Editorial

Introduction to the Special Issue *"The Challenge of Folklore to the Humanities"*

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Five and a half decades ago, when Stith Thompson was the doyen of American folklore studies, he published his essay "The Challenge of Folklore" in *PMLA*, a leading journal of the Humanities (Thompson 1964). For a scholar who was dedicated to the construction of folklore research methods, identifying and cataloging motifs (Thompson 1932–1937, 1955, Thompson 1955–1958, 1960), and formatting and indexing the templates of folktale types around the globe (Thompson 1919, 1928, 1961a), this article was an anomaly. It had neither footnotes nor a bibliography. Written on a hotel balcony in Northern Italy, in the early winter days, when snowflakes outlined distant mountain tops, it was an odd ode to folklore. Stith Thompson (1885–1976), a scholar born in the heartland of America (Thompson 1996, p. 3; Martin n.d., p. 3), who began his scholarship celebrating the oral literature of the native Americans (Thompson 1919, 1922, 1929), faced the mountains on which the native Europeans had roamed hundreds of years ago, and whose oral literature, ancient, medieval and Renaissance authors harvested, and with them made a major contribution to European humanities.

Thompson was in awe. With broad brush strokes, he described the rise "of what we call civilization" (Thompson 1964, p. 357) not only in Italy, but also "in Egypt and Mesopotamia and various parts of the Near East, in Judea and in Persia, in Crete and in Greece." He was not Euro-centric, but rather universalist. "Farther east", he continued, "we observe special florescence in India and China and Japan and later in Southeast Asia. And in the New World the Mayas, the Aztecs, and the Incas have left remarkable remains of their advances beyond the level of their simple neighbors" (Thompson 1964, p. 357). From his hotel balcony, Thompson imagined not just these civilizations, but, as a dedicated folklore scholar, also the folk and the literature that literacy left on the margins (Thompson 1961b, 1970).

He envisioned the consolidation of the concept of folk literature not with its Romantic endorsement, but with its indispensable transition from orality to literacy, through recording and collecting by either amateurs or professionals, that turns oral literature into a curiosity. A dozen years earlier, his personal friend (Thompson 1996, pp. 58–59) and celebrated scholar Archer Taylor (1890–1973) addressed this very issue, singling it out as the primary obstacle to the admission of folklore into the Humanities.

"In the humanities", he wrote, "folklore has won for itself only a small place. This is not surprising because it has not been able to free itself completely from the antiquarian and dilettante tradition of collecting curiosities. Proverbs, tales, ballads, customs, or superstitions are thought to be quaint and are recorded and studied for that reason. In the fifteenth century, Italian humanists brought to Germany the idea of an objective description of a country and had imitators who illustrated accounts of Westphalia and Ulm with local proverbs, stories of ghosts and nixes, wedding customs, and other bits of folklore. A little later Johannes Boemus (1485–1535), who ranged more widely in his *Omnium gentium mores, leges et ritus* (1520), and Sebastian Franck (1499–1543), who limited himself to Germany, proceeded more systematically. Franck saw that a knowledge of customs and manners contributed as much as knowledge of political, legal, or ecclesiastical history to the understanding of a people. Such collections of materials had, however, a somewhat nationalistic

tinge and did not amount to much more than contributions to ethnography, history, or geography. A similar subordination of folklore to history and geography is seen in William Camden (1551–1623), *Remaines of a greater worke concerning Britaine* (1605). The second edition of this book (1614) contained the first alphabetical collection of English proverbs to be printed in England and we can therefore call it an early example of the organized presentation of folklore. The making of records continued and the manner of presenting them improved somewhat, but a systematic study of folklore did not arise. At the end of the seventeenth century scientific work that had been stimulated by the foundation of the Royal Society led John Aubrey (1626–1697) to make two valuable collections of folklore and the miscellaneous interests of German and other polymaths included it. Divergent as these activities were, they did not reinforce each other and did not establish folklore as a recognized branch of the humanities" (Taylor 1952, p. 59).

