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Rethinking Folklorization in Ecuador

Multivocality in the Expressive Contact Zone

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ABSTRACT

"Folklorization" highlights the processing of local artistic production into mediated displays of culture. Here I challenge the built-in assumption that folklorization necessarily corrupts, arguing instead for the multivocality of cultural production in expressive contact zones, that is, zones where the local meets the global. In Quichua storytelling and in the making of musical CDs among the indigenous people of northern Ecuador, there is strong potential for revitalization of vernacular codes even in highly-mediated performance settings. *KEYWORDS: folk belief, personal experience narrative, commemorative song, ritual language, folklorization*

These days, folklore seems to come to us in highly mediated forms—or is it that we are simply more attentive to processes of mediation that have always been at play with our materials? No doubt, expressive genres have been objectified from time immemorial. After all, oral tradition has found its way into writing for a few millennia, into print for several hundred years, and into broadcast media for more than a century. But only recently was the verb "to traditionalize" coined by Dell Hymes (1975) to capture the processing of tradition, and it wasn't until the second half of the twentieth century that the migration of cultural production

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from point of origin to point of consumption, from its first-order to its second-order existence (Newall 1987), came to be carefully theorized. Such is the level of current interest in the mediation of popular artistic expression that I propose we embrace as the current folkloristic paradigm the study of organic cultural expression as it is processed for artistic, touristic, commercial, political, and yes, academic, ends.

A term in current usage that is meant to capture the mediation of local artistic traditions is "folklorization," and I want to explore in this paper the potential it offers for addressing the ways folklore enters into these larger arenas. In its most common acceptation today, "to folklorize" means to remove traditional expressive culture from an original point of production and relocate it in a distanced setting of consumption. Uncomfortably, for folklorists, the root sense of "folklore" entailed in this construction is of an always, already adulterated product. As in Germany and much of Latin America, the term "folklore" as referenced in folklorization implies something prettified or staged. Nevertheless, the folklorization paradigm has become fashionable in contemporary social science, particularly among anthropologists and ethnomusicologists, and we folklorists ignore it at our peril.

"The adventures of folklorization" is a topic awaiting careful scrutiny. The term's first appearance in English, to the best of my knowledge, was in the work of Américo Paredes, who used it to indicate "the way that folklore adapts all kinds of materials into generic patterns dominant in a tradition" (1973:172). The test case for Paredes was "El corrido de José Mosqueda," where the tale of a train robbery is adapted to the dominant theme of inter-ethnic conflict.[1] "Folklorization" doesn't appear to gain much traction in the North American context, as far as I can tell, until 1991 when the ethnomusicologist Thomas Turino (1991) employed it in reference to interventions in vernacular culture production by agents of the Peruvian state, notably during the military dictatorship of Juan Velasco Alvarado, 1968–1975. Since the late 1990s, the term has become conventional among a group of mostly younger scholars, working for the most part in Latin American settings, most of them housed in the fields of anthropology and ethnomusicology (Jackson 1995; Rockefeller 1998; Lewis 2000; Hagedorn 2001; Wirtz 2004; Feldman 2006; Greene 2007).

It is crucial to bear in mind that folklorization has had different meanings, even opposite meanings, in different times and places. For example, David Guss, writing on festivals in Venezuela, inverts the current paradigm, referring to what we are calling "folklorizing" as "de-folklorizing":

> Through this concept the folklore event would be cleaned up. It would be colorfully recostumed and dramatically recoreographed. In short, it would be repackaged so that it could compete onstage with other art forms no matter how classical or refined. Only then would folklore finally be 'de-marginalized' and, taking its rightful place in the pantheon of the arts, be able to be appreciated by all strata of society. (2000:114)

Still, among the clutch of scholars using this term today, a consensus has formed implicating folklorization as a processing of local traditions for external consumption.

The outlines of this usage are established in the volume edited by Greg Urban and Joel Sherzer, *Nation-States and Indians in Latin America,* which, since its publication in 1991, seems to have served as a point of origin for much subsequent discussion of folklorization, to judge by the tracks of cross-references. This volume contains a seminal statement by ethnomusicologist Thomas Turino, "The State and Andean Musical Production in Peru," as well as an influential overview in the book's introduction and additional recourse to the term in the chapter contributed by Jane Hill. Turino reviews policies implemented in Peru during the second half of the twentieth century, and, referring to interventions by agents of the state into vernacular traditions, points to the inevitable transformations wrought upon the source materials:

> With the best of intentions, these cultural administrators were, and are, fighting for the legitimacy, recognition, and preservation of Andean arts through actions such as organizing performance contests, theater-stage presentations, and "folklore" schools. In the very act of doing so, however, they are bowing to the greater prestige of urban-Western values and institutions by suggesting that such contexts are the final proving ground for performers and art forms. Moreover, in such contexts Andean arts are highly influenced by urban-Western aesthetics and *criollo* stereotypes regarding Andeans. Legitimacy is indeed enhanced but on *criollo* terms and within their control. (1991:272)

The activities instigated by these cultural brokers, in spite of good intentions, introduced values and perspectives alien to the root communities and served most directly the purposes of *criollos,* the urban elites. Greg Urban and Joel Sherzer (1991:10–11), in their introduction to the volume, see folklorization as close kin to "exoticization," a "related but distinguishable process . . . which is connected with touristic interest," and find similarities between folklorization and what Eric Hobsbawm (1983) calls "invented traditions."

