way. These mysterious powers seemed to flow like water from one visible body to another.

Likewise, contagious diseases passed from person to person. Lepers of bygone ages were banished from society because of their contaminating touch. Plagues were combatted by the isolation of all victims long before microbes and viruses became known. In the light of these superficial discoveries, it seemed logical to assume that health as well as sickness was an invisible fluid which could pass from the body of a healer to that of his patient when the two came into contact. Hence the widespread belief in the efficacy of healing through the touch. Among the yogis, this supposed health-fluid is known as prana. Yogi Ramacharaca, in a racy little book called Mystic Christianity, clearly reveals the foundations of this belief in his description of Jesus Christ healing a leper:

He even laid His hands upon the unclean flesh, defying all the laws of reason in so doing, and fearlessly passed His hand over the leper's face, crying aloud, "Be thou clean!" The leper felt a strange thrill running through his veins and over his nerves, and every atom of his body seemed to be tingling with a peculiar burning and smarting sensation. Even as he looked he saw the color of his flesh changing and taking on the hue of the flesh of a healthy person.... and still Jesus held His hand against the flesh of the leper, allowing the life current of highly vitalizing prana to pour from his organism into that of the leper, just as a storage battery of great power replenishes and recharges an electrical appliance. (Chicago, 1908, pp. 120-121.)

Health being thus thought of as a fluid, physical contact is often considered essential to its flow. Agnes Sanford of Minnesota emphasizes this in telling how a minister brought life to his stillborn child:

The minister held up the tiny, lifeless form in his two hands and prayed thus: "Oh, God, if You will give life to this my child, I dedicate both him and myself to Your service."

Whereupon, his act of dedication, raising him into the presence of God and his two hands providing a perfect channel for the inflowing of a strong current of life, the child breathed and lived.

Had he merely knelt beside the baby and not laid his two hands beneath the tiny lifeless form, I venture to guess that the child would not have lived. (The Healing Light, St. Paul, 1949, p. 92.)

Sanford, like the yogi, fortifies her belief through the phenomenon of electricity:

If we try turning on an electric iron and it does not work, we look to the wiring of the iron, the cord, or the house. We do not stand in dismay before the iron and say, "Oh, electricity, please come into my iron and make it work!" We realize that while the whole world is full of that mysterious power we call electricity, only the amount that flows through the wiring of the iron will make the iron work for us. (Ibid., p. 17. The italics are Sanford's.)

THE HEALER, SAYS SANFORD, IS A LIVING PIPELINE, carrying the life current from God into the patient. Hutton Webster, in his sociological study of magic, describes how this belief in an invisible fluid affects present-day nonliterate societies. Men of central Australia, to cure headache, wear women's head rings long enough for the pain to pass into them. The rings are then thrown away. The freshly killed, warm limbs of the energetic beaver are rubbed by the Bellacoola of British Columbia on their baby girls, so that they will grow up to be good workers: eager beavers. Basuto men, to obtain longevity, wear on their chests an insect that lives long.

THE BELIEF HAS ALSO INVADED THE FIELD OF ECONOMICS. Says Karl Marx in Capital:

Let us take two commodities, e. g., corn and iron. The proportions in which they are exchangeable, whatever those proportions may be, can always be represented by an equation in which a given quantity of corn is equated to some quantity of iron: e. g., 1 quarter corn = x cwt. of iron. What does this equation tell us? It tells us that in two different things — in 1 quarter of corn and x cwt. of iron, there exists in equal quantities something common to both. (N. Y., 1906, p. 43.)

As a matter of fact, the equation tells us no such thing. My weight is equal to that of 200 pounds of gold, but this does not mean that I am made of gold, or that I have in my body any ingredient that also inhabits gold. Any two materials can be dished out in the same size doses, but this does not indicate that they have "something common to both."

What is this "something common" that Marx imagines as existing in all commodities? He tells us that it is human labor:

Commodities, therefore, in which equal quantities of labor are embodied, or which can be produced in the same time, have the same value. The value of one commodity is to the value of any other, as the labor-time necessary for the production of the one is to that necessary for the production of the other. "As values, all commodities are only definite masses of congealed labor-time." (Ibid., p. 46.)

Actually, time cannot congeal. Only fluids can congeal. Marx is obviously reasoning from the same deeply ingrained folk belief which lies behind all practices of contagious magic, a belief derived from the behavior of water, heat, magnetism and electricity. He sees labor-time as if it were a fluid, flowing from laborer to commodity as water flows from kettle to cup, there to solidify and take on the name of value. Only thus could he think of it as congealing. His repeated use of such words as congeal, congelation and absorbent clearly reveal that he is thinking of "labour power" as an invisible fluid:

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....Human labour-power in motion, or human labour, creates value, but is not itself value. It becomes value only in its congealed state, when embodied in the form of some object. (ibid., p. 59.)value shows itself in its true light as a congelation of undifferentiated human labour. (ibid., pp. 72-73.)The raw material serves now merely as an absorbent of a definite quantity of labour. (ibid., p. 211. The italics are mine.)

THIS PRIMITIVE IMAGERY LEADS MARX to some weird conclusions. He is convinced, for instance, that uncultivated land has no value, because no human labor has been poured into it! (ibid., p. 115.)

The point of contact whereby the imaginary fluid supposedly flows from body to body need not be always the touch. William Hemstreet envisages Napoleon pouring power through the air into his army:

Napoleon Bonaparte imbued his spirit upon his army as directly and physically as any common physical force is imparted. There was poured into his organism from the sources of space a volume and quantity of soul-force independent of heredity. (Mind is Matter, or the Substance of the Soul, N. Y. 1891, p. 2.)

THE INVISIBLE FLUID IS OFTEN THOUGHT OF AS FLOWING THROUGH THE EYES, as in the well-known idea of the evil eye. For astrologers, the point of contact is temporal: influence flows from each constellation into those who were born during its ascendancy. For practitioners of imitative magic, the point of contact is coincidence of action or ceremony.