The Humanities have certainly changed not only since the days of John Aubrey (1626–1697), but also since Archer Taylor delivered his "Presidential Address" to the Modern Language Association in 1951, and so have folklore studies. It is no longer a curiosity, captive in museums and archives, but the subject of comprehensive studies in which integral and interdisciplinary theories and methods converge and new ones emerge. Folklorists set forward grand (Dundes 2005; Haring 2016) and humble (Noyes 2016) theories, and spelled out the contribution of folklore to the Humanities (Wilson 1988). If for Thompson, the challenge of folklore was to explore "the literature of the unlettered" (Thompson 1961b, 1970), today's folklorists challenge the Humanities to explore the humanities of the humanity that the Humanities marginalize.

They are not alone. Scholars in the Humanities themselves have engaged in an introspective analysis, examining their own engagement in processes of inclusion and exclusion in the Humanities of the multi-cultural America (Fuery and Mansfield 1997; Hollinger 2006). But in their thoughtful analyses, they have focused primarily on the socio-ethnic aspect of these processes, rather than on the cultural-literary heritage or the "folklore of peoples outside the main stream of Western or Oriental civilization" (Thompson 1964, p. 358). The following essays take up this challenge. They present periods, countries, cultures, and forms of oral literature as well as methods and theories that address their actual and potential contributions to the Humanities. Their coverage is not comprehensive; countries and cultures are missing, forms and theories are overlooked, but the hope is that these essays will generate further explorations.

The contributors to this online essay collection responded to my invitation. We did not meet in a conference nor discuss these issues collectively in a zoom or any other room, seeking any consensus or uniformity in identifying the challenge of folklore to the Humanities. But as an international group of folklore researchers, it is hardly a surprise that we respectively sought to examine the ways, using Thompson's terms (Thompson 1964, p. 358), in which folk cultures challenge civilization.

The Hebrew Bible is one of the ancient texts in the canon of the Western Humanities. In her essay, Susan Niditich explores the interdisciplinary engagement of biblical studies and folklore research, analyzing the consequences of the paradigm shift in biblical studies from the "Documentary Hypothesis" that Julius Wellhausen (1844–1918) had consolidated to the oral folk narrative forms and patterns that Hermann Gunkel (1862–1932) delineated. This change suggests a new positive meaning to the Medieval phrase *Vox Populi Vox Dei,* transforming the Hebrew Bible to a holy scripture of which the scribes were its secondary and the speakers and singers its primary creators.

The Hebrew Bible continued to maintain a central cultural position in the subsequent period, which Haim Weiss and Galit Hasan-Rokem present in their essay "Folklore in Antiquity." From their comparative analysis of Jewish and Greek folklore genres, it is possible to construct two models of the relation between orality and literacy in antiquity. In the historical Jewish society, rabbinic Judaism controlled literacy and eliminated or rejected texts that did not conform with its religious and ethical values, while in Greece, literacy was decentralized and individualized. Consequently, themes, forms and figures of oral

culture crossed into a broad spectrum of literary genres and contexts, ranging from history and philosophy to novella, drama, and poetry. Yet, as Weiss and Hasan-Rokem point out, regardless of the dominant ideological cultural attitude, pragmatically, in their daily and formal discourses, speakers had a cultural, multi-generic, category of folklore to which they referred and from which they quoted oral-literary forms. Therefore, in both societies, the Jewish and the Greek, there is a dialogic relation of validation and valuation between orality and literacy.