Jane Hill (1991:77–78) delves into folklorized tradition in Puebla, Mexico, during the 1970s and 1980s. With reference to school festivals, she uses terms like "canonical mélange," "spectacle of athletic contortion," and "denatured version" to characterize the dances performed in these venues. Hill notes with appárent discomfort: "in a graduation in San Miguel Canoa in 1982 I saw a twelve-year-old loincloth-clad 'Aztec prince' simulate the sacrifice of a white-robed fifth-grade 'virgin' on a pine table borrowed from some parental household" (1991:78). Like the other authors in the Urban and Sherzer volume, Hill is tracking the disconnect between indigenous culture as lived reality and its portrayal in nationalistic demonstrations. She and her companions in the anthology accurately capture the artificiality of the folklorized productions that emerge from these settings.

And so it goes—resounding across the discourse on folklorization is this thematic of privation, doubtlessly fixated on real dilemmas associated with the transportation of culture across social boundaries. The drift of these commentaries is toward the alienation, stagnation, fossilization, and ultimately, corruption of folk practices caught up in these vortices. In a move that goes against the grain of this literature, I want to highlight here the multivocality of folklorized traditions, which can simultaneously speak to different audiences and serve different purposes. I take up two performance venues among Quichua-speaking indigenous people residing in the city of Otavalo in the north of Ecuador and in many communities in the vicinity of Otavalo. Runa are Quichua-speaking indigenous people—*runa* is a Quichua word meaning "person," and *runa shimi*, "the people's mouth or tongue," is the Quichua term for the language they speak. The Runa of Imbabura have long been famous for their textiles and for their music, and music plays a central role in the ceremonial life of these communities (Salomon 1973; Meisch 2002). In recent years, Otavalo has been the cradle of a unique musical phenomenon, a recording industry featuring songs that are sung in Quichua. I know of no other Andean region where a commercial music project of comparable scope has emerged with the majority of lyrics performed in the local indigenous language.

The Otavalo Runa showcase a familiar trend: a local, ethnic, or indigenous community gets identified as a pre-modern preserve, and becomes a scene of rampant folklorization. With their famous Saturday market, said to be the largest indigenous market in South America, and the exporting of Runa culture by its legions of musician ambassadors, the Otavalos are experiencing an intense moment of cultural capitalization,

one orchestrated, these days, by members of the indigenous community rather than by mestizo elites as in the past (Kyle 2000). In such settings, we might wonder, is it still possible to find folklore in an unfolklorized state? Or are we doomed to encounter our precious quarry only as it is filtered through self-conscious projects of mediation?

Lynn Meisch (2002:10) observes that "Otavalos are coping with globalization by relying on a combination of traditional values and practices and modern technology to preserve as well as market their ethnic identity." Consequently, Runa culture can acquire the feel of a staged enterprise crafted for the viewing pleasure of tourists, taking on the quality of, as Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998:144) has it, "a picture of itself." Kirshenblatt-Gimblett notes two difficulties with respect to culture on display, "the foreignness of objects to their contexts of presentation and the location of meaning at their destination" (1998:1). Ethnographers and tourists who seek to penetrate this facade may find themselves in the land of paradox that Heidi Feldman (2006) entered when she sought the mystical source of Afro-Peruvian culture in La Chincha, and found instead a shifting culturescape where what Erving Goffman (1959) termed "front stage" and "back stage" seemed interchangeable, and nothing was quite what it appeared to be.

My argument in this paper is that our best chance to grasp or glimpse authenticity in such highly folklorized settings may be in the spaces where processed tradition loops back upon local artistic practices. These expressive contact zones, where the canonic meets the impromptu, should be embraced by folklorists, and we are well equipped, I think, to find the wheat among the chaff, that is, to seek out the vitality of cultural expression in processed artistic production. I explore this possibility here with respect to two revelatory episodes from my recent fieldwork among the Runa in Ecuador. The first of these occurred in the course of an ethnographic interview that transformed from a static recitation of "official" folklore into a dynamic folk narrative session. The other episode revolves around my discovery of content I found surprising on the compact discs produced by Runa musicians and sold to tourists in the Otavalo marketplace and wherever these musicians perform their songs—many of these productions feature segments of a ritualized discourse that is normally employed within the Runa community on ceremonial occasions.

These two unexpected developments complicate common assumptions about the processing of folklore in today's world of hyper-mediation. It seems to me there is a common thread linking these two

fieldwork surprises, the breakthrough from recitation to performance in a folk belief session and the inclusion of ceremonial speech on the compact discs. We could formulate this thread in this way: within the process of folklorizing tradition, that is, the effort to make it accessible and appealing to a cosmopolitan audience, there exists a contrary impulse, to recapture and enhance local expressivity. These contrary tendencies introduce a resilient multivocality into the mediated environments of the expressive contact zone, those nodes of artistic communication where the local meets the global. In addition to the much-discussed exploitation and transformation of local culture in postmodernity, we can devise a less-documented reflex, the reinforcement of local aesthetic practices.

LUIS ALBERTO AND THE SOMBRA

For many years I have maintained a close friendship with Runa traveling musicians from two extended families in the Otavalo area, one based in Peguche, the other in Ilumán. From February to May of 2005, and again during the summer of 2007 for the Inti Raymi festivities, we were able to visit our friends and come to know their families. The program of activities worked out for us by our indigenous hosts reflects the impact of this heightened consciousness of what it means to be indigenous today. Shortly after our arrival in Otavalo, we heard from our Ilumán connection, Luis Alberto Yamberla, that members of his group, the Centro Cultural Inti Raymi (CCIR), had stayed up late the night before (until 10pm!) making plans for our entrance into Runa lifeways. Luis Alberto produced a document elaborated that night that served as a kind of memorandum of agreement, or contract, typed out on a manual typewriter. Gazing down through its contents, I realized our friends had prepared for us a very packaged tour through their traditions. For example, we were to see how the older people used to (and still do, for small, inaccessible fields) prepare the earth using an ox to pull the plow. I expressed my gratitude for the effort of the CCIR and all that its members promised to share with us, but inwardly wondered if I would have access to more natural, less rehearsed settings.