Almost as abundant as water in the lives of early men, especially those who settled along rivers or near the sea, was sand. When sand is dry, it takes the shape of any container into which it may be packed, but as soon as the container is removed, the shape is lost. Yet there were other objects, such as stones and trees, which retained their shapes from day to day. It must have seemed reasonable to assume that these other objects were enveloped in invisible containers which kept them from falling apart. Hence the idea of form as revealed in the following remarks from Leander Edmund Whipple:

The object "cube" has external shape but not form. The shape, composed of concentrated stagnation of particles, exists, therefore, for the purpose of satisfying the demands of sense, but remove the form, and the disintegration of the "shape" that would immediately occur will cause the objective cube to vanish. Without psychic body, no material body can endure. (Healing influences, N. Y., 1913, p. 166. The italics are Whipple's.)

Accordingly, some philosophers see all matter in the universe as dry sand, held together by invisible containers known as forms. The relative stability of physical containers leads these thinkers to believe that forms are eternal and divine, while matter is transitory as shifting sand.

Thus, all these notions stem from a universalization of the concepts of containers and contents. The behavior of water leads to the idea of invisible fluids. The behavior of sand leads to the idea of invisible containers, or forms. The two ideas are thus derived from the invisibilization of different members of the same everyday combination. They may therefore be outlined as follows. In parentheses after each item I have placed the terms and movements generated by the concept.

FLUIDISM

1. Visible containers (bodies)
2. Invisible contents (mana, prana, life-force, soul-force, value, etc.)
3. Points of contact between containers, whereby the invisible contents flow from one to another
 - A. Spatial (healing through the touch, contagious magic)
 - B. Temporal (astrology)
 - C. Formal (ceremonial magic)

FORMISM

1. Invisible containers (forms)
2. Visible contents (matter)

STILL ANOTHER CIRCUMSTANCE IN THE LIVES OF EARLY PEOPLES has led to a fusion of fluidism and formism. Wet sand is capable of keeping its shape after the mould is removed. Water has the power to perpetuate form through internal adhesion. Consequently, the idea of invisible containers, or forms, was internalized. Form came to be thought of as the very invisible fluid that could flow from body to body, giving health to the sick and value to the worthless. Hence Alan Watts' identification of forms with fluids in the following passage from The Way of Zen.

In sum, then, the maya doctrine points out, firstly the impossibility of grasping the actual world in the mind's net of words and concepts, and secondly, the fluid character of those very forms which thought attempts to define. The world of facts and events is altogether nama, abstract names, and rupa, fluid form. It escapes both the comprehension of the philosopher and the grasp of the pleasure-seeker like water from a clutching fist. (N. Y., 1957, p. 53. The italics are Watts'.)

The main trouble with these notions is, they creep up on people. Wearing pretty, modern masks, they sneak into our thoughts, ingratiate themselves, and cling like leeches. The human race is so deeply habituated to thinking in accordance with their patterns, that the finest minds often find themselves embracing and rabidly championing some fancy-labeled brand of magic (the "labor theory of value" or "astrological science" or "maya doctrine" or "Platonism" or "NeoPlatonism" or some similar ism) without recognizing the primitive fluidistic and/or formistic premise from which it is derived.

THE QUESTION NOW ARISES: ARE FLUIDISM AND FORMISM EVER VALID? The answer should be clear. Like any other idea, they are valid only when kept within their areas of original predictability. The minute they are extended outside these areas, they lose their reliability. In other words, they are dependable only in dealing with actual fluids, sands and containers. In the areas of health, economics, religion and philosophy, they are not only worthless but dangerously misleading. As a final example, I quote from Josef Stalin:

In physics every change is a passing of quantity into quality, as a result of a quantitative change of some form of movement either inherent in a body or imparted to it. For example, the temperature of water has at first no effect on its liquid state, but as the temperature of liquid water rises or falls, a moment arrives when this state of cohesion changes and the water is converted in one case into steam and in the other into ice.

....qualitative changes occur not gradually, but rapidly and abruptly, taking the form of a leap from one state to another; they occur not accidentally, but as the natural result of an accumulation of imperceptible and gradual quantitative changes....if the passing of slow quantitative changes into rapid and abrupt qualitative changes is a law of development, then it is clear that revolutions made by oppressed classes are a quite natural and inevitable phenomenon.... Hence the transition from capitalism to Socialism ...cannot be affected by slow changes, by reform, but only by a qualitative change of the capitalist system: by revolution. (Dialectical and Historical Materialism, Moscow, 1941, pp. 7-12.)

This, then, according to Stalin, is why we must have sudden, bloody revolutions: because water changes suddenly to ice or steam! Inasmuch as people are not water molecules, Stalin's argument may be discarded as another overextension of fluidism.

(The above paper originally was read at a meeting of the Folklore Society of Greater Washington on April 12, 1968. Frank Goodwyn is Professor of Spanish at the University of Maryland, College Park, where he also conducts a graduate seminar, "Folklore in Literature." His published works are numerous and include the folklore study The Devil in Texas (Dallas: Dealey and Lowe, 1936), area studies Life on the King Ranch (New York: Crowell, 1951) and Lone Star Land (New York: Knopf, 1955), and novels The Magic of Limping John (New York: Rinehart, 1944) and The Black Bull (New York: Doubleday, 1958).)

NEW FOLKLORIST AT MARYLAND...Gladys-Marie Fry, who received her BA and MA from Howard University in Washington, D.C. and her PhD from Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, is scheduled to join the folklorists presently teaching at the University of Maryland College Park campus. The university has announced that its undergraduate folklore program is being expanded to include courses in urban folklore, folk narrative, Afro-American folklore, American folklore, folksong, and ballad.

THE OLD DOG (CAT) IN THE SUITCASE (SHOPPING BAG) TRICK...RAK of Arlington, Virginia, (formerly of Stephens City, Virginia), had a daughter in the nunnery. In a letter to him, the daughter told a tale of two nuns working in a school for exceptional children in New York, New York. The nuns had had a pet dog at the school for a number of years. One Friday the dog died and the next day the nuns called the sanitation department to ask that the body be picked up. They were told that the department didn't make pickups on the weekend, but if they could get the carcass to a department station they would be relieved of it. The nuns stuffed the body in a suitcase and called a cab. Not wanting the cabbie to know their destination, they gave him an address a few blocks from that of the station, where they got out and proceeded to lug their parcel down the sidewalk. They hadn't gone but a few steps when a young man approached them and politely offered to carry the suitcase for them. At first they refused, but after the youth's protestation they assented, and the three proceeded toward their destination. A short distance later, the nuns, missing their helpmate, turned to see him hustling down the street as fast as he could with his heavy burden.