Crossing a time zone to the European Middle Ages, the two patterns continued. The church assumed a controlling authority in the transmission of themes, figures and forms from orality to literacy in Christianized Europe, while vernacular cultures continued to flourish in multiple forms and languages, making its own forays into literacy that by the dawn of the Renaissance manifested itself in literary works such as the *Decameron* and *Canterbury Tales* that became among the cornerstones of European literature and Humanities. In his essay "The Challenge of Folklore to Medieval Studies", John Lindow exposes the intertwined relations between folklore and Medieval studies. Folklore studies initially consolidated their research targets and tools, drawing upon Medieval Studies, and later, in turn, offered new perspectives for the analysis of medieval texts. Romantic nationalism bonded the two disciplines by extending to central European societies the traditional heritage of Medieval Nordic cultures, supplementing, or at times substituting, the classical humanities and myths, by constructing anew their imagined national identity, substantiated by philological analysis and thematic comparisons.

The second part of the present essay collection consists of four essays, each dealing with the study of folklore in a different country or region. Their selection was not systematic; none of them necessarily represents either a group or a pattern. They are case studies of the discipline of folklore and its integration in academic establishments, illuminating problems that it encounters.

In the many countries of sub-Saharan Africa, folklore faces common challenges as Enongene Mirabeau Sone observes in his essay "African Folklore and the Humanities: Challenge and Prospects." While they are all empowered by the liberation from intellectual colonialism, the denigration of primitivity by evolutionary anthropology, and the adoration of primitivism by Western romantic exoticism, they face the ideology of progress that academic administrators and intellectual leaders adopted. Such an ideology denied their own peoples the formative inspiration of their own traditional cultures, languages, literatures, and philosophies as embedded in their folklore. Encountering these contrasting trends in modern African countries, Sone's essay functions both as a cultural analysis and an advocacy for the potential positive value of folklore in the construction of modern societies in Africa.

Across the Atlantic and somewhat northward, in the continental United States, "below Canada and above Mexico", Simon Bronner defines the territory in his essay "The Challenge of American Folklore to the Humanities." His essay is a case study of folklore of a society that is caught between its own heterogeneity and its romantic idealism of national homogeneity. Lacking the medieval melting pot that forged oral traditions to be a source of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century romantic nationalism, America aimed at constructing homogenous national folklore of its own, challenging thereby not only the Humanities but also European theories of folklore and nationalism (Baycroft and Hopkin 2012). In Bronner's comprehensive essay, it is possible to distinguish four intersecting directions that folkloristic ideas followed in pursuit of these goals: (a) Initial projection upon Native Americans European models of folklore that gave away to their folkloristic-anthropological analysis, and finally the claiming of their own tradition by the Native American themselves. (b) Constructing American folklore in regional, rural, urban, and social regions and classes. (c) Preserving the memory cultures of ethnic immigrant communities and their transformations in America. (d) The formation of political institutions for the preservation of tradition and the emergence of popular cultural trends for the revival of rural folklore in middle-class contexts. After the completion of his essay, Patricia Sawin, and Rosemary

Levy Zumwalt examined the struggle of folklore in the American academic institutions (Sawin and Zumwalt 2020).

By comparison, the Arab World extends from the eastern shores of the Atlantic Ocean in North Africa to the western shores of the Persian Gulf in the Arabian Peninsula; while it is a larger territory than the United States, folklorically, its society is more homogeneous, with greater uniformity and historical continuity than the United States, but its rich contribution to global Humanities is often neglected. In his essay "Folklore in the Arab World," Hasan El-Shamy presents the folklore of wide-ranged societies from nomadic desert tribes to highly urbanized populations. United by religion and language with its dialectical and register variations, Arab folklore has been performed in a broad generic range from proverbs to tales and from riddles to poetry and long epics. El-Shamy challenges both folklore scholarship and the humanities in the Arab World to recognize the contributions of Arab folklore to civilization. In the nineteenth century, as folklore scholarship sought to integrate national and universal dimensions of folklore, major scholars traced the spread of European folktales along the paths of their Indo-European linguistic families, skipping thereby the Semitic language of Arabic that territorially was one of the bridges between India and Europe, and in itself was a likely source of tale types known around the world. Within Arab society itself, the intellectual elite were not influenced by the romantic nationalism that inspired philosophers, writers and poets in Europe, and maintained the gap between the elite and the folk. Consequently, as El-Shamy points out, the introduction of folklore into academic circles and the performance of folklore cultural forms in urban contexts are nothing short of revolutionary in the Arab World.