One of the first items on the agenda was traditional beliefs and omens and it is this session that I want to bring forward here. My wife, son, and I were invited to the home of Luis Alberto and his wife, Maruja, one afternoon to explore this topic.[2] We went up to the top floor where a room is set aside for activities of the CCIR. We all took seats, Luis Alberto wearing his New York Giants football jersey, Maruja resplendent in her

traditional clothing. To my surprise (and consternation), Luis Alberto pulled out a book and proceeded to read from it, using it as a canonical source of information of Otavalo folk beliefs. (I later obtained a copy of this book; it is titled *Sarunmanta Kunankaman Kichwa Runa Kawsay Kamu: "El Pasado y el Presente de la Vida Indígena,"* ["The Past and the Present of Indigenous Life"], compiled by Professor Alberto Y. Conejo of Ilumán, and published locally.) This ethnographic session started with Luis Alberto consulting the printed text to recite the folk beliefs listed there, first in Spanish, then in Quichua. The text was the template but we were not to be rigidly confined to it. Luis Alberto oscillated between reading the text verbatim and paraphrasing it, but always returning to the book to keep his bearings and to insure an orderly presentation of facts.

Luis Alberto presented the initial items using a phrase he took from the book, "entre indígenas dice" ("among the indigenous people, it says"), wording that underscores the nature of the exercise, a canonical rendering of indigenous belief. Indeed, his early framing statements had the air of a radio broadcast:

> *Con las supersticiones vamos hoy día,*
> We are going with the superstitions today,
>
> *vamos a continuar,*
> let's continue,
>
> *en eso a ver si programa para hacer parte,*
> with that, let's see if we can arrange to do some of these,
>
> *eh, bueno, hay muchas creencias, supersticiones aquí,*
> eh, well, there are many beliefs, superstitions here,
>
> *especialmente aquí en Imbabura.*
> especially here in Imbabura.
>
> *Ya se había dicho dos supersticiones,*
> We have already said two superstitions,
>
> *ya seguimos con la otra.*
> now we will continue with the next one.

But as the session continued, the dominance of the book softened a little, and Luis Alberto began to take ownership of the material, presenting the belief in his own words and splicing in confirmations of its truth-value. As the afternoon progressed, a tension developed between

two modes of exposition, the recitative and the exegetical, the former marked by loyalty to the book, the latter by less-scripted realizations of the content. There was a strong impulse to return to the printed source, but an equally strong pull to exemplify the codified material through reference to personal experiences. Eventually, the recitative protocol started to crumble in the face of the sheer attraction of the beliefs under discussion, their opening into the grain of lived experience.

A different discourse protocol was taking shape, with exegesis gradually gaining the upper hand, now taking the form of affirmations of the encoded beliefs through the performance of personal experience narratives. I want to focus on a pivotal moment in this transition, a prolonged narrative by Luis Alberto depicting his encounter with a shade. Luis Alberto's story performance seriously challenged the frame of recitation from the printed text; shortly thereafter, a similar excursion into collateral experience on the part of his wife, Maruja, definitively overwhelmed it.

Through these dramatic testimonies, our hosts, Luis Alberto and Maruja, first challenged and finally vanquished the initial discourse agenda, putting in its place a radically different mode of communication. Their stories derailed the conveyance of pre-packaged ethnic data to open a space for the release of unauthenticated folklore, and the folklorized material was de-folklorized in the process. Apparently, they were chafing as much as we were at the stale recitation of encoded information. Luis Alberto initiates this breakthrough into narrative performance by expanding upon a codified piece of Otavalo folklore, the belief that dogs have the capacity to perceive the presence of spirits. But his presentation of the official material already presages a loosening of the protocol. Luis Alberto speaks:

> *Bueno, otra de las supersticiones.*
> Well, another of the superstitions.
>
> *Por ejemplo, aquí, comunamente,*
> For example, here, commonly
>
> *cerca de Imbabura,*
> near Imbabura Volcano,
>
> *de noche, claro, que ustedes no sienten nada.*
> at night, sure, you don't notice anything.
>
> *Pero aquí nosotros, siempre escuchamos,*
> But here we, we always hear,

doce o una de la mañana,
midnight or one in the morning

el perro aulla.
the dog howls.

Pero no es, no es, un aullero así.
But it is not, it is not just any howling.

Es otro tipo.
It's another kind.

Entonces, en ese momento, el perro está viendo las almas.
And so, in that moment, the dog is seeing the souls.

Nosotros no vemos,
We don't see it,

por eso los perros lloran.
that's why the dogs cry.

(Maruja speaks)
El perro oye . . . (The dog hears it ...)

(Luis Alberto speaks)
Es malos, especialmente, malos espíritus,
It is bad ones, especially, bad spirits,

que están caminando,
that are walking about,

pero el perro lo está viendo.
but the dog is seeing it.

(Switching to Quichua)
Nin shina . . .
They say it, like this . . .

Wakin alku aula . . .
Some dog howls . . .

After Luis Alberto's brief recapitulation in Quichua, Maruja offers the comment: "Aya tarijushpa" (they are finding a spirit), and this brings closure to the Quichua portion and propels the talk back into Spanish, as Luis Alberto concludes:

Bueno, completamente, no venga el diablo ya,
Well, totally, may the devil not come now,

es la hora, es la hora, que en verdad pasa eso.
it is the hour, it is the hour, in truth, when that happens.

We see that the recitation has now become quite free-form; the book is still nearby, but it is held at the waist in a slack hand, and the discourse no longer betrays the economical and impersonal phrasing of a handbook. Still, Luis Alberto sticks to the duality of language mode, and presents a similarly free-form Quichua rendition of this folk belief. After the Quichua statement, Luis Alberto produces a personalization and an affirmation of the truth of the stated belief:

Y yo también, a mi me pasó también.
And me too, this also happened to me.