TRC of College Park, Maryland, (originally of Washington, D.C.), on hearing this story, told one he had heard: One day a high society lady's pet cat died and she put the body in a shopping bag to carry it to the veterinarian. On the way to the veterinarian, she took a short cut through a downtown department store (the Palais Royale, now defunct). The store was crowded. She was often jostled. And she didn't notice until out of the store that her shopping bag was missing. A short time later, store detectives were called to the ladies' room where they, unexplainably, found a big, fat lady (here TRC threw his arms out to his side and his head back) on her back fainted dead away on the floor. At her side was a shopping bag, containing a dead cat.

[For a story similar to the above, see "The Stolen Corpse" (Folktales of England, edited by Katharine M. Briggs and Ruth L. Tongue, The University of Chicago Press, 1965, pp. 99-100).]

THE SOCIETY LOGO...Someone has remarked that our logo, the design on the masthead of the Society's monthly newsletter, would "besmirch the character of a guineakeet." The bird is not a "guineakeet," but the American eagle. It is the design on the center of a counterpane with calico appliqué, signed "Esther S. Bardford, 1807," and in the Henry Ford Museum, Dearborn, Michigan. Lettered on the banner in the eagle's bill is "Truth is the summum bonum," and along both sides from the plant at the bottom of the design, "Let the arms of America be subjugated only to the banners of the cross and the sweet servitude of Immanuel; His yoke is easy and His burden light." The lettering on our regular monthly masthead is the work of Gerry Parsons.

HUNTING AND TAMING THE NATIVE AMERICAN (OR HAMMERED) DULCIMER
by Richard H. Hulan

I FIRST HEARD OF THE HAMMERED DULCIMER IN 1957. As a college freshman I had purchased the new American Folk Tales and Songs by Richard Chase, had read it, and was dutifully beginning with my own family (cf. p. 228) to recover all the traditional lore left. My great-aunt Launa Harper Davidson sang for me "Old Maids, Old Maids, All Ragged and Dirty," and remarked that as a girl (in 1893) she had learned to play the song on a dulcimer made by my grandfather, George Henry Hulan. Further information about this instrument was obtained from my grandmother, Bess Harper Hulan, and from my great-uncle Charles T. Hulan.

According to these relatives, there was a company (in Missouri?) which made dulcimers of the kind now distinguished by the non-folk prefix "hammered." Around 1885 my great-uncle Sam Hulan, living ten miles downstream from Nashville, Tennessee, became a salesman for this instrument manufactory. He traveled in the Cumberland River Valley, demonstrating the instruments and soliciting mail orders.

After a short time (before 1890) he determined that it would be more profitable to make the instruments himself, using the tools of his father's carpentry business. Sam and two younger brothers, Minor and George (my grandfather) made dulcimers, but only Sam and Minor sold them for a living. The business dried up around the turn of the century.

I had not seen a hammered dulcimer, however, prior to my discovery and purchase of one in Hodgenville, Kentucky, in 1965. By this time I was completely indoctrinated by, and even (shudder) a participant in, the Great Appalachian Dulcimer Conspiracy. Finding and restoring the real dulcimer, while it did not shake my faith in the other kind, at least reminded me of what I had early known and soon forgotten about the currency of the former instrument in the Cumberland region.

In the spring of 1966 I had a conversation with Joe Hickerson and Gus Meade (who was on coffee break) at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. Laboring through old Nashville Banner files (it's bad enough reading new ones), Gus had found a 1926 radio log reference to a Mrs. Cline of Westmoreland, Tennessee, who was to play dulcimer on the Saturday evening WSM radio program of folk music (later called the "Grand Ole Opry"). I suggested that this would probably have been a hammered dulcimer. Sensing a temperature drop in the room (perhaps only a breeze from the air hammers they were using in those days to encourage research), I decided, one way or the other, to find out.

A letter to the postmaster of Westmoreland seeking the address of any known friend or relative of a "Mrs. Cline who appeared on the Grand Ole Opry the first year it was on the air" was, as it turned out, forwarded to Mrs. Cline who at the age (then) of eighty-eight and one-half years was still living where she always had. She was, indeed, a hammerer of dulcimers.

After exchanging several letters with the sprightly Mrs. G.R. (Cora) Cline, I visited her in June, 1966. She had given her dulcimer to a grandson years before, but after a few false starts I managed to tune mine in the treble courses well enough to record a bit of her lightning-fast playing. We ran into problems, however, when we came to the bass notes. Mrs. Cline had always tuned by ear, but couldn't tune this particular instrument because of the sharp eyesight and physical effort necessary. The trial-and-error method seemed to get us nowhere, so we gave up on the bass courses.

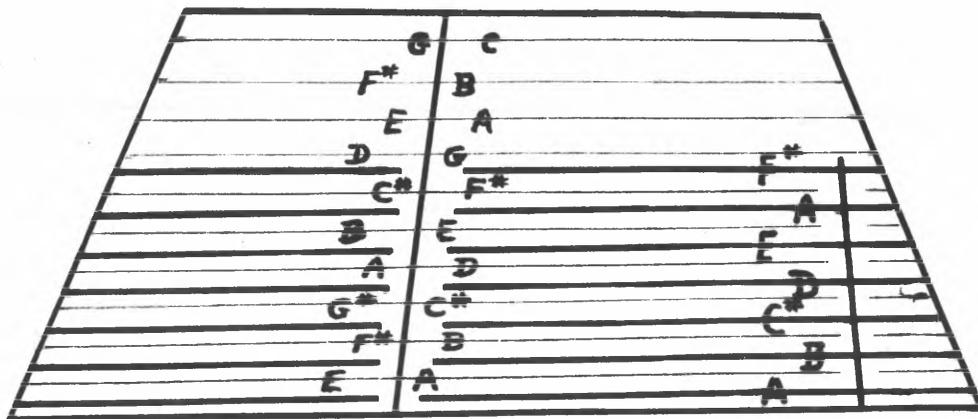
Later in 1966 I found my second dulcimer. This one, from West Virginia, had no bass course and thus caused little tuning difficulties. We moved from Bethesda, Maryland, back to Nashville in the fall, visiting Mrs. Cline several more times

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and finding (in Westmoreland) a third dulcimer without learning how to tune the bass strings.