In the essay that follows, "Folklore in China: Past, Present, and Challenges," Juwen Zhang unfolds a history to which revolutions are not strangers, yet from his perch in the hotel balcony in Northern Italy, Stith Thompson could not observe them nor could he see the actual flames of folklore that lightened China for thousands of years with "a very special florescence" (Thompson 1964, p. 357). Zhang reveals them, shifting from orality to literacy and back, up to the present period in which folklore has secured for itself a respected position in the Chinese Humanities and social sciences, and in their academic studies. He concludes his essay by pointing out the availability of international folklore studies in Chinese. Hopefully his essay will encourage the translation of Chinese folklore, sources and studies alike, to several languages that serve as lingua franca in the modern world.

The third part of the present essay collection consists of seven essays about folklore genres. Neither is this part comprehensive nor does it purport to be. Conspicuously, essays on the folksong and the ballad are missing, and no doubt the absence of a few other significant folklore genres is noticeable. Yet, the represented genres address major issues in folklore studies and the Humanities. In the first essay of this part, William Hansen formulates his theory of generic distinctions and analogies by drawing upon critical ideas of earlier folklorists. He offers a new approach to the generic analysis of folktales. The concept of genre has haunted folklore since the dawn of its modern scholarship. The Grimm Brothers' observation that "[t]he fairy tale is more poetic, the legend is more historical" (Ben-Amos 1981, p. x) was the starting point of two centuries of inquiries into the concept of genre in folklore (see bibliographies in Beebee 1994, pp. 285–91; Ben-Amos 1976, pp. 247–82; and discussions in Briggs and Bauman 1992; Chamberlain and Thompson 1998; Gray 2015; Honko and Voigt 1980; Jolles 2017; Koski et al. 2016; Swales 1990). In 1965, William Bascom (1912–1981) constructed a summative model of myth, legend, and folktale as the three principle genres of prose narratives in folklore. He considered belief and time to be their primary characteristics, and place, attitude, and principle characters their subsidiary characteristics (Bascom 1965, p. 5). As an anthropological folklorist, Bascom focused on the social attitude toward the narrative as the primary component of his generic model. In contrast, in his essay, Hansen proposes an intrinsic quality, dimensionality, as the narrative primary generic distinction. When humans tell legends, the human and the supernatural dimensionalities clash, whereas, in fairytales and myth, the human, divine, and supernatural figures interact on the same dimensionality: the humans and

the deities interact with each other in myth as humans and supernatural entities do so in folktales. Significantly, in the examples with which Hansen illustrates his thesis, divine and supernatural figures such as ghosts and spirits of the dead do not interact.

In folklore, like in any other discipline, trends and directions interlink. The essay of Timothy R. Tangherlini, "Toward a Generative Model of Legend: Pizzas, Bridges, Vaccines, and Witches," complements Hansen's literary analysis by introducing into folklore the method of corpus analysis, for which computer technology is an optimal tool. In his Archer Taylor Memorial lecture in 2012, Tangherlini outlined "The Folklore Macroscope: Challenges for a Computational Folkloristics" (Tangherlini 2013). He does what he proposes, and the essay is a preliminary analysis of legends following his challenging approach. Corpus analysis has been developed in linguistics (Rühlemann 2007, 2013; Schmidt and Wörner 2012), and to a more limited extent in diary research (Ben-Amos and Ben-Amos 2020, pp. 12, 299–396). In folklore, the historic- geographic method requires assembling a large corpus of texts, but their analysis is diachronic, seeking to establish the primary form and its subsequent transformations (Dorson 1963, pp. 93–96; Goldberