Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1978 Volume III: 20th Century American History and Literature

A Unit on American Folklore

Curriculum Unit 78.03.08
by Edward H. Fitzpatrick

UNIT OBJECTIVES

1. To provide students with a working definition of folklore—a definition that will enable students to move about their community and see things in a different light. Perhaps they might be able to understand and appreciate certain objects, people, and themselves in a way they never thought possible.
2. To use the study of folklore to enable students to gain an understanding of one of life's most painful processes—the gradual loss of independence on the part of the individual. But the objective does not end there. The study of folklore can be used in such a way as to enable students to say "no" to this gradual loss of independence. It is a way of teaching them to endure and survive.
3. To use the study of folklore to answer questions about who we are and how we should use our self-knowledge.
4. To demonstrate to students that folk art has every right to be considered along with formal art as justifiable "art." I will do this by exploring the sources of inspiration for artists and demonstrating that the folk and formal artist have sources in common. And I will introduce James Thomas to my students as an example of a folk artist who performs and creates as eloquently as any formal artist. Thomas, who should be inspirational to students, is a small, frail, middle-aged man from rural Mississippi whose accomplishments are astounding. He has had little formal education, little contact with trained artists, and yet his accomplishments are such that they defy many of the accepted theories of folklore scholarship. Hopefully, James Thomas will cause students to look inside themselves and discover talents they have not yet nourished.
5. To introduce the ballad to students as a prime example of folk art, and to use the ballad as an incentive for and method of studying literature. Although I will probably treat the study of folklore in an oral and visual manner, there is a wealth of reading material on the subject, both fiction and nonfiction. There is a strong possibility that an introductory course in folklore could then be followed by something like "Folklore in American Literature." Mr. Ferris has done just that. In the event that something like this did come to pass, it would be nice to arm students beforehand with techniques that could be applied to the study of literature.

6. To have the students study the evolution of a ballad as it passes from a composition written by an individual to a folk ballad recreated in terms of many local or individual cultures. Once this evolutionary process is understood, it might be possible to apply the same process to folk art or folklore in general, so that students would have a better idea of how folklore develops.
7. To point out to students that the folk ballad in the hands of native American folk artists has undergone a significant change. The ballad is no longer just considered a song, but contains a message as well. This can be clearly demonstrated by examining the protest movements of the 1960's, and the place of ballads in these movements.
8. To familiarize students with the origin and development of the blues—and in particular the rural Delta blues. In doing this I would also hope to point out to students the place of this musical tradition in their own lives. For instance, the call and response element of the blues is present in the church experience of some students. The minister calls and the congregation responds. This is a tenuous connection, yet it is valid and will perhaps spark some interest on the part of students during our study of the blues tradition.
9. To familiarize students with the basic elements of the Delta blues. Students will be expected to listen to a number of recordings and draw certain conclusions about the style of the performers as well as the musical tradition.
10. To use the study of the Delta blues as an instrument to make students realize that they are part of a specific urban culture—a culture that is on the one hand violent, and on the other self-protecting. In fulfilling this objective students should be encouraged to talk to parents, grandparents, and relatives who were part of another distinct regional culture before arriving in New Haven, and compare and contrast the two.

My Institute experience was a bit different from the other participants'. I was able to take a course in American folklore taught by William Ferris. My interest in the course resulted from a lecture given by Mr. Ferris in the early weeks of the Institute. I took the course with the hopes of teaching material in my own classroom modeled upon Mr. Ferris' course. Thus my paper will not focus on a single idea, but will rather be an attempt to outline a year-long program of study in folklore, with an emphasis on black folklore. In organizing the paper I am, in fact, trying to gain a better understanding of the major concepts expressed in Mr. Ferris' course and organize them in such a fashion that they will appeal to and be understood by students in grades 7-12.

What is folklore? This is, of course, the first question to be asked, and answering it is the initial objective of the unit. It cannot be answered easily, and may not even be fully answered at the end of the course of study. "Folklore" is a word with a turbulent history. An Englishman named William Thomas first used the word in 1846 to replace the term "popular antiquities," then used to designate the study of old customs, superstitions, and usages. The first book with "folklore" in its title appeared five years later, and a few years after that Charles Darwin's theory of biological evolution created still more interest in the subject. The Folklore Society of London was formed in 1878 and began publishing a journal which, remarkably, continues to be published today.

From England, an interest in folklore spread to the Continent; many languages borrowed the English term directly. However, the field covered by the word "folklore" expanded, beginning to embrace a more total picture of rural folklife, including objects produced by household artisans, as well as the usual oral tradition. In fact the spectrum of folklore began to include types of barns, quilts, orally inherited tales, songs, sayings, and beliefs, as well as village festivals, household customs and peasant rituals. The common thread in all these topics was and is tradition.

Interest in the subject of folklore invariably spread from the Continent to the United States, where the study of folklore has customarily meant the study of the spoken and sung traditions. The American Folklore Society was founded in 1888, but after an initial surge of activity interest died down. In the early part of the twentieth century interest again picked up with the publication of cowboy songs by John A. Lomax and of old English ballads from southern Appalachia by Cecil Sharp in 1917. The folksong collectors were followed by collectors of folktales in the 1930's and 40's, and suddenly the nation was on the brink of possessing a body of good old American folklore.

What is interesting about the growth of folklore in America, as well as in the rest of the world, is its connection with the rise of nationalism or a nationalistic spirit. Nazi Germany comes immediately to mind, with its use of folklore as an effective propaganda instrument for proclaiming the superiority of the master race. A more recent and less insidious example is Nasser in Egypt and his campaign for pan-Arabism, highlighted by the construction of his folklore center in Cairo.

It must be stressed to students that arriving at a definition of folklore is not necessarily very important. It should not be pursued to the exclusion of all else. What is important is to study the *folks* as well as the *lore* of folklore. Folklore is not just a collection of tidbits, but must be seen in the context of the larger picture. It must be studied as part of a coherent culture. And the study of it, for the purpose of my students, is probably best done in the manner of the school of modern American Folklorists who stress oral lore and study both rural and urban folklore.

Armed with at least the beginnings of a working definition of folklore, I can anticipate a "so what?" response on the part of students. It is important to come to grips with this response, since in doing so one can also come to grips with the rationale for teaching the course.

I became very interested in the study of folklore because of Bill Ferris. But why should my students become interested in the study of folklore? Why should they become interested in something that heretofore has not been a part of the public school curriculum? Answering these questions, I think, will go a long way toward confronting some of our personal and societal dilemmas.