THE FOURTH HAMMERED DULCIMER I OBTAINED UNLOCKED THE PUZZLE. Someone had penciled a number under each course. Since I already knew that the treble tuning was basically a Mixolydian scale on the right side of the bridge, and the same thing a fifth higher on the left, I knew the tone values for the numbers. The bass range was numbered 1,2,3,4,5,1,6, which, in the simplest key signature, would be C,D,E,F,G,C,A. This tuning was subsequently confirmed by Mrs. Cline and by another player from her neighborhood, Mrs. W.P. (Laura) Lambert, as the one they had learned before 1900.

Having since acquired four more dulcimers, and having seen some twenty others which were not for sale, I feel reasonably confident in offering this scheme of tuning as the one which was traditional in the vicinity of Westmoreland, Tennessee, and Scottsville, Kentucky, at the turn of the century:



It is easier for me to think in C than in the keys suggested by this system of tuning (A,D, and G). As a matter of fact, the instrument responds about as well tuned a tone lower than as shown on the diagram, if one prefers G,C, and F. The reason I have written those tone values on the diagram is that the hammered dulcimer in the area I studied was frequently used with a fiddle; at least one group regularly played with a dulcimer, fiddle, and banjo. In the case of the latter instruments, absolute pitch is more critical than with the acoustically unsophisticated dulcimers most typically found in the area. The A,D, G pattern caters to the fiddler, and when playing by ear the dulcimer artist can think in any key he pleases. This is an advantage, or a drawback, common to instruments with basically a built-in diatonic scale such as the harmonica, Appalachian dulcimer, and so forth. To avoid value judgments, let us say that it is characteristic.

THERE ARE ON THIS CONTINENT QUITE A NUMBER OF ETHNIC COMMUNITIES which use, or have used hammered dulcimers in several variant forms. Among these are the Germans in Michigan, Kansas, and Nebraska; the Czechs in Texas; the Ukrainians in Alberta; and predominantly Scottish-Irish communities in the Appalachian, Ozark, and Cumberland hills (not to mention the valleys between). To the best of my knowledge, no group thus far reported in print uses quite the same tuning I have just described. Furthermore, the only source which gives detailed information on what to do after tuning (how to play) is Howie Mitchell's underground press. I have therefore attempted to transcribe one tune, "Soldier's Joy," exactly as played by Mrs. Laura Lambert, Fairfield Community, Sumner County, Tennessee.

A few words of explanation will be necessary for the system of notation.

As the preceding diagram shows, the form of the dulcimer used in the Cumberland area has two bridges. Treble notes are produced by striking a course, three or four strings tuned to the same pitch, near the left bridge, which slants from left to right (/). Mrs. Lambert's dulcimer had ten treble courses. In the notation below 1/ means that the first course (nearest the player, lowest note) is struck on the left side of the treble bridge. Similarly, /5 would be the fifth course struck on the right side of the treble bridge.

There is the further complication in that any note on the instrument may be struck by the hammer (some Cumberland area residents call them "paddles") held in either the right or the left hand. Thus the last note mentioned (/5) will be written /5R or /5L, depending on which hand was used by Mrs. Lambert.

This completes the treble notation and, if used for the West Virginia type dulcimer which has no bass bridge, would be the whole system. For those instruments which have a bass bridge on the right side (near the edge of the trapezoidal sounding board), the bass symbol contains no slash, but is underlined (5R). All bass notes are struck on the left side of the bass bridge. To review: The number indicates which course to strike; the letter indicates which hand to strike it with; and the straight line indicates which bridge (in the case of the treble, which side of the bridge). A word of caution: In all tablature, you only produce the right notes if your dulcimer is tuned like the one from which the tune was transcribed.

SOLDIER'S JOY

The musical score for "SOLDIER'S JOY" is presented in six staves. Each staff contains a line of music with a corresponding line of dulcimer tablature below it. The key signature is G major (two sharps) and the time signature is 2/4. The tablature uses numbers 1-8 to represent courses and letters R/L to represent the right and left hands. Slashes (/) indicate the treble bridge, and underlines indicate the bass bridge. The notation is as follows:

- Staff 1: /5R /5L 6R /5L /5R /5L 6R /5L /5R /5L /5R 4L/ 4L/ /5R /5L 6R /5L /5R /5L
- Staff 2: 6R /5L /5R /5L /4R /2L /2L /5R /5L 6R /5L /5R /5L 6R /5L /5R /5L /5R 4L/ 4L/ 6R 6R
- Staff 3: 4R/ 5L/ 6R/ 5L/ 6R/ 5L/ 5R/ 5L/ 6R/ 5L/ 4R/ 4R/ 4R/ 4R/ 5L/ 6R/ 5L/ 6R/ 5L/
- Staff 4: 8R/ 8R/ 5L/ 5R/ 5L/ 6R/ 5L/ 7R/ 7R/ 5L/ 5R/ 5L/ 6R/ 5L/ 8R/ 8R/ 5L/ 6R/ 5L/
- Staff 5: 5R/ 5L/ /5R /5R 5L/ 6R/ 5L/ 6R/ 5L/ 8R/ 8R/ 5L/ 5R/ 5L/ 6R/ 5L/ 7R/ 7R/ 5L/
- Staff 6: 6R/ 5L 6R/ 5L 5R/ 5L 6R/ 5L 4R/

SV5n6

This piece as written is played in twelve seconds (♩ = 160). Mrs. Lambert may play through it three or four times, or it may be divided into eight-measure sections, either of which may be repeated.

Close inspection of the music reveals certain techniques for producing the maximum complexity of sound with the minimum effort. The right hand plays only downbeats; the left all upbeats. Furthermore, the left hand has only four notes throughout, repeating two in much the style (rhythmically) of the fifth banjo string. Therefore the right hand, which does most of the moving about, has twice as long to get from note to note as the staff notation alone would indicate. At this tempo it is still quite busy, but not impossibly so.

To approximate on a piano the sound of the hammered dulcimer, play the notes with both the soft and sustaining pedal depressed. To get the feel of the effort required, play the above music with one finger of each hand, downbeats with the right and upbeats with the left (chords with both). And get through in twelve seconds. Then you will need only a dulcimer and a pair of paddles to become an authentic folk player of the Native American Paddled Dulcimer.

(Richard H. Hulan is Director of Belle Meade Mansion in Nashville, Tennessee. He is presently working, combining more of his findings in a more extensive and comprehensive article on the hammered dulcimer.)

THE 1968 CROP OF FOLK FESTIVALS...A GLEANING (Continued):

Tennessee Valley Old Time Fiddlers' Association Convention and Contests...For the second year, the Tennessee Valley Old Time Fiddlers' Association has put on a fine folk festival without (for crying out loud) having to call it one. This organization, formed gradually since 1964 to fill the vacuum created when most of the so-called "fiddlers' contests" in the Confederacy became dominated by electrified garbage-mongers, caters to old-time fiddlers. It welcomes old-time anything else -- harmonica blowers (suckers?), banjo pickers, delcymore knockers, teeth ticklers, buck dancers, and so forth. It has a division for bluegrass banjo separate from old-time banjo, and doesn't allow grass bands at all, which action I defend as historically accurate and geologically appropriate, the soil around Athens, Alabama, not being bluegrass soil.

Besides getting to hear some of the best traditional fiddling around (Sid Harkreader and Arthur Smith, former professionals now qualifying as amateurs, didn't win their divisions), several thousand people had the opportunity to buy Uncle Jim's Home Made Fiddles for twenty-five dollars, to buy Kanawha and County records from their producers, to hear an anvil shoot, to see the fabulous Hulan collection of instruments (splendidly mounted on plywood), and much more -- all for the low, low price of one dollar. This fall, there will be free trailer facilities for campers. The first Saturday in October, Athens College, Athens, Alabama, y'all come. For more details, newsletter, and so forth, write: Tennessee Valley Old Time Fiddlers' Association, Route 4, Box S-191, Madison, Alabama 35758

Richard H. Hulan

From MAS, aged seven and resident in Bethesda, Maryland, and to the tune of the 1937 hit from the Walt Disney movie, "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs":

Heigh, ho; heigh ho, it's off to school we go;
With razor blades and hand grenades,
Heigh, ho; heigh, ho; heigh ho!

BOOK NOTICES AND REVIEWS;

Anglo-American Folksong Style. [By] Roger D. Abrahams [and] George Foss. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968. ix, 242 pp. Music, References, Sources of Songs, Selected Bibliography, Discography, Index, Index of Titles and First Lines. Cloth, \$7.50; Paper, \$3.95.

In many ways this book is the best comprehensive survey of British-American folksong style since G.H. Gerould's The Ballad of Tradition; indeed, the volume invites comparison with Gerould's splendid effort of 1932. Gerould judiciously picked his way through the warring theories of the post-Child generation, arriving at a sensible and balanced exposition of the salient characteristics of the Child ballads. His critical eclecticism, his keen insight on specific issues, and his gracious prose helped to make Gerould's book an ideal summing-up, a watershed in folksong criticism. The shifts in emphasis in Anglo-American Folksong Style reflect a host of new ideas and attitudes which have boiled up in folklore studies since the 1930's. The ballad has been demoted from its former eminence and mixed democratically with other forms of folksong. Gone, for the most part, are the lengthy discussions of the origin of various generic groups. Gone is many an old platitude about ballad and lyric, oral transmission, and other crucial theoretical issues. And gone is Gerould's gracious prose style.

The book has many virtues. The authors have drawn upon their own field collections for excellent examples of American (generally Southern) folksong. Meter and music receive thorough attention. In an age of communication theory, we may be assured that the relationship of a singer's art to his audience and to his cultural experience has not been neglected. The nature and causes of stability and variation in oral transmission are explored in detail. The analysis of the epic-ballad-dialog-lyric spectrum is perceptive. There is a brave effort to lay the groundwork for a folksong esthetic, principally through analysis of the text-tune relationship in the folksong idiom. In short, the book teems with exciting ideas; it is not so much a balanced summing-up as a tentative exploration of new critical territories.

The chief defect of the book is its carelessness with detail. One has the impression that it was composed in haste. The repose of Gerould's exposition, born of long acquaintance with all facets of every term and issue, is missing here. In terminology, for example, the authors use "Anglo-American" to mean both "white American" and "American of British origin," causing some unfortunate ambiguities. Similarly, the word "formulaic," which has come to carry a quite specific meaning in recent scholarship, is used where "formal" would have been better (p. 69). "Isochronic" (pp. 62, 134) is used in an unusual sense. Worse, there are numerous instances of downright mistakes. To take a conspicuous example of factual error, the "Wreck of the Old 97," not "Casey Jones" (p. 34), is an imitation of the older "Ship That Never Returned." On the bibliographical side, the Chapter References contain so many errors that they seem to have been typed from memory and rushed to the publisher. One page (p. 194) contains a disgraceful eight or ten errors, such as "Alfred Lord" for Albert Lord (twice), and "Bruno Nettle" for Bruno Nettl. Such sloppiness here hardly inspires confidence where facts are not verifiable.

Much of the commentary on folk music (presumably the responsibility of Foss) is pioneering, which means that, though it is an excellent explanation of a complicated subject, there is room for debate at more than one point. The analysis of scales, though quite long and thorough, fails to deal with "inflected scales;" inflection (p. 159) is wrongly equated with chromaticism and wrongly ascribed to Negro influence (it is easily traceable to British tradition). The discussion of the feeling for the octave among traditional singers (p. 157) is, in my opinion, neither correct nor lucid. The phenomenon of syncopation is poorly illustrated (pp. 138-9). The comments about tune re-

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relationships are inadequate: the tune on page 180 is not borrowed from a "young" song, but appears frequently with Child 74 (twenty-three instances in Bronson); and the tune on page 183 was probably not borrowed from "Edward," for it is the ubiquitous "Boyne Water" and appears elsewhere with "The Gypsy Laddie." Though the book cites previous folk music scholarship by Bartók, Bronson, Bayard, and Schinhan, it fails to mention several important studies by Bronson and Bayard, especially Bronson's computer analyses of stability and variation in folk tunes.

To end with a better perspective, this is an excellent volume from both the verbal and musical points of view. Its assertions should stimulate some hard new thinking about the nature of American folksong style. But a revised edition is in order to accommodate our interim needs.

Alan Jabbour
University of California
Los Angeles, California

The Ballad Mongers: Rise of the Modern Folk Song. [By] Oscar Brand. Foreword by Agnes De Mille. New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1967. (Minerva Press, M7.) First published 1962. [xv] 240 pp. Bibliography. Paper, \$2.95.

Historians of the folksong revival will have to retrieve their hard core of historical fact from ephemeral and mass-media publications, interviews, and a variety of commentary-from-within. The 1967 Dell paperback, The American Folk Scene, was an anthology of largely popular articles, with little disciplined direction from editors David A. DeTurk and A. Poulin, Jr. There have already been two MA theses on the revival, John Patterson's historical interpretation at Indiana University and Victor Lukas's anthropological study at the University of Illinois. Two PhD dissertations are in progress on the use of folksong by the American Left, R. Serge Denisoff's sociological treatment at Simon Frazer University and Richard A. Reuss' historical one at Indiana University.

Except for general trends, the specifics of time, place, and personality have rarely been documented in published writings on the revival, the one main exception being Oscar Brand's personalized description of the "ballad mongers," now available in paperback. Historians will have to reckon with this book, but in so doing they will have to contend with a hodge-podge of fact, near-fact, and fiction concerning both folk music and the folksong revival, laced throughout with the author's recounting of his own involvement in particular events. In the latter regard, the book might be useful. As for the former, however, hardly a page goes by without an error of fact or a confusion of sweeping misinterpretation. And underlying the entire book is the author's boldly stated but unarguable personal definition of folk music as that "distinguishable by a specific sound, a kind of 'simple noise'" (p. 10).

Brand's style makes for lively reading, and I commend this book to anyone who can locate one of the places where it sells at discount for ninety-five cents, and who is particularly interested in skirting the realities of the folksong revival, as I believe many of its participants occasionally wish to do,

J.C.H.

Singing Games and Playparty Games. Compiled by Richard Chase. Illustrated by Joshua Tolford. With six piano settings by Hilton Rufty. New York: Dover Publications, 1967. 57 pp. Illustrated, Music. Paper, \$1.00.

Children's Singing Games with the Tunes to Which They are Sung. Collected & Edited by Alice B. Gomme. Pictured in Black & White by Winifred Smith. New York: Dover Publications, 1967. 70 pp. Illustrated, Music. Paper, \$1.00.

Richard Chase's book is an inexpensive reprint of a work published in 1949 as Hullabaloo and Other Singing Folk Games by Houghton Mifflin of Boston. This is a usable collection of eighteen simple traditional English-American dances,

some for young children, others for teenagers and adults. With unerring taste for drama, melody, and fun in participation, Chase draws primarily from his own extensive experiences with recreational groups along the eastern seaboard of the United States. The clarity and appeal of his instructions are enhanced by delightfully informative illustrations by Joshua Tolford.

Some scholars may be critical of Chase's failure to provide complete reference information about the sources of his materials; they may criticize his combining materials from more than one source. Such critics will have discounted the main purpose of the author's efforts, which is to maximize the enjoyment of active participation in a traditional form of recreational activity.

In his book, Chase acknowledges his indebtedness to the works of several persons, particularly Alice B. Gomme. An example of Lady Gomme's work is provided in Children's Singing Games, published originally by David Nutt of London in 1894. It comprises eight selections from her landmark two-volume The Traditional Games of England, Scotland and Ireland (London: D. Nutt, 1894 -8), and is enhanced by elaborate illustrations and decorations by Winifred Smith. Interesting notes for each game give an indication of the development and social significance of many of the actions. On the negative side, the notation of several of the tunes is inaccurate or unnatural, but this condition can easily be overcome by children in their own way as they enjoy the games.

For those who would make a comparative analysis, four of the games described in English versions by Lady Gomme appear also in Chase's book of American games.

Though separated by an ocean and two generations, the two books provide excellent selections which, in use, well illustrate why children's singing games remain vibrant in our time of technological change. These games join children with their cultural past while responding at the same time to natural esthetic and social needs of all children. For such reasons, singing games merit the attention of parents as well as leaders in schools, churches, camps, and recreation programs.

*John F. Putnam
Lanham, Maryland*

Folk Religion in Japan: Continuity and Change. [By] Ichiro Hori. Edited by Joseph M. Kitagawa and Alan L. Miller. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1968. (Haskell Lectures on History of Religions, New Series, No. 1 Joseph M. Kitagawa, General Editor.) xv, 278 pp. Foreword by Joseph M. Kitagawa. Selected Bibliography. Illustrations. \$7.00.

This book is based on a series of lectures given at the University of Chicago in 1965. It is a history of the interaction of the Japanese people with religion, not in the formal sense, but outside the bounds of organized religion, in what is folk religion, a force which "...has greatly conditioned the political, economic, and cultural developments..." (p. xi) of the Japanese people. With such a subject, this could be a dynamic book, giving not only the history of folk religion but an insight into its influence on the Japanese people. Like all too many text books, the subject is covered thoroughly in a well organized but, unfortunately, uninspiring manner. It may be a good book to use as a reference, but not one to read for enjoyment.

*Frank Daspit
Washington, D.C.*

The Delaware Canal: A Picture Story. By Robert J. McClellan. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1968 (c 1967). Foreword by Maurice K. Goddard. xv, 112 pp. Illus., Maps, Gloss. \$7.50.

Sometimes in these streamlined days, we yearn for the easier pace of times gone by. But I, for one, can't remember myself ever yearning for a pace quite as easy as that afforded by the canal boat. These unsentimental sentiments notwithstanding, let me enthusiastically recommend Robert J. McClellan's book. If it

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won't make you any more eager to subject yourself to the slowest motion a mule can provide, it may at least give a more stimulating picture of the colorful communities and robust people that once flourished along the mirror waters.

McClellan subtitles his book "A Picture Story," by which he refers to the eighty or more handsome wash drawings of men, boats, locks, machinery, bridges, dams, aqueducts, boat yards, lanterns, stoves, cabin furnishings, mules, and other paraphernalia of the vanished industry. The author-artist also includes a number of maps, diagrams and cross sections (he says that a cross section drawing of a canal is called a prism) that help the reader see the Delaware Canal in its totality -- the sixty miles along the Delaware River from Easton in the coal country, down past the falls at Trenton, finally to the Bristol Basin just up from the port of Philadelphia. McClellan did his artwork from old photographs and from the still standing fragments of the Delaware Canal (opened 1832, closed 1931), and there is about it a refreshing aura of authenticity.