Es real.
It is real.

Immediately following Luis Alberto's affirmation, Maruja reminds him of an experience and a story about it that will shed additional light on the matter under discussion. Luis Alberto takes this cue and embarks on the performance of an extended personal experience narrative, one that uses the folk belief about the perceptive capacities of dogs as a point of departure for talking about a more gripping matter, the presence of spirits in and around the human domain.

Luis Alberto speaks:

Por el hecho de ser silencioso,
Due to the fact that they are quiet,

las quebradas sí tienen los malos espíritus.
the creek-beds really do have bad spirits.

Es verdad.
It is true.

Porque siempre predomina el bien y el mal,
Because good and evil always prevail,

en dondequiera, (5)
everywhere,

siempre predomina el bien y el mal.
good and evil always prevail.

Igual que en el mundo las contradicciones entre lo bueno y lo malo,
Likewise, the conflict in this world between good and evil,

entonces hay lo mismo.
and so, there is the same thing.

Entonces, a mi mismo me pasó una vez,
And so, it happened to me one time,

yo, de borracho. (10)
to me, when I was drunk.

Yo antes, yo antes, no vivía tan bien con mi mujer.
Previously, I, previously I did not live right with my wife.

Yo andaba tomando.
I went out drinking.

Entonces, yo vivía atrás,
And so, I lived out back,

esta casa no existió.
this house did not exist.

Vivía atrás, pasando la quebrada. (15)
I lived out back, on the other side of the creek.

Y yo una vez, me venía como a la una de la mañana.
And one time I, I was coming at one in the morning.

Y justo aquí en la quebrada,
And exactly there at the creek,

se apareció,
it appeared to me,

un hombre,
a man,

pero no me indicaba la cara. (20)
but he didn't show me his face.

(Marjua interjects)
Una sombra . . .
A shade . . .

(Luis Alberto continues)
Una sombra, negra,
A black shade,

con capa, sombrero negro, así todo negro.
with a cape, a black hat, like that all black.

(Maruja interjects)
Un fantasmo . . .
A ghostly presence . . .

(Luis Alberto continues)
Entonces, a mi no me dejaba subir, (25)
And so, it would not let me climb out of there.

Porque hay que subir, remember?
Because you have to climb out, remember?

Cuando pasaste al tomate, así?
When you came by the tree tomatoes, like that?

(Maruja interjects, to us)
Donde estuvieron hoy día.
Where you were today.

(Luis Alberto continues)
No pude subir.
I could not climb out.

Subía, y me bajaba a mi. (30)
I went up, it brought me back down.

Subía, y me bajaba.
I went up, it brought me down.

Yo ya me enojé,
Now I became angry,

borracho ya.
already drunk.

Le di pensando a pegarlo así –
I was thinking to hit it like this –

no le podía dar. (35)
I could not connect with it.

Nada.
Nothing.

Nada, nada.
Nothing at all.

Igual abajo.
Still down there.

Caminaba así, abajo.
It was walking like that, down there.

Pero yo no sabía porque. (40)
But I didn't know why.

Después, ni sé cómo, me acordé,
Later, I don't know how, I remembered,

me acordé que, para mal espíritu,
I remembered that, for the evil spirit,

nunca hay que pegar con la derecha,
you should never hit them with your right,

sino hay que pegar con la izquierda.
but you have to hit them with your left.

Y entonces, me acordé de eso, (45)
And so then, I remembered that,

y empecé a dar con esto.
and I started hitting with this one.

Allí sí subí.
There I was able to climb out.

Ya después cuando subí,
Then when I got out of there,

ya me di cuenta un poco,
I started to catch on a little,

y de una vez me fui corriendo. (50)
and right away I went off running.

(Shifts to Quichua)
Entonces, nijuni kainipish,
And so, I am saying, near here

cierto, tiyan, niyari,
truly, there are, they say,

tiyan bachani shina nali nali, espiritukuna.
there are spirits like this, bad, bad spirits.

We see that Luis Alberto is inspired to relate a prolonged narrative, prompted by his wife's suggestion, and that he does so in a highly dramatic fashion. This narrative discourse contrasts in every way with the discourse of the scripted recitations. Now we have not a statement of folk belief but an illustration of several folk beliefs: we learn that spirits are thought to reside in quiet creek-beds, that they take a specific visual form, that they interfere with humans in particular ways, and that they can be punched away with the left arm and fist only. Moreover, this cluster of beliefs is placed in a philosophical framework remarking the competition of good and evil forces in all domains of the cosmos. In terms of sheer worldview content, this personal experience narrative trumps the recitation of encoded beliefs several times over.

Additionally, by moving from the mode of recitation to that of artistic performance, Luis Alberto draws us as his audience into the lived reality of his experience. He reminds us of the creek-bed near the tree-tomato field, a place we had visited with him and Maruja earlier that day, thus locating us in a known physical setting. We suffer with him as his discourse reproduces iconically the absence of movement, the nadir of *nada, nada* as the spirit pins him in the *quebrada.* And we escape with him when the strokes of his left arm and fist allow him to shake free and emerge unscathed. Luis Alberto's narrative skills activate the potential that storytelling holds to collapse the narrated event into the narrative event, creating an instance of what I call *narrative epiphany,* a breakthrough from one ontological realm to another (see McDowell 1982). In fact, Luis Alberto's story quickly morphs into theater as he unleashes an impressive range of gestures and facial expressions, miming with his

body the actions he describes. He provides a rich gesticulated counterpoint that accompanies, illustrates, emphasizes, and comments on his verbalizations. His eyes get big when he speaks of the contest between good and evil, at the outset. As he eases into the narrative, he activates his hands both deictically (to point towards the nearby creek-bed) and iconically (to simulate a variety of actions named in the spoken discourse). Indeed, he lets loose a language of the hands that serves as a gestural companion to the verbal narrative and merits close inspection in its own right. Luis Alberto nods his head up and down to indicate a positive response, and back and forth to signal a negative one. When he lashes out at the spirit, at first in vain with his right fist, and later, successfully, with his left, we see the fist form and travel through space. And when he tells us that the spirit was walking about, in line 39, he rises to his feet and walks the forward and backward steps taken in the embrace of black-caped spirit.