Modern life has created a gradual loss of independence on the part of the individual. Students, and in fact most people, are not fully aware of this. Old ways and old senses of self are being crushed. The study of folklore and the developing sense of what folklore is, is a way of saying "NO" to this gradual loss of sense of self. It is a way to endure and survive in the face of hostile elements. The study of folklore is not simply a study of past relics, but a way of keeping the past intact and thus using it as a way to deal with the present. The study of folklore provides one with a sense of place and a feeling for cultural roots, which help us gain an understanding of life and how we deal with who we are. Much of this has been conveyed to me by Mr. Ferris. I had to be led into it. But there is nothing wrong in that. That is what teachers are for. I only hope I can do the same with my own students.

With my students I would begin this investigation as does Mr. Ferris, by presenting a spectrum of things—by discussing the levels of culture within our society of which folklore/folk culture is a part. Briefly, there are three levels:

A. *Academic* : the written word—the source of validity—the opposite of hearsay. There is a certain amount of irony attached to this level as it pertains to my students. They spend the greater part of their day in the classroom attempting to function within this level, yet it is the level most foreign and frightening to them.

This gets at the heart of why I chose to study folklore and to use it as a vehicle for teaching certain skills and concepts in my classroom. It is not frightening. It stresses oral lore and culture, and thus my students can come to grips with sophisticated, meaningful material that they do not have to decode in the traditional ways.

B. *Popular* : this is by far the most pervasive and, I suppose, the most subversive level of our culture. It is the world of electricity—the world of radio, TV, and film. It is the level that takes the specific and makes it into the global. It is a trite fact by now, but still frightening to realize that by the year 2000 everyone, will have grown up in the world of electronic and photographic images.

C. *Folk* : The Folklore level of our culture can be broken down into three further categories. A diagram is helpful here:

FOLKLORE

MATERIAL CULTURE (what we can touch and feel)	PROSE NARRATIVE	MUSIC

I anticipate a strong response on the part of students as we study and explore the material culture segment of folklore. It is via studying this aspect that we can look at the American landscape (or at least our part of it in and around New Haven) as art. We can look at the land and figure out how we fit into it. And in doing so we

can experience a certain joy at being alive and feeling interconnected to the world.

What would be wrong with taking the ideas found in Jan and Michael Stern's wonderful book on popular American culture entitled *Foodways* , and putting them to classroom use? We could visit the Peter Paul Almond Joy factory in Naugatuck, Connecticut, a marvelous example of the American landscape as art, and the purveyor of a significant item within our material culture. I would never dream of entering a darkened movie theater without a Peter Paul candy bar in hand! We could invade the attics and basements of New Haven in search of material culture. We could make connections with parents, grandparents, and elderly people in the neighborhood, and dredge up memories and skills that have almost been forgotten. A visit to the factory and to the attics and basements would also serve to introduce one of the constant themes of any folklore course, the question of the academic or the formal versus the folk level of culture. In my mind, it is not a question of which is better. It is a question of neglect—neglect of indigenous art or culture. The indigenous stuff is neglected to the point of being invisible. There is little chance for it to appear in libraries and museums and thus gain a measure of respectability.

One of the tasks of the folklorist and the teacher of folklore is to help the folk artist and his art gain a measure of respectability in the formal world. For who is to say that the creator of an intricate quilt or a well-carved cane fife is any less an artist than Rubens? Or that the finished product of their efforts is anything less than a genuine piece of art? An effective way of proving this, as well as to begin to look at the Afro-American folklore segment of the investigation, is to introduce the figure of James Thomas to the students, using films, tapes, records, and written material.

Thomas, a "discovery" of Mr. Ferris, is an artist in every sense of the word and one of the most remarkable people I have ever studied. A resident of Leland, Mississippi, in the heart of the Mississippi Delta, a self-taught and gifted blues musician, taleteller and clay sculptor, Thomas embodies the rich spectrum of folklore and is truly an active bearer of folkways. He expresses the love of his community and to an extent of his region. James Thomas is folklore—Afro-American and otherwise.

James Thomas, as described in our course, is the equivalent in his world of the *griots* in West African culture. He is a singer and teller of tales who carries with him the laws, written and unwritten, and the culture of his land. He is looked upon with both awe and fear due to his power to freeze the images of the land in song and sculpture.

In studying the life and art of James Thomas, it is of the utmost importance that we study the individual artist and his tradition with equal care. Folklore scholarship has tended to document "traditions" without considering the artists who produce them. Folk art, and certainly black folk art, reflects the artist's personal life. Thomas' art cannot be fully understood without knowing something of his life as a black man in Mississippi. As Thomas put it,

> If you'd worked as hard as I did, if you'd known a dream you couldn't tell it. You couldn't hardly hold up at the work I did. I have pulled five hundred foot cables up and down those Mississippi hills all day long and not have nothing but a box of crackers for dinner and some water. And I have worked all day long trying to get some money to buy food for my children. [1]

Today Thomas works as a gravedigger. It is an occupation reflected in the theme of death which runs through his folktales, blues, and sculpture. Images of skulls often "roll across" his mind, to use a pun of his own making. Thomas' friends associate him with death and jokingly say to him things like, "Don't come after me. I'm not ready to die yet." Death and burial are major themes in Afro-American culture, and Thomas' life

causes him to focus on these themes in the forms of his folk art.

Thus the Delta region, Thomas' occupation, and his artistic sensitivity are major influences on his sculpture, which is in itself a part of a larger Afro-American tradition. And without an appreciation of Thomas' life we have only a partial picture of his art and its role in Afro-American folklore.

James Thomas was born on October 14, 1926, near Eden in Yazoo County, Mississippi, in the red clay hills of the Mississippi Delta. As a child he began making clay imitations of animals, patterning his first work after similar figures made by his uncle. He later made clay models of Ford tractors and was nicknamed "Son Ford." In Thomas' words,

> I used to make little tractors. I haven't made them in a long time. I used to make them and put me some sticks through there [as axles] and made me some wheels and let it dry and then I'd have something to roll across the floor. I would make them Ford tractors and they started to call me "Son Ford" from then on. [2]

The clay which Thomas worked is called "gumbo clay" and is found in very pliable forms in the hills of Yazoo County. As a child he made his figures more durable by baking them in a stove or fireplace until they became red with heat. This firing made the clay figures as hard as bricks, and afterwards he used them as toys or sold them to local whites.

Thomas has had no continuing contact with artists who work with clay other than his uncle. His work has been highly personal. Perhaps the most unusual figures in his repertoire are heads and skulls which often have openings in their tops that serve as containers or ashtrays. Thomas explains how he first began this work:

> It was a long time ago. I wouldn't know just how old I was. When I was going to school, that's how I get my money to buy my paper and pencils, because my momma and grandmomma waddn't able to buy none of that stuff for me. I would make different things that looked good enough for me to sell, you know. The white people around there, they'd help me out and buy some. The highest I ever sold when I was small, one day, I sold some horses, and I got three dollars for them. [3]

When asked where he got the idea for the skull, he replied:

> Well, whatever come to my mind, that's what I'd do. Most of the time when I was young, I never did fool with no boys or nothing. If I waddn't fishing, I was hunting, and I hardly ever would play with anybody. Just anything would cross my mind, I'd do that. [4]

On the basis of his explanation, Thomas' decision to mold faces and skulls from clay seems to have been spontaneous. It seems not to have arisen from having ever seen similar art forms. If Thomas' uncle or others in the area made clay skulls as well as animals, Thomas never mentions the fact. These highly individual creations are used within the black folk community of Leland and function as important examples of Afro-American folk art. Local blacks value them highly, much to Thomas' pleasure, and their meaning for both the artist and those who possess the art is important to our understanding of the community and the folklore within it.

Despite the fact that Thomas is a black man, and that there are clearly identifiable Afro influences present in his art, we must look to other sources in order to understand him completely. A way of organizing this investigation for students is to look at Thomas' art, and other folk art, in a tripartite way. The analysis might look something like this:

James Thomas' art

1. *Tradition* : basically Afro and European sources. In an almost every way Thomas, although isolated from his Afro and European traditions, manages to maintain and respect the traditions of masters who came before and laid down certain foundations. In this way he reinforces the fact that you cannot cut yourself off and that you must affirm what came before. This seems to confirm what has often been suspected, that there appears to be a spiritual or subconscious level in Afro-American folk art through which the artist recreates images of his past.
2. *Region* : It is the region that gives Thomas and other folk artists (as well as formal artists) a sense of place that adds to their traditional sources. The materials of the artist vary with the region: Thomas works with the clay of the Mississippi Delta in order to construct his skull sculptures.
3. *Individual* : This concerns the impact of the individual on his work. Each artist has a sense of what constitutes a good piece of sculpture, a good woven basket, etc. Thomas is very interesting in terms of his personal imprint on his work. He has developed what is termed "the aesthetic of the ugly." He creates grotesque human images and feels that these images are of greater interest to the viewer than more conventional shapes would be. In his own words:

> A skull has got to be ugly cause it's nothing but bones and teeth. People are more likely to be interested in something like that than they would be in a bird [which he often makes]. They'd rather see a skull. Then too, a lot of people have never seen a real skull and they're probably wondering how it will be when they die. They say, "Will I be in the same shape that skull there is in?" [5]

This preference for ugliness is an aesthetic and artistic choice which reverses traditional white concepts of beauty, somewhat like our students' use of "bad" to mean good. The "bad" man in the context of the blues and the prose toast (and even in the folk ballad which cuts across racial lines) is the black outlaw who affirms himself against white society. Thus both "bad" and "ugly" assume positive value within the Afro-American folk aesthetic in a significant reversal of white usage of the terms. In the process of creating, Thomas has had to confront what Henry Glassie describes as a polarization in culture between *pleasure* and *function* —the tension that exists in a work of folk art between its pleasure-giving aspect and its functional aspect. [6] It is argued that functional considerations are always foremost. Decorations on a quilt or basket, for example, will never be allowed to interfere with the quilt's basic function within the folk culture. Thomas' sculpture, however, has shown a startling evolution from function to decoration. His early skulls, for example, were designed for use as ashtrays or containers. More recent skulls have not even been hollowed in the top.

Thomas also frequently uses paint on the faces rather than simply displaying the natural clay surface. Wherever possible other material is incorporated into his clay sculpture. For instance, his most recent innovation is a pair of flashing red Christmas lights which serve as eyes in a black cat. The black cat of course plays a major role in voodoo practice, and Thomas consciously chose red as a flashing color.

The voodoo element in Thomas' art should prove to be very interesting to my students, who are surprisingly superstitious. It must be pointed out, or rather shown to students by visual means, that the sculpture of faces and heads is widespread in African art. Often statues of complete human figures accentuate the head by enlarging it in proportion to the rest of the body. [7] As a sculptor of heads, both Thomas' medium and his subject are rooted in Afro-American art. In both Africa and America the head is considered the most vital and

sensitive part of the body. Voodoo spells traditionally focus on the head. And the power of voodoo doctors also emanates from their heads.

During a lecture Mr. Ferris recalled an incident involving Thomas and a local black which had a voodoo quality about it. There was an unmistakable resemblance between one of Thomas' sculptures and this man. Called in to see his clay image and asked if he had ever seen anyone who looked like the figure, the local man was very nervous and refused to admit any resemblance between the clay figure and himself.

What this incident illustrates is the sense of awe with which local blacks regard Thomas and his sculpture. To create a man's image, in the voodoo tradition, is to have power and control over him. This vital and often eerie relation between the artist and his community is also present in Thomas' blues. In these tunes he introduces names, occupations, and physical traits of individuals in the verses created during performances. James Thomas the folk artist then becomes a powerful and at times a frightening force within the black community.

We have discussed three sources of influence acting upon James Thomas and his art. Thomas, the self-taught artist, claims that his major inspirational source is that of dreams. This leads us into three additional sources of inspiration that are really common to all artists. In terms of presenting this material to students, these common sources serve as a link between the formal world and the folk world, and serve to strengthen the theory that folk art should be considered in as serious a vein as formal art. The inspirational sources are as follows:

1. *Memory / Imagination*— the world within and the world without. We must look at both in relation to the artist, in much the same way that we must look at text and context. A sense of place often occupies an important part of the memory and imagination. It is that internal sense of place recalled by the artist's memory. The colors may differ from reality and vary from artist to artist, but certain threads of truth are common to all. It might be said that the folk artist consecrates place to a greater extent than the formal artist. That is subject to debate. No less a figure than William Faulkner, with his deep love of place and his passion for developing the sounds of a region, defies this theory. But Faulkner is a special case, and I will discuss him in another section of this paper.
2. *Dreams* and *Visions* of the artist. For some artists, and certainly in the case of James Thomas, these dreams and visions can be of a haunting nature. They are haunting until released, until the artist places these feelings on materials and achieves some sense of balance and centrality within himself and with respect to his art. Ironically, as in the case of Thomas' skulls, once the artist is released from these haunting feelings, the material he has created may haunt others.
3. *Media* —an important source of inspiration for folk artists and formal artists as well. I experienced firsthand a good example of media influence on folk artists while I was in the Peace Corps in the middle 1960's. My wife and I visited a fellow Peace Corps volunteer who was working with the San Blas Indians off the coast of Panama. The Indians were and still are producing small tapestries called *molas* . Although I was not aware of it at the time, these *molas* were prime examples of folk art. There was a strong tradition behind the *molas,* they varied in structure and content within their region of production, and there was a significant impact of individuals on their work.

What was interesting then, and even more so now as I examine it in terms of folklore, was the impact of media on the folk art of the San Blas Indians. As a result of exposure to modern media, the Indians began to include

such items as bathing beauties, soccer players, baseball players, and beer cans in the design of their *molas.* These items certainly did not usurp the place of the traditional jungle and sea animals in their art, but often mingled with the more traditional symbols to form bizarre designs.

My classroom presentation of Thomas will be a multi-media sort of approach. I hope to draw heavily from Mr. Ferris' film and slide collection and from his recordings of Thomas. What I have presented in this paper is really my own attempt to understand James Thomas, and to reduce him (if that is the correct phrase) to a figure who can fit into a classroom.

In presenting the study of folklore as a classroom unit, I anticipate moving from material culture, the study of what we can touch and feel, and its emphasis on collecting and studying by students, to the study of music and what we can hear. Ideally, I would like to begin with a study of the ballad.

There is no clear-cut source for the ballad, but in Europe in the Middle Ages there appeared a type of story-song which in English has come to be known as the ballad. The ballad or story-song has certain definite characteristics that always appear, and others that frequently appear. The ballad always tells a story, in song, in a way that makes it unmistakably the product of folk culture. The impersonality of a ballad and its concern with a single situation rather than with a fully developed series of events might be said to be secondary characteristics.

The ballad tells a story, although not in conventional literary terms. Such a distinction is valid in that I would like my students to study the ballad not only in and of itself and as an example of folk art, but as a springboard to studying literature.

Of the elements that comprise a story—action, characters, setting, and theme—the ballad is chiefly concerned with action. The action is always vivid and dramatic, with a bit of romance often thrown in. At times it is sensationalized into the melodramatic. A valid analogy can be drawn between the ballad story and our current spate of TV "soap operas," as well as the modern tabloid newspaper story. It is an analogy with great possibilities in the classroom since it can be used to emphasize the elements of a ballad, the elements of a television program, and the elements of a newspaper story. Two rivals, an Englishman and a Scotsman, meet in battle and fight to the death. A brother kills his sister on her wedding day. A girl about to be executed is saved by her lover. Drama and romance within timeless situations. Such stories have appealed to the *folk* over the years. They are the stuff of real life and thus the stuff of folk songs.

Action is present in the ballad, but there is a definite lack of connection between character and action in the ballad. The action is not motivated by character as it is in more formal narrative. This can be clearly seen simply by listening to and studying closely a number of ballads.

Another conspicuous difference between the modern story and the folk ballad story is the tendency of the ballad to quickly pass over the first half of the plot and get to the solution. The ballad entitled "Lord Randall" is a classic example of this, as is "The Cruel Brother." In the latter the action begins with a brother who stabs his sister as she prepares to ride off after being married. A result of an incestuous relationship come to a close? The ballad itself gives no clue.

This tendency on the part of ballads to concentrate on climactic action is really the contribution of the folk and the effect of the nature of the oral tradition on ballad style and form. For ballads, like all folk art, are things of growth. In their earliest forms ballads may well have told detailed stories. But as they are recreated by the folk, the slower, less dramatic elements are dropped and only the moment of drama remains.

One could conceivably make a case for the ballad as the ultimate in dramatic expression. In them is a man or woman facing the moment of truth; the details that bring about this confrontation, this moment, are unimportant. In a sense this is an important aspect of all of folk art. Certainly folk artists can be introspective and analytical (James Thomas is an excellent example), yet they are also concerned with the drama of the moment.

An excellent example of the elements and growth of a ballad can be seen in the piece entitled “The Maid Freed From the Gallows.” This ballad appears in both British and American tradition. As it was handed down, the folk gradually discarded certain details, yet maintained the dramatic mood and the climax. As certain details disappeared the ballad gained in intensity. It would be interesting in a classroom situation to compare this ballad and the practices related to its development to similar techniques in the short stories of Hemingway. In “The Killers,” for example, Hemingway passes over the slow and undramatic elements and moves right into the climax. He directs the reader to what is significant.

The ballad, for all its color and drama, is curiously impersonal, setting it apart from narrative literature in which the narrator is prominent. The scene is set, the characters pass through, but all without direction or comment on the part of the supposed author. Also, the fast and furious action of ballads always seems to contain the same level of tension. The most brutal and exciting details are told in a sort of casual, offhand way. This is seen clearly in the ballad of “Lord Thomas and Fair Annet.” Lord Thomas’ wife has stabbed his sweetheart:

> “Oh art thou blind, Lord Thomas?” she sayd,
> “Or canst thou not very well see?
> Oh dost thou not see my own heart’s blood
> Run trickling down my knee?”
> Lord Thomas he had a sword by his side,
> As he walked about the hall;
> He cut off his bride’s head from her shoulders,
> And he threw it against the wall.
> He set the hilte against the ground,
> And the point against his heart;
> There was never three lovers that ever met
> More sooner they did depart. [8]

The last two lines are an incredible example of understatement. They certainly emphasize the casualness and impersonality of the ballad. This quality is even present in folk ballads that are told from the first person point-of-view. The "I" is an impersonal "I." First-person ballads of this sort could be compared to some of Edgar Allen Poe's stories of high adventure. Both are intensely dramatic, and part of the effect is due to this impersonal presentation of things. In the same way that the exclusion of details in the ballad heightens the feeling of dramatic tension, lack of continuous narrative comment in a ballad makes the action seem starker. The reader or listener himself must imaginatively reconstruct the scene.

Up to now I have been discussing what constitutes a ballad and its relation to literature. In terms of studying the ballad within a folklore context it would also be appropriate to discuss what ballads are about and how they originated.

The ballad, of course, begins with the original composition. Students might wonder how a song composed by an individual becomes a folk piece—how it becomes part of folklore. In a way this process is very important. With few exceptions, it can be used to explain the evolution of folk art and the place of the folk in this process. The stuff of the ballad, the stuff of folk art is, of course, the key. The material must be of interest to the folk. It must be realistic, it must be dramatic, and it must be of a local nature. The content of the art must be of a nature to capture the imagination of the folk, and it must not seem to be too far removed from the experience of the folk.

If the original compositions can meet these criteria, the process of acceptance begins. The folk begin to take them and make them their own. Generations of singers slowly absorb them. The process of re-creation sets in—a process that I touched upon earlier in this section. Lines are added and deleted. Words drift in and out. Emphasis changes. This is the re-creation by the folk of the original song into a folk song that expresses local culture and emotions.

The words "local" and "dramatic" are important in explaining to students what folk ballads are about. The majority of ballads are about local happenings of a dramatic character. A stirring event occurs in a community. It probably first becomes an oral tale with a succession of embroidered details. Then it may become the subject of a ballad which at first is sung locally, but then gradually extends in space. And if it is a good story with a good tune it extends not only in space, but in time. It is sung from generation to generation and undergoes changes as it is adapted to new local situations.

The subject of Robin Hood is a good example, It began as a local legend of a dramatic character. Not only the legend but the folk ballads grew and extended in space all over England. They extended in time, too; the earliest known reference to Robin dates from 1377, and stories about him are still told today. As an outlaw Robin did not suffer at the hands of storytellers and folk singers. Outlaws have always been romanticized and dramatized by the folk, and still are. We need only witness Jesse James, Bonnie and Clyde, and Big Bad Leroy Brown in our own culture to affirm this. This leads to interesting classroom possibilities for using the outlaw ballad to excite students about the ballad in general, and as a springboard to teaching literature and film. One could list dozens of films with the outlaw as hero. The "aesthetic of the bad!"

A nice way to finish up the study of ballads would be to investigate what kinds of changes ballads undergo when they come to America and become part of and subject to our own folklore. Mr. Ferris gave a beautiful example of such changes in a lecture in which he selected a single ballad and illustrated the effect upon it of British folklore, native American folklore, and finally Afro-American folklore. In my classroom I would use this as a sort of grand finale. First, though, I would deal with one major change undergone by ballads in America. I might not have dealt with or even recognized this change had it not been for two guest lecturers in Mr. Ferris'

course. Jim Goode and Rodney Harris were from Harlan County, Kentucky. They were from coal-mining families and beneath their pleasant country-boy humor there lurked a strong sense of tragedy—mine disaster tragedies. It struck me that mine disasters would be an ideal issue on which to base my own classroom presentation of American folk ballads and the changes they have undergone.

Some of the best American folk ballads are tragic mining ballads—tales of cave-ins, strikes, and black death. It is all true, there is no sense of heightened melodrama in these ballads. And it makes sense that among the miners the folk ballad has developed as a vehicle for social protest. That is, the folk ballad in the hands of the local folk artists among the miners becomes a story with a purpose. It becomes a story with a decided stress on the theme of social protest. This is the significant change undergone by folk ballads as they extend in space and time to America. The story becomes less and less important, until it is told merely to illustrate the theme.

The theme may not always be one of clear-cut social protest. Such is the case in the three folk ballads used by Mr. Ferris in his illuminating example of the evolution of a ballad. The overall theme in these ballads is one of an almost old-fashioned morality, involving a sinner who leaves home and mother and ends up disgraced. The study begins with a British version of "The Unfortunate Rake," moves to the native American ballad "The Streets of Laredo," and concludes with the Afro-American version of "The St. James Infirmary." It must be stressed for the students' benefit that this is the same ballad. What is different is the response of the local folk artists to the ballad, as they attempt to fix it within their own space and time.

The other prominent type of music I will deal with in this folklore unit is the "blues." I myself had listened to a lot of blues numbers without knowing what lay behind this sound, and I was amazed at its origins and the significant questions about Black America that can be answered through the blues.

It seems probable that the blues tradition developed after the Civil War, during the Reconstruction era, when blacks were no longer forced to live and work for white masters. There was less danger of movement on the part of blacks and blues singers tended to travel widely and describe in verse the experiences they encountered. But the blues did not spring full-blown from the mobile period following the Civil War. The music had its origin in hard times and the response of people to these times. The hard times were work times. People worked "from sun to sun," said James Thomas in a recent visit to Yale. And the songs were work songs, which were and still are a part of black culture in both West Africa and the New World. They were used to coordinate groups of workers usually engaged in strenuous manual labor. Usually one man, who did no work, called the verses while the group worked according to the tempo of his call, responding with a chorus at appropriate times.

This call-and-response pattern of work songs established an important division between the singer and the working group. The singer handled the verses in such a way that he could direct the workers and set the tempo. This musical creativity was greatly respected by both the work gang and, more importantly, their overseer, for callers often did no manual labor and were paid higher wages. It is logical that blacks with musical ability developed it, and began to sing what evolved into blues as a means of escaping odious manual labor. Big Bill Broonzy confirms this point when he tells in his autobiography how he and his brother played their music and entertained white people under screened porches while other blacks had to work in the hot sun.

Broonzy also recalls how the first musicians he knew, the first well-known blues players, prided themselves on being able to make a living from their music and the gifts of women who admired them. They may well have been the precursors of the modern street-corner hustler, or "Superfly." As Broonzy describes them,

> Them men didn't know how cotton and corn and rice and sugarcane grows and they didn't care. They went out, dresses up every night and some of them had three and four women. One fed him and the other bought his clothes and shoes. These is the men that wear ten-dollar Stetson hats and twenty-dollar gold pieces at their watch and diamonds in their teeth and on their fingers. [9]

Thus, the blues player stood apart from the rest of the black community and used his musical abilities to avoid heavy manual labor which was the fate of most blacks in the rural South. Such singers often transcended their appointed role and became musical spokesmen for the black community. Their blues announced a suffering with which all blacks identified. Blues singers, like ballad singers, frequently referred to local events and persons in their verses, publicly expressing the suffering of blacks as individuals and as a group.

Some folksong scholars feel that similar songs were composed during slavery. Like many blues, these songs were sung only before black audiences. And like the blues these songs voiced the suffering of individuals and were a means of relieving the depression of slaves who had been beaten and mistreated. A very interesting statement by a former slave given to a J. Miller McKim in 1862 illustrates this:

> I asked one of these blacks—one of the most intelligent of them (Prince Rivers, Sergeant 1st Reg. S.C.V.)—where they got these songs. "Dey make 'em sah.' 'How do they make them?' After a pause, evidently casting about for an explanation, he said: 'I'll tell you, it's dis way. My master call me up, and order me a short peck of corn and a hundred lash. My friends see it, and is sorry for me. When dey come to de praise-meeting dat night dey sing about it. Some's very good singers and know how; and dey work it in—work it in, you know, till they get it right; and dat's de way." [10]

This description of singers taking an event and working it into a musical frame which was sung by others present can be applied to the work of blues singers with their own repertoire. There are similar traditions of musical spokesmen in African cultures, and a student of folksongs named Janheinz Jahn has analyzed the blues in an interesting way based on this tradition. Jahn feels blues are primarily a public rather than a private expression. Although many blues tunes are personalized by their use of the first person, Jahn feels that their purpose is to describe the racial rejection familiar to all blacks.

> For the blues singer does not in fact express his personal experiences and transfer them to the audience; on the contrary, it is the experience of the community that he is expressing, making himself its spokesmen. ...And even though indirectly, the note of rebellion is always heard: I'd rather drink muddy water, sleep in a hollow log, than stay in dis town, treated like a dirty dog. The melancholy is a camouflage, the 'plaint' hides a complaint. [11]

My initial presentation to students would be of a general and historical nature. The origin and development of the blues can validly be handled in this way. The Delta blues tradition, as I studied and observed it in Mr. Ferris' course, is the particular blues tradition to be focused on in the unit. Students will undoubtedly ask why we are studying this particular blues tradition, and not the blues in general. My answer, and I trust that I am interpreting Mr. Ferris and my related readings correctly, is that there is no single, all-encompassing blues music, just as "black music" as such does not exist. What does exist are numerous distinct musical traditions found among blacks which are greatly influenced by regional context. Different settings, different local histories, and different social structures in the United States produce different kinds of black music. In speaking of the music of black communities we are dealing with a number of variables.

Mr. Ferris found this to be true even in rural regions in and around the Mississippi Delta. He found that Delta blues was indigenous to black culture in that area and had little in common with traditional white music of

nearby areas. Tom Dumas, one of Mr. Ferris' black informants during his fieldwork, illustrated this beautifully. Dumas, although living in the Delta when interviewed by Mr. Ferris, had spent most of his life outside the Delta in an area where the black musical tradition had been influenced by white music. Dumas' musical repertoire consisted entirely of square dance tunes played on a fiddle and banjo. When he moved to the Delta, he found that only whites were interested in his music. He could feel no identity with the music of other blacks in his Delta community, nor could they with his music.

The issue of distinct musical tradition influenced by the regional context extends really beyond music to folklore in general, and in particular to black folklore. Although the insertion of this issue could come at any number of places in the unit, it might be appropriate to deal with it now as it might be helpful to students in drawing certain conclusions about Black America.

The study of folklore, and in particular of black folklore in the United States, is complicated by regional groups which have distinctly different cultures. Past studies have analyzed specific groups of blacks and then tried to draw conclusions concerning black culture as a whole. What must be realized is that there are a number of well-defined subcultures within the black populace which simply cannot be equated with each other.

One of the major distinctions to be made is between rural and urban black culture, and between the culture and folklore of specific rural regions and that of specific cities. Patterns of black life in ghettoes of highly populated urban areas like Harlem, West Philadelphia, and even New Haven, differ greatly from those in small Delta Mississippi towns (I use the Delta as an example because of its importance in our blues studies). Northern urban ghettoes contain large, highly concentrated populations within boundaries across which few whites will venture. And from this all-black society many of the outspoken black leaders have emerged. (This became evident to me while living in Washington, D.C., in the late sixties, as I witnessed the emergence of such people as Channing Phillips and Stokeley Carmichael.) It is from these Northern urban areas that the potent "Black Power" groups have developed their philosophies and organizations. The popular mind sees the urban ghetto as seething with violence. Yet it is a community that has allowed black culture and folklore to develop within a protective context.

It is of the utmost importance in terms of gaining a sense of place and a sense of personal identity that students see themselves as part of this distinct and specific urban black culture. And it is equally important, even in the face of personal violence that students may encounter, that they see their urban area as a self-protecting community.

Blacks in Southern rural areas, and here it might be possible for students to draw firsthand accounts from parents, grandparents or neighbors, are much more vulnerable to intimidation from whites. In most small Southern towns whites can enter black areas easily and are quick to deal with individuals or groups who openly oppose the whites. (See Richard Wright's powerful volume of short stories entitled *Uncle Tom's Children,* especially the opening story, "Big Boy Leaves Home.") Because of this intimidation most Southern blacks conceal their racial hostilities and learn to develop attitudes of accommodation towards whites. The black folklore of Southern rural areas reflects this aggression, this suppressed hostility, in the oral tradition shared only among blacks. I am speaking of the protest tale which reflects its rural context by being full of rural images and by dealing primarily with the black trickster figure who has been popular in oral lore since the beginning of slavery. This trickster figure permits a vicarious release from societal pressures. The trickster violates forbidden rules. He is the id—the animal passions suppressed by the superego. For blacks the trickster is a way of dealing with the white power structure. As indicated earlier, the blues tune is also used in such a manner. The melancholy air is often the camouflage for a justifiable complaint.

Urban ghetto lore, on the other hand, puts its subjects in an urban situation. Hustlers, jet pilots, detectives, and astronauts are all roles ascribed to black protagonists in urban ghetto lore. The language is generally "hip" and unfamiliar to whites and Southern blacks alike. In urban folklore blacks are reshaping traditional materials—materials that are most likely of rural origin—and through them developing a different image of themselves. Instead of ploughing behind a mule the black protagonist is flying a jet. These same changes can be seen in the development of folklore in other parts of the world. Frantz Fanon noted during Algeria's war for independence from France, "The oral traditions and stories, epics, and songs of the people…are now beginning to change. The story tellers…introduce into them modifications which are increasingly fundamental. There is a tendency to bring conflicts up to date and to modernize struggles…."

So there are fundamental differences between urban ghetto folklore and the lore of Southern rural towns. This emphasizes the premise that one cannot study the folk without the lore, the text without the context. Both the culture and the lore which functions within it, and in this case the black culture and the lore which functions within it, are primarily regional expressions.

This brings us back to the blues from the Mississippi Delta. Despite the confusion of many folk scholars, it seems clear that it was in the Mississippi Delta counties that the first blues were sung, and where there was the richest creative growth. Since 1900 Delta blues have clearly emerged as a dominant cultural force, which continues even today to influence black culture as well as most white "pop" music. A recent movie, *The Last Concert* , would be an excellent illustration of the effect of blues on current performers, if the movie could be procured and shown.

Many attempts have been made to characterize the style of Delta blues singers. Mr. Ferris' conclusions, based on his extensive field work, are certainly as valid as any. I will also add my own bit, based mostly on a few wonderful hours of listening to James "Son" Thomas at Yale this summer. What stood out for me was the falsetto voice used for contrast and emphasis. Almost all of Thomas' songs contained a portion sung in falsetto. This was very interesting because, as Mr. Ferris pointed out, the use of falsetto is traditional in many West African cultures. And it again emphasizes the strangely spiritual or subconscious level in Afro-American folk art that links it to the past.

As a contrast to the use of falsetto was the heavy, raspy voice used by Thomas at times. Although he was a gentle, almost painfully thin man, this heaviness was like a growl and made him appear more ominous than he really was. In listening to Bessie Smith this summer on records I was aware of this vocal heaviness. In fact it seemed much more prominent and pronounced in her voice than in Thomas and other Delta blues singers.

The bottleneck guitar technique was another distinguishing feature. As Thomas explained it, the racial circumstances of his region sometimes prevented him from having access to certain musical accoutrements. In their place he simply broke up a coke bottle and used the bottle neck, or ran a piece of metal up and down the guitar strings for the desired effect. Thus you have the bottleneck guitar technique.

I expect students to draw their own conclusions about style based on listening to Delta blues singers. I list some elements of that style here for the purpose of acquainting readers of this paper with its features.

But we have not yet spoken of the Delta, the physical context for the text of the blues. The Delta is a rich alluvial plain which extends from Memphis, Tennessee, to Vicksburg, Mississippi. It is defined by the Mississippi River on the west and the Yazoo River on the east. The region has an agricultural economy and contains the greatest density of black population in the state. Most of this population is grouped around scattered rural towns which number less than five hundred inhabitants. An introduction to the physical Delta

for students will take the form of a map reading assignment. Reading a map key will be emphasized as well as location of towns, matching hometowns to certain famous Delta blues musicians, and noting population and physical dimensions.

Blacks began migrating to the Delta in large numbers in the 1890's, about the time of the emergence of the Delta blues. By 1930 they greatly outnumbered whites in the region. Speculation has it that labor agents promised higher wages to those who would live in the Delta. Even though today Delta blacks still constitute a social majority and continue to work as laborers, a situation that has existed since the turn of the century, they are an unusually mobile group. It has been suggested that Delta communities represent classic examples of communities in stages of decreasing physical isolation, as first the Mississippi River, then railroads, and finally highways were developed in the area. These changes had important and long-term effects on the folklore of the communities as they moved from rural isolation to communication with other areas. Many Delta blacks have traveled outside the state and often their lore and thus their contribution to the local body of lore is influenced by experience in other parts of the world.

As an example of this mobility, two major highways link the Delta with northern industrial areas such as Chicago. These highways constitute one of the three major migration routes which blacks have followed in their exodus from the South. Along these highways thousands of families have left Mississippi in search of better jobs and homes. During the period between 1955 and 1960, 60% of the nonwhite migrants to Chicago were from the South, and three-quarters of this group were Mississippi-born. Though the Delta is physically defined, its inhabitants are highly mobile and it is this mobility that exerts a powerful influence on the culture of the area and its folklore.

To further emphasize the importance of the Delta, it should be noted that such musical figures as Bo Didley, Little Walter, Muddy Waters, B. B. King, Sam Cooke, John Lee Hooker, Otis Spann, Jimmy Reed, and Diana Ross are all from the Delta, giving the area an importance out of proportion to its size. In a sense many of the performers have transcended the Delta, and their lives and music are no longer an intimate part of Delta culture. They have become national "culture heroes."

I have deliberately avoided a discussion of the structure of Delta blues. It is reasonably difficult and I am not certain of its importance within a folklore unit of which the Delta blues is but a part. If there is any focus on structure within my unit it will be on verse structure and its relation to the composition and performance of blues by individual singers. Delta blues are sung mainly for dancers in so-called "juke joints." Their length often depends on the enthusiasm and the response of the dancers. Audience response is critical in determining whether a blues number will be ended after several verses or will be continued indefinitely. Such flexibility in blues is due to the use of formulaic verses which can be added to songs by singers. The formulaic verse is not a story verse or part of a plot, nor can it be dealt with through literary analysis, as can the verses of traditional ballads. The formulaic verse is a self-contained unit that seems to be floating in the musician's head.

Two citations clarify all this. Although neither one concerns the Delta blues, both capture the essence of the blues and the idea of formulaic verse. Newmar I. White, speaking of black song styles, writes, "The structural units in Negro folksong are the metaphor and line, not the plot or part of plot. Instead of weaving narrative elements to create a story, the Negro song accumulates images to create a feeling." [13] His second comment is, interestingly, about Serbo-Croatian epic singers. "We shall see that in a very real sense every performance is a separate song; for every performance is unique, and every performance bears the signature of its poet singer. ...What is important is not the oral performance but rather the composition during oral performance."

[14] Thus, we have captured the essence of the structure of the blues from entirely unsolicited sources.

I am totally indebted to Bill Ferris for all of the material in this unit. What I have tried to do is simply arrange his lectures, readings, and films in such a manner as to make them presentable to middle-school and high-school students. This has involved some streamlining of the original course in terms of reading materials. Thus, for the purpose of my course, the bibliography included here contains both required and suggested readings.

It has also involved placing the emphasis of the course in places other than where Mr. Ferris has intended it to be placed. For instance, one of my major objectives would be to give students a sense of themselves as members of a distinct urban culture. This would involve not only studying rural folklore in and of itself, but using it as a yardstick with which to compare and contrast urban folklore.

In streamlining the course to fit my needs certain areas have been neglected. One of these is the prose narrative section of folklore. I have not neglected it completely, as I have tried to weave it into the other segments of the unit. But I have not treated it as a separate entity. Such a section could probably be included in the latter part of the school year. This is because a good focal point of the prose narrative section would be a major nonfiction work entitled *All God's Dangers* , a fascinating yet difficult work for which students would have to be well prepared in order to handle it successfully.

NOTES

1. William Ferris, "If you Ain't Got It in Your Head, You Can't Do It in Your Hand: James Thomas, Mississippi Delta Folk Sculptor," *Studies in Literary Imagination* , Vol. 3, Center for Southern Folklore, 1970, pp. 89-130.
2. Ibid., p. 118.
3. Ibid., p. 119.
4. Ibid., p. 119.
5. Ibid., p. 116.
6. Ibid., p. 116.
7. Ibid., p. 125.
8. MacEdward Leach, *The Ballad Book* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952), p. 270.
9. William Ferris, *Blues From the Delta* (London: Studio Vista, 1970), p. 29.
10. Ibid., p. 29.
11. Ibid., pp. 29-30.
12. Ibid., p. 35.
13. Newman I. White, *American Negro Folksongs* (1928; rpt. Hatboro, Pa: Folklore Association, 1965), p. 112.
14. Ibid., p. 112.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Required Texts

Richard M. Dorson, *American Folklore.*

James Deetz, *In Small Things Forgotten* .

Wilbur Zelinsky, *The Cultural Geography of the United States.*

Theodore Rosengarten, *All God's Dangers* .

William Ferris, *Blues From the Delta.*

Allen Tullos, ed., *Long Journey Home: Folklife in the South (* Southern Exposure, v. 5, #203).

Lawrence Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness.*

William Ferris, ea., *Images of the South: Visits with Eudora Welty and Walker Evans* .

Xerox package. (reading marked with an asterisk available in xerox)

INTRODUCTION

1. *What is Folklore* ?
   Richard M. Dorson, *American Folklore* .
   Allen Tullos, Introduction to *Long Journey Home* , pp. 6-10.
   William Ferris, ea., *Images of the South: Visits with Eudora Welty and Walker Evans* .

MATERIAL CULTURE

2. *Folk Art, Architecture & Technology I*
   James Deetz, *In Small Things Forgotten*

*Henry Glassie, "Folk Art" in Dorson's *Folklore & Folklife* , pp. 253-280.

*William Ferris, "Vision in Afro-American Art: The Sculpture of James Thomas," *Journal of American Folklore* , 88 (348) April-June 1975, 115-131.

3. *Folk Art, Architecture & Technology I*
   Wilbur Zelinsky, *The Cultural Geography of the United States*
   *Roger Welch, "We Are What We Eat: Omaha Food as Symbol," *Keystone Folklore Quarterly* , XVI (4), Winter 1971, p. 165-170.
   *Yvonne R. Lockwood, "The Sauna: An Expression of Finnish-American Identity," *Western Folklore Quarterly* , 36 (1), January 1977, p. 71-84.

VERBAL ART

4. *Myths, Legends and Folk Tales*

   *Frank Cushing, “The Cock and the Mouse,” in Dundes, *The Study of Folklore* , pp. 269-279.

   Lawrence Levine, “The Meaning of Slave Tales,” pp. 81Ð135 in *Black Culture* .

   *Zora Neale Hurston, *Mules and Men* , pp. 17Ð82.

   *Richard M. Dorson, *American Negro Folktales* , pp. 12-64, 68-81, 172-186.

   *Katherine Morgan, “Caddy Buffers: Legends of a Middle Class Negro Family in Philadelphia,” in Dundes, *Mother Wit* , pp. 595-610.

NOTE: Prospectus for term project due

5. *Minor Genres*

   Lawrence Levine, “Black Laughter,” pp. 298-366 and “A Pantheon of Heroes,” pp. 367-440 in *Black Culture* .

   *Naome and Eli Katz, “Tradition and Adaptation in American Jewish Humor,” *Journal of American Folklore* , 84 (332), April-June 1971, pp. 215-220.

   *Ed Cray, “The Rabbi Trickster,” *Journal of American Folklore* , 77 (306), October-December 1964, pp. 331-345.

   *William R. Bascom, “Four Functions of Folklore,” in Dundes, *The Study of Folklore* , pp. 279-299.

   *Alan Dundes, “Thinking Ahead: A Folkloristic Reflection on the Future Orientation in American World View,” *Anthropological Quarterly* , (42) 1969, pp. 53-72.

6. *Folk History*

   Theodore Rosengarten, *All God’s Dangers: The Life of Nate Shaw* .

FOLK BELIEF

7. *Folk Medicine and Folk Religion*

   Lawrence Levine, “The Sacred World of the Black Slaves,” pp. 3-80 and “Freedom, Culture and Religion,” pp. 136-189 in *Black Culture* .

   *Don Yoder, “Folk Medicine,” in Dorson *Folklore and Folklife* , pp. 191-216.

   *John C. Messinger, “Folk Religion,” in Dorson *Folklore and Folklife* , pp. 217-232.

   John Vlatch, “Graveyards and Afro-American Art” in *Southern Exposure,* pp. 161-165.

   Brett Sutton, “In the Good Old Way: Primitive Baptist Tradition,” *Southern Exposure* , pp. 97-104.

FOLK MUSIC

8. *White Country Music*

   *MacEdward Leach, *The Ballad Book* , pp. 1-44, 81-88, 277-280, 753-766.

   Charles Wolfe, “Tracking the Lost String Band,” *Southern Exposure* , pp. 11-20

   Buell E. Cobb, Jr., “Fasola Folk: Sacred Harp Singing,” *Southern Exposure* , pp. 48-53.

   Charles Camp and David Whismart, “A Voice From Home: Southern Mountain Musicians on the Maryland-Pennsylvania Border,” *Southern Exposure* , pp. 80-89.

   Sue Thrasher, “Pure Country: Wilma Lee and Stoney Cooper,” *Southern Exposure* , pp. 90-96.

   John Cohen, “A Visitor’s Recollection,” *Southern Exposure* , pp. 115-118.

9. *Black Song*

   Lawrence Levine, “The Rise of Secular Song,” pp. 190-297, and “Epilogue,” pp. 441-445 in *Black Culture* .

   William Ferris, *Blues From the Delta* .

Suggested Films For Use In The Folklore Unit

MUSIC: “Gravel Springs Fife and Drum”

(16 M, Color, 10 Min.)

“Mississippi Delta Blues”

(16 M, Black and White, 18 Min.)

“Delta Blues Singer James ‘Son Ford’ Thomas”

(16 M, Black and White, 45 Min.)

“Give My Poor Heart Ease: Mississippi Delta Bluesman”

(16 M, Black and White, 20 Min.)

CRAFTS “Made in Mississippi: Black Folk Arts and Crafts”

(*16 M, Color, 20 Min* .)

RELIGION: “Black Delta Religion”

(16 M, Black and White, 15 Min.)

“Two Black Churches”

(16 M, Color, 20 Min.) —Should be of particular interest since one of these churches is located in New Haven

“Fannie Bell Chapman: Gospel Singer”

(16 M, Color, 42 Min.)

TALES: “Ray Lum: Mule Trader”

(16 M, Color, 18 Min.)

“I Ain’t Lying: Folktales From Mississippi”

(*16 M, Color, 20 Min* .)