I think that students of early industry will find the text quite as convincing as the illustrations. Although the prose is readable, which is to say the opposite of scholarly, McClellan gives this canal non-buff the impression that he's done his homework. His character sketches of the old-time "canawlers" are engaging. His explanations of the subtleties of "locking through" are lucid. Washington area residents should read this book, then go look at their own canal with a fresh eye.

Gerald E. Parsons, Jr.
Cooperstown Graduate Programs
Cooperstown, New York

I'm a Freeborn Man and Other Original Radio Ballads and Songs of British Workingmen, Gypsies, Prizefighters, Teen-Agers -- and Contemporary Songs of Struggle and Conscience. By Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger. New York: Oak Publications, 1968. Index. 104 pp. Illus., Music. Paper, \$2.95.

This book is built around songs commissioned for radio and TV programs, documentary films, and living theatre. It contains forty-five songs, of which five are credited to Peggy Seeger and forty to Ewan MacColl. Some are entirely new, others use traditional melodies. They range from MacColl at his best in songs like the nostalgic "Thirty-Foot Trailer" to MacColl at his worst in some political so-called "cause" songs. (Even a good cause is not an excuse for a bad song.)

Most of the songs "...were not conceived as... 'spot numbers'... [but] were designed to form part of a continuous text which would move freely between speech and song or, when combined with visual images in a film, they would form part of the total language of the medium. They represent an attitude towards song-writing which, in Britain, has become known as the radio-ballad approach..." (p. 5).

One wishes that this were not a book, but a collection of the programs and films for which the songs were written. Songs are not at their best on paper anyway. The photographs help, however, and MacColl's twelve-page section "Concerning the Radio Ballads" should be read by anyone concerned with creation for communications media.

The radio ballads were a series of eight programs commissioned by the BBC between 1957 and 1964. "They were the work of a team of singers, song-writers, technicians, instrumentalists, and others who were consciously attempting to apply the techniques of folk creation to one part of the mass media - radio..." (p. 5). By eliminating the formal narrator and combining "actuality" speech with studio music and song, the radio ballads attempted to form an organic unit of communication. This technique has been used since in several TV programs and films in Britain. (An adaptation of the idea was used in the film "Whaler Out of New Bedford," shown two years ago by the Folklore Society of Greater Washington.) The concept is fascinating, and should be used in this country. If this book does nothing else, it could stimulate some thought about the use of traditional music forms in today's electronic media.

John R. Dildine
Accokeek, Maryland

Rapping Frailing Folk Banjo. By Terry Bryon. Seffner, Florida: The Bluegrass Bookshelf, 1967. 23 pp. Tablatures. Paper, \$4.95.

Ten Rapping Frailing Banjo Tablatures. By Terry Bryon. Seffner, Florida: The Bluegrass Bookshelf, (1967?). 11 pp. Tablatures. Paper, \$4.00.
Current address: 726 S.W. 14th Avenue, Miami, Florida 33135.

Caveat Emptor! A so-called "folk" book written by a bluegrass banjo player. An instruction book, yet. I don't want to drive any more wedges between the so-called "folk" world and that of bluegrass, since acrimony is abundant enough between the two, but I must say that these two books are pretty much useless.

The instruction book is written in a loose, rambling style, and its text and tablature contain numerous mistakes. The most evident is in the paragraph dealing with the author's distinction between frailing and rapping. He says that rapping is up-picking and frailing is down-picking (referring to the first note in the basic pattern). Then he says that rapping is like "kicking a football" with your finger and frailing is like "digging a hole." Unless my fingers bend opposite from his, the author appears to have contradicted himself.

Barring the mistakes that creep in, Bryon's tablatures are easy to use and instructive, but his arrangements of tunes leave me cold. And why does he choose the songs he does? For example, he uses "Wildwood Flower" to illustrate several techniques, a song well-known to bluegrass musicians but not particularly suited to other styles of banjo playing.

Ten Rapping Frailing Banjo Tablatures suffers from the faults of the instructor. Again, the choice of music is terrible, and the transcriptions are fraught with errors (either that, or Bryon plays some pretty weird versions of standard songs).

*Robert J. Clayton
Washington, D.C.*

Instrumental Techniques of American Folk Guitar. [By] Harry Taussig. New York: Oak Publications, 1968. Originally published in 1965 by Traditional Stringed Instruments. 91 pp. Illus., Music, Bibliog., Discog. Paper, \$2.95.

This is a very sophisticated and excellent book well suited for the student who has a fair grounding in the basics of guitar and who wants to learn to play solos and accompaniments in traditional American finger-picking styles. Some of the musicians whose styles are covered are the Carter Family, Elizabeth Cotton, Etta Baker, Mississippi John Hurt, Merle Travis, and Reverend Gary Davis. An extensive discography is appended, and the author makes a point of referring to it often, telling the student to listen before trying to decipher the tablature. This is a point I feel is often forgotten in instruction books of this sort, the end result being a guitarist who is technically competent but has little feeling or soul (excuse me) for his music.

The book starts with an elementary Carter style pick-and-brush stroke and progresses through various increasingly difficult styles, giving at least two or three variations of each. The student is encouraged to employ these variations together with the recordings (the tablature is not an exact transcription) in order to develop his own versions of the songs. Words are given to each song to give a feel for accompaniment.

The book contains twenty songs (with several versions of many) but is probably concentrated enough to keep a serious student busy for about a year of evenings. The resultant practice will no doubt be rewarding if frequent reference is made to recordings and live performances.

*Mike Rivers
Arlington, Virginia*

The Country Blues Guitar. By Stefan Grossman. Music autography and "The Music System" essay by Larry Leitch. New York: Oak Publications, 1968. Illustrations, Photos,

Facsimiles, Music, Tablatures, Discography. Paper, \$2.95.

This is the first of a well-conceived series of five volumes concerned with the traditional guitar techniques of Negro America. This volume is primarily devoted to the style of Mississippi John Hurt, the Memphis sound, and some musical styles from Alabama and Arkansas. The other volumes will treat of the music of the Mississippi Delta, Texas, and Louisiana, as well as ragtime blues. An entire book will be devoted to Reverend Gary Davis and his many intricate and personal styles of guitar playing.

For the first times, here is a really usable instruction book for the serious blues guitarist. During the past several years a large number of published works have appeared purporting to teach so-called "blues" guitar, but for the most part, the examples provided have been so insipid that far from helping interest grow, they have turned off a large number of aspiring bluesmen.

In the current work, there are words, music, tablature, and photographs of all chord positions for twenty-four songs by Mississippi John Hurt, Furry Lewis, Frank Stokes, Charley Jordan, Memphis Minnie, Bo Carter, Robert Wilkins, Ed Bell, Barefoot Bill, and Buddy Boy Hawkins. Some of the selections are very well known and easily obtainable on records, such as "Frankie" and "Candyman" by John Hurt, and "Kassie Jones" by Furry Lewis, while others have not yet been reissued in this country (for example, "Jailhouse Fire Blues" and "Awful Fix Blues" by Buddy Boy Hawkins). It is a pretty safe bet, however, that anyone who is interested in the blues enough to want to take advantage of this book will have access to recordings of more than half the songs transcribed. A complete discography is provided.

Of course some of the reservations common to most instruction books are inherent in this one too. It cannot adequately teach the spirit or feeling of the blues. As Happy Traum points out, "There are too many aspects of the blues for which we have no written language." This book can be an invaluable supplement to, but cannot replace, the most effective and most traditional process of learning blues guitar styles -- by listening. No tablature system, no matter how easy to read (this one is pretty good in this respect), and no musical transcription, no matter how accurate, can adequately transmit the blues style.

I do think, though, that with this book, some patience, some talent, and a lot of listening, a pretty fair insight into some of the most important of the country blues guitar styles may be obtained.

*Victor T. Lukas
Sunshine, Maryland*

To Hell With Skiing! A Tragi-Comic Collection of Some 70-Odd Ski Songs of the U.S.A. Collected and Edited by Mike Cohen. New York: Oak Publications, 1967. 112 pp. Music, Photographs, List of Sources. Paper, \$2.95.

To Hell With Skiing is an extensive collection of bar songs, college songs, and camping songs -- parodies on skiing of the sort fashionable a few years ago in night-clubs in Aspen and elsewhere. These are the ditties of the après, or instead-of ski. The introduction laments: "Neo-skiers have let the tradition of song fall by the wayside....For whatever reason, they don't seem to sing....This book...hopes [to encourage] a ski-song revival...."

Skiing is an individual, not a group sport; there are no swim songs, either. So the only real ski music is the yodel, a tradition in which few are competent. But for those, skiers or not, who like the gemütlichkeit of après-ski, this collection is ample. It lacks only the unwritten round, "Slalom Chaverim."

*Cal Herrmann
New Shrewsbury, New Jersey*

At the Society's January program, PETER GOTT from the Big Laurel area of North Carolina told of a mountaineer acquaintance who "always wanted to play the mandolin but never could get that nervous."

RECORD NOTICES AND REVIEWS:

The Mountain Dulcimer: How to Make It and Play It (After a Fashion). By Howard W. Mitchell. Record and Book. Folk-Legacy Records, Inc., 1965. Huntington, Vermont. (Present address: Sharon, Connecticut 06069). \$6.95.

Some folklore purists may be disappointed with Howard Mitchell's lack of reverence for the past. But most thoughtful persons (including the purists) probably will agree that his record-booklet combination succeeds in stimulating interest in the dulcimer, in its characteristics and potentialities. The performer-author succeeds also in generating in the reader-listener a self-confidence in his ability to create his own plucked dulcimer and then to draw from this creation a variety of satisfying musical expressions.

The record serves both as guide and inspiration. It contains a pleasurable potpurri of demonstrations, folksong samplings, experiments, and homey chatter. The total effect on the listener is one of wonderment and admiration, and of assurance that, in the dulcimer, almost anything may be possible. Though a most simple instrument, it also can serve sophisticated ends -- and the record seems to prove it.

Musically, selections on the record range from the banjo tune "Flop-eared Mule" to "The Two Sisters (Child ballad number 10), from "Frankie and Johnnie" to "The Ash Grove," and from "Babylon is Falling" of the shape-note hymnal to Bach's "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring." The performance reflects the casual ease and creativity of outstanding artistry. Reproduction is excellent.

For those who would receive a full measure of self-fulfillment through creative activity, the booklet outlines steps involved in producing one's own plucked dulcimer -- and in drawing music from it. As with the record, Mitchell's personality shines through in the directness of the construction steps and in the folksy humor of side excursions on various related topics. This sly humor may be illustrated in the names of his experimental instruments which include the "dulciless" (a fingerboard without a soundbox), "twicimer" (for two players), and "d'Orcimer" (constructed on a hollow core door).

This booklet-record package provides stimulation, titillation, and inspiration, with enough detail about construction and playing to encourage self-confidence. This detail is balanced with brevity sufficient to encourage creative self-expression uninhibited by false notions that with a folk-type instrument there is any standard of artistry or performance to which one's own efforts should be compared.

John F. Putnam
Lanham, Maryland

HOLD THE WOODPILE DOWN...Moonshining has been the subject of articles in two recent publications. In The Cotton Patch Rag, published by the Houston Folklore Society (5638 Newquay, Houston, Texas 77045), there is a brief article describing the process as learned, presumably, from informants in Texas, and noting the pitfalls involved in moonshining (III: 3, p. 2 and ff.). Foxfire, published in Rabun Gap, Georgia 30568, contains "The End of Moonshining as a Fine Art" (II: 3&4, p. 35 and ff.). The article, the work of several authors, is very complete, enhanced with photographs, diagrams, and even gives some of the folklore connected with moonshining.

Meanwhile here in the Washington, D.C., area the Study Commission on Maryland Folklife has learned that (mirabile dictu!) the federal government is setting up a mountain still. The still is being prepared by the National Park Service at Catoctin Mountain Park near Thurmont, Maryland, where 5,700 acres are planned to be developed as a living outdoor museum of Western Maryland mountain folklife. According to the Commission's information, the aim of the project is to tell the story of man's use of his environment. Also included in plans for the site are a mountain farm, an exhibit of charcoal making for iron furnace use, an early gristmill, an early sawmill, and an Ordinary.