Let me provide one further observation on this performance: we are led to understand this narrative as a stage in the progress of this couple's married life, for it was experiences like these that cured Luis Alberto of his wayward tendencies and convinced him to become the good husband and father that he is today. This story seems to function as an indirect affirmation of their conjugal happiness, and it is Maruja who encourages Luis Alberto to tell the tale, and who also provides helpful orientation along the way as Luis Alberto generates the narrative's phrases.

Granted, the performance venue here remains rooted in the expressive contact zone—we are, after all, an audience of foreign visitors, and Luis Alberto and Maruja are still at some level representing their culture to outsiders. But the performance moves that arise in the breakthrough into narrative are characteristic of Runa performances we have observed on other occasions with a primary Runa audience. Indeed, dramatizations of this sort are endemic to narrative as a performance mode universally. In this instance, they provide multiple insights that are not possible with scripted recitation. But note that the outlines of the protocol reassert themselves at the end of this segment, when Luis Alberto returns to the familiar pattern of producing a Quichua equivalent for the material he has just performed in Spanish. We have not fully abandoned the original protocol, but have instead stretched it to the breaking point. It is with Maruja's ensuing narrative about her neighbor's encounter with a malignant spirit that the original modus operandi finally meets a total defeat, and the performance of engaging, exemplary personal narratives in Spanish, the tongue that most closely

gathers all those present into a speech community, takes over as the new discourse paradigm of the session.

RUNA MUSIC IN THE EXPRESSIVE CONTACT ZONE

The breakthrough into performance (see Hymes 1981) accomplished by Luis Alberto and Maruja exposes the fragility of folklorized discourse in settings conducive to the release of performative energies. I turn now to the second of my Runa revelations, that musical artists have inserted esoteric discourse into productions aimed primarily at outside audiences, alerting us to the multiple publics implicated in contemporary artistic productions and showing us that even folklorized products retain spaces for ethnic communication. A prominent site of Runa folklorization is the production of recordings featuring indigenous musicians playing regional rhythms, an enterprise that has flourished in the Otavalo area over the last three decades. The core materials for the present study come from my collection of more than thirty representative compact discs recorded and produced in the period 1995–2005 by bands based in and around Otavalo and featuring as the principal expressive genre the *sanjuanito*, the characteristic musical genre of the zone. It is possible to designate the 1980s and 1990s as a period of florescence for this musical art, a time when many bands arose in the Otavalo area to play at cafes and bars in Otavalo and to carry their music to the far corners of the world as itinerant musicians. Some of these Runa bands have achieved considerable fame abroad—Chari Jayak in Barcelona, Spain, and Yarina in Boston, Massachusetts, come to mind.[3] Many of them have seen lesser success but have still prospered, in places like Madison, Wisconsin, where Inti Raymi, the band I have worked with most closely, has a foothold.

It is important to note that these bands with their global wanderings have not arisen from nothing; they are, in fact, a particular crystallization of profound commitment to music in the inner life of the community. To this day, live musical performance is a requirement at rites of passage ceremonies such as baptisms and weddings, and costumed, roving ensembles of irreverent musicians are an essential feature of the Inti Raymi celebrations, the most significant gathering of community for festive purposes, spanning the interlude in late June from *el día de San Juan* (Saint John's Day) to *el día de San Pedro* (Saint Peter's Day).[4] Hence, the Otavalo commercial music project derives from a matrix of community-based music, and we must assess its manifold voices and constituencies. Looking at the harvest of compact discs produced in this environment

provides a window on the evolution of Runa music into a commodity, and reveals how ethnicity can be parlayed into cultural capital. Perhaps less expected is the discovery that these commercial products resonate within the Runa community, and that the artists who create them take on the role of counselor to the indigenous people.

A compact disc is a multi-layered artistic object, with interacting visual, verbal, and acoustic elements. Close inspection of my Otavalo CD collection reveals a cornucopia of messages deployed across these semiotic channels, at times in interlocking, at times in cross-cutting, patterns. Some components are clearly intended for external publics: images of emblematic Andean sites, elevated jacket prose and poetry evoking the Incan substrate, songs whose words commemorate the four quarters of the Inca realm, Tahuantinsuyo. As Shane Green observes, "The Inca and the Andes continue to serve as a kind of postcolonial template for all projects of cultural recognition and revalorization in Peru (and possibly elsewhere in the neighboring 'Andean' countries)" (2007:467). But the Inca veneer is thin in northern Ecuador, so the salient visual rhetoric on the Runa CD covers and internal pages is more tailored to the romance of Imbabura as an enchanted locus of indigenous culture. Typical visual motifs are signs and symbols encountered in local archaeology projects and featured in museums, newspaper accounts, and school programs. Prominent among the visual ecology of these materials are photos and drawings of stone carvings to be found in the area, human faces and hands with their projecting fingers. Another visual strategy is to feature old photographs of people making music and engaging in other traditional activities, often using sepia tones to enhance the sense of antiquity. This approach makes the case for Imbabura as a particular token of the Andean indigenous bedrock, with remarkable features in both pre-history and history.

I make brief reference to the visuals of Otavalo compact discs and to their promotional blurbs, but I want to focus here on the recorded tracks on these CDs, and specifically, on the song lyrics. In my collection of some thirty compact discs, I have paid attention to approximately 129 songs and selected a core sample of forty songs for close examination. All of these CDs were released within the last fifteen years by groups associated with the Otavalo Runa music scene. I purchased most of them in the Otavalo market; others were gifts from friends and also from members of Runa bands. My objectives were to acquire a cross-section of recorded music from a representative slice of the active musical groups.

The overall song sample shows a slight preference for Quichua lyrics: 45% of the songs are sung in Quichua, 39% in Spanish, and some

14% combine Spanish and Quichua. Hence, almost two-thirds of this corpus features songs sung fully or in part in Quichua. The preferred rhythm or song genre is the sanjuanito, which constitutes 55% of this sample. There is, as well, a presence of *inti raymi, fullero*, or *churay*, as the stomping dance rhythm used during the Inti Raymi celebrations is variously known, bringing the total portion of local song rhythms to 60%. Otavalo music, though rooted in the local sanjuanitos, is self-consciously pan-Andean, presented as *música andina*, so there are as well *cumbias* from Colombia (14%), *huaynos* from Perú (11%), and a smattering of rhythms from Bolivia (7%). Still, both with respect to choice of language and choice of rhythm, this musical corpus accentuates the local.

It becomes clear right away that the favorite theme of these songs is the classic one, romantic love. The local term for these is the Spanish label *de puro amor*, and nearly half of the corpus are love songs. Still, a significant portion, nearly a third of the total song inventory, are what I will call *commemorative songs*. These songs delve into the history of the community and emphasize the rituals, customs, and traditions that make the Runa distinctive. Within this category of commemorative songs, there is a subset that exhorts listeners to live properly, in harmony with nature, and in step with Runa values. These songs of exhortation, comprising roughly 10% of the total corpus, are the ones that feature echoes of the community-building ceremonial discourse I will soon discuss.

These figures clearly bespeak the multivocality of this commercial song production, which simultaneously beckons to outsiders, drawing them into the Runa aesthetic, and to insiders, reinforcing familiar modes of communication. And indeed, the CDs circulate widely among members of Runa bands—who keep close track of what their friends and competitors are doing—and more generally, in pirated copies, among the Runa as a whole. One significant outlet for these sounds is Radio Ilumán, a locally-managed radio station broadcasting in both Quichua and Spanish. Everywhere we went with our Runa friends, we found people tuned to Radio Ilumán.

"TALKING AMONG OURSELVES": RUNA CEREMONIAL DISCOURSE

Michelle Wibbelsman takes note of a ceremonial speech register in Quichua referred to in the phrase, *rimarishpa, rimarishpa kausanchik*, which she sees as an instance of "placing talk or dialogue at the heart of Andean life" (2005:171). This phrase is built on two evocative roots in the Runa context: *rimai* meaning "to speak" and *kausai* meaning

"to live." The root *rimai* sports the reflexive and reciprocal marker *–ri* and the gerundive *–shpa*, creating the adverbial phrase "talking among ourselves"; *kausai* appears in the first-person plural conjugation. Hence, I translate this phrase loosely as "talking, talking among ourselves, we live well." Wibbelsman goes on to argue that transnational populations like Ecuador's Otavalos make special efforts to remain in touch with their places of origin: "As Otavaleños travel outwardly, the geographical, technological, and social dislocations they experience seem to produce a new awareness of their cultural and mythical heritage, leading them back through ritual and memory to an understanding of centralizing concepts that define their sense of commonality" (2005:178). This impulse, this necessity, causes a renewed interest in such ritual and ceremonial activities as dancing the Inti Raymi, participating in the *chishi armay*, the ritual bathing that precedes it, and visiting sacred indigenous sites such as the *lechero* tree that overlooks Lago San Pablo and the city of Otavalo. In addition, I contend, the desire to retain contact with indigenous roots causes Otavalos to recur to traditional modes of speaking, even introducing samples of this discourse on commercial compact discs.

Humberto Córdova, Otavalo composer and musician, has produced a series of compact discs over the last two decades. He is explicit about the purpose of his music-making, which he sees as a forum for calling the Runa back to their culture and back to the pathway of healthy living. In my conversations with Humberto, he stressed to me the messianic role of the musician, and the jacket blurb on one of the compact discs he produced with his band, Karu Ñan ("Long Road"), titled "Ñucanchic Taki: Música Traditional Andina," proclaims his mission, in Spanish, for the Latin American component of his public. (My English translation follows):

> *Los antiguos nos enseñaron el secreto de la vida en armonía, un secreto que se hace visible en cada roca del ande, en cada río y en cada lago; un secreto que conocen el cóndor, la llama y el puma; un secreto que crece en cada árbol y que es de la tierra.*
>
> *La música es más que una interpretación musical, es la expresión de los llantos, alegrías y costumbres de nuestros pueblos. Las melodías y ritmos auténticos de los pueblos son la identificación del pasado, presente, y futuro de nuestra raza. Es así que quiero dejar con este trabajo musical un mensaje de hermandad y fraternidad.*

> The ancient ones taught us the secret of life in harmony, a secret that is made visible by each stone along the path, by each river and each lake; a secret known to the condor, the llama and the puma; a secret that grows in each tree and is of the earth.

> Music is more than a musical interpretation, it is the expression of sorrows, joys and customs of our peoples. The authentic melodies and rhythms of the people are the identity of our race's past, present, and future. It is for this that I wish to leave behind with this musical work a message of brotherhood and solidarity.

This blurb opens into a discourse of harmony with nature and solidarity in community, situating the Runa as deeply rooted in their Andean setting. It poses the musician as the focal point in a campaign to repossess this ancient heritage.[5]

The first musical number with lyrics on this album is called "Runapac Causai," "Our Traditional Way of Life," and it opens with this declamation:

Kai takikunawan
With these songs

Kai kushikunawan
With these celebrations

Ñukanchi runa kausaikunata
Our people's customs

Ñaupamanda apashun.
We must carry them forward from the early times.

The sung portion of song proceeds to develop this theme in earnest:

1
Kai punllakuna
These days

Tukuipa kushijuimi
We must all be joyful

Runakunapa kausaita
The life of the indigenous people

Rikunchimi
Surely we see it

2
Punda taitakunapak kausaita
The life of our old fathers

Ñukanchic kausaikunapimi
Within our way of life

Chaikunamanta kushijunchimi
Because of them we are celebrating

3
Kashna sumagta takishpallami
That's why we are singing so well like this

Kashna sumagta tushushpallami
That's why we are dancing so well like this

Runa kausaikunata apanchi
We bring forward the people's ways

Several key words in the spoken and sung segments of this song form a kind of litany of Runa moral consciousness. The word "*taki*," "song," carries an aura of ritual communication; singing and dancing, moreover, are core components of communal celebrations. Equally important is the word "*kausai*," from the verb "to live," but carrying the added value here of "living in the good way," or as a noun, "the old traditional way of life." As the song clearly indicates, the good way of living derives from the example laid down by the ancestors; it is the obligation of the current generation to "bring forward" these ways that have their origin in "*ñaupa tempo*," the days of the ancestors. These verbal elements are staples of the ceremonial discourse called "*rimashpalla*," based on the verb "*rimai*," "to talk," but carrying, as do these other key lexical items, an additional semantic burden in these contexts, that of moral and spiritual counseling.

It is appropriate, I think, to hear this song and many others like it, by Córdova and other Otavalo musicians, as medicine directed to healing the dislocations and tensions occasioned by the radical transformations impacting the indigenous groups in Imbabura over the last few decades. People my age and older recall from their childhoods what they term "the times of slavery," when the Runa were confined to a life of debt-peonage, working the land for wealthy land owners and their caretakers with no possibility of escaping poverty. Now, their children are traveling to Europe, North America, and Asia, bringing into the community resources that were formally unimaginable. The town of Otavalo, which was largely off-limits to these older generations, is increasingly owned and operated by Runa entrepreneurs and politicians.

These improvements have not come without social cost. There are resentments fostered by unequal access to these opportunities, between generations, between men and women, and between rural and urban sectors. Moreover, families must now cope with fathers and husbands (and lately, daughters, sisters, and aunts) who spend part of each year, or in some cases, entire years in sequence, away from home. And there is much concern about the youngest generations, people under the age of twenty-five or so, many of whom are growing up for the most part outside of the traditional culture, shedding the Quichua language and customary modes in dress, foodways, and music. All of these influences have proved to be disruptive, and one proposed remedy is a return to Runa traditions, as suggested in Córdova's song and many other comparable songs. Tapping into a traditional discourse of rimashpalla, Córdova urges his audience to "carry forward" the example of the ancestors.

This message of moral elevation is not always so pervasive. One of the big hits of recent years is "El Chuchaqui," "The Hangover," performed originally by Winiaypa, anchored by the brothers Humberto and Segundo Gramal. They tell an engaging tale about a young man's adventures in the Otavalo night. But, as we shall see, the moral admonition comes at the song's end as a corrective to the casual behavior depicted in its narrative portion:

1

Kunan tutami risha nirkangui
This evening you said, "I will go

Otavalopi puringapa
To Otavalo to walk around"

Taita mamata llullashpa llugshini
Lying to father, mother, I leave

Tigramushalla nishpa rini
I go saying, "I'll be back soon"

2

Otavaloman chayashpa tupani
Arriving in Otavalo, I meet up with

Kumbakunata peña pungupi
Friends at the door of the night club

Jaku ukuman nishpami pushawan
"Let's go inside," saying, they take me in

Kushi kushimi yaikurkanchi
Happy, so happy, we went inside

3
Ukuman yaikushpami tiarinchi
Going inside, we sit down together

Kaimanda chaimanda karamun
From here, from there, they come to treat us

Wayusa kajpi cerveza kajpi
Since there was liquor, since there was beer

Acha achami upiashkanchi
Much, so much we had drunk

4
Europa kausaikunata rimanchi
We talk of European ways

Kaita chaitami bullayanchi
Making noise about this and that

Machai yalirinajushpa nirinchi
Becoming drunk together, we say to each other

Pegucheman tigrana kanchi
"We must be returning to Peguche"

5
Tandanajushpa llugshirirkanchi
Gathering ourselves, we quickly left the place

Kwandra kwandralla kallarinchi
Just wobbly, wobbly we start off

Ashata kashkawanka tupanchi
In a little while we come across

Mishukunata machashkata
A group of drunken mestizos

6

Kaishu chaishuwan makanajurkanchicha
With this one, with that one, perhaps we were fighting

Imasinacha llactarkanchi
How did we manage to ever get home?

Kayandipa tuparishpa yachanchi
The next day, coming to, we realize

Chompa zapato chingashkata
Jackets and shoes were lost

7

Alitashnapash shinashka purinchi
We go about as if we were doing good things

Shinalla sakinata yashun
We should try to leave all that behind

Rumishna sinchi runakuna kashun
We should be strong like Indians of stone

Sumag kausaita taringapa
In order to find a good way of living

With its merry narrative capped by the admonition to live a better life, this song works as a morality tale, pointing the way to good behavior by exhibiting (with some relish) its opposite. The trip into Otavalo town is still fraught with some danger, as mestizos lurk about there and, in some cases at least, harbor antipathy toward their indigenous neighbors who have the opportunity to travel to Europe and make a show of having been there. Implicitly, the song lyrics criticize the boisterous, rowdy comportment of the group of indigenous friends and contrast this style of behavior to the "strong Indians of stone" who live within themselves and hence do not court trouble. The reference to stone is telling here, since Rumi Ñawi, Stone Visage, the Incan warrior remembered for his deeds in ancient times, is much celebrated locally as a symbol of indigenous prowess.

Echoes of the ceremonial discourse enter this final stanza of "El Chuchaqui" in the admonition to live like strong Indians of stone and to seek out the good way of living associated with the ancestors. It is worth noting that this final stanza was not included with the words to this song as printed on the CD jacket—all the words to the previous stanzas are

there, in Quichua with a Spanish translation. Did they just run out of space? Or does this omission signal an awareness of the different publics implicated in this CD production?

CONCLUSION

My argument is that folklorized materials lodged in the expressive contact zone merit close inspection for their multiplicity of voices. We have seen that published compilations of lore as well as compact discs, obvious arenas of culture reification, retain a capacity to stimulate local cultural production. Both case studies take us into an expressive contact zone where artistic production bridges sharply-defined gaps in social identity—between natives and tourists, rural and urban, indigenous and mestizo, among many others. The shift to narrative performance in the folk belief session occurred in the context of cross-ethnic communication as our Runa interlocutors dramatized for us their encounters with spirits, though, as compadres, sharing with Luis Alberto and Maruja a ritual co-parenthood, we could be said to straddle the gap between these contrasting ethnicities. Likewise, Runa compact discs speak both to external and internal audiences. For outsiders, the presence of Quichua blurbs and lyrics and the sanjuanito rhythms of the songs can serve as authenticating elements, drawing them (us) into a realistic encounter with indigenous culture. For insiders, nuances such as the presence of ceremonial discourse connect these artifacts to the well-springs of Runa identity.

Highlighting the multivocality of folklorization, I contend that its products are not fatally corrupted, as is often supposed. Instead, I see a tendency in host communities to repossess that which has been folklorized and to fortify local cultural production through the creative adaptation of folklorized enterprises. These contrapuntal possibilities have been recognized in the literature on folklorization (Rogers 1998; Mendoza 2008), but the emphasis in the scholarship is decidedly on the corrupting and stifling effects of a process that promotes external agendas at the expense of local creativity (Briggs 1996; Lewis 2006). For folklorists, the revitalization of local expressive culture as a byproduct of folklorization is a gratifying option, offering an escape from the postmodern gloom wherein all culture is seen to arrive previously reconfigured for public display. There is hope for us in the breakthrough from processed to spontaneous representations of ethnicity, in the resurgent folk belief session and in the Runa compact discs re-centering mediated communication as ethnically relevant.

Hermann Bausinger, says Victoria Newall, "rightly pointed out that the first and second existences of a custom often merge, so that they cannot be separated" (1987:133). It is this specific juncture in the evolution of tradition that interests me here. I believe that the tendency to folklorize tradition operates in a state of constant tension with a tendency to de-folklorize it, to invest canonic identity displays with new energy through a process of instantiation, that is, a reworking in the crucible of organic social interaction. My data from northern Ecuador suggest that we will do well to scrutinize expressive contact zones where canonizing and instantiating forces meet, where official displays of culture are activated and dissolved into less-scripted improvisations or funneled into in-group channels of communication.

The argument is, then, that folklorized objects such as a published catalog of Runa beliefs and commercial compact discs give rise to richly multivocal discourses in expressive contact zones. They operate at multiple levels, serve multiple purposes, and are addressed to multiple publics. These complex representations of Runa culture stimulate and reinforce local discursive practices when folklorized elements provoke acts of cultural reclamation. In view of these considerations, it is premature (once again!) to announce the demise of freshly-minted folklore, that is, of artistic performances with an organic connection to community. It would seem that the folkloristic apocalypse is not yet at hand. Folklorization, no doubt, is very much with us, but as the Otavalo data propose, it can serve as much to stimulate as to inhibit the informal modes of cultural production we recognize as folklore.

NOTES

1. It is my theory that Paredes became aware of the term "folklorization" in conversation with his Latin American colleagues. He had developed the basic thesis about "el corrido de José Mosqueda" in an article published in 1958. Then, in 1966, he attended the International Congress of Americanists in Mar del Plata, Argentina, and gathered later with a group of Latin America folklorists in Buenos Aires. Wherever he came by the term, it gave a lofty name to the process he had discussed with "José Mosqueda," and he explores its implications in his 1973 article in Aztlán (McDowell 2005).
2. We formed a family ethnography team: I did much of the talking and operated the audio tape-recorder; my wife Pat did the still

photography; and our son Michael, who was 15 years old in 2005, handled the video work.

3. Chari Jayak has garnered much attention from its base in Barcelona, Spain; the group returned for a triumphant concert at the plaza in Otavalo in February 2005, which we attended. Yarina has received acclaim in the United States: their album, "Ñawi," won "Best World Music" at the Native American Music Awards in 2005, and they were invited to play at the Live Earth concert at the National Museum of the American in Indian in Washington, DC, on July 7, 2007. See the Yarina website: http://www/yarinamusic.com/ordermusic.html.
4. According to Meisch, the main celebration in Ecuador was known as San Juan until the 1990s, when the term Inti Raymi, the Inca festival of the sun, was imported from Peru (2002:252).
5. It is instructive to visit the Karu Ñan website (http://www.karunan.com.ar/espanol.htm), which is subject to a similar analysis in terms of its multivocality. Websites mounted by indigenous communities have become a prominent feature of the expressive contact zone, frequently speaking simultaneously to insiders and outsiders.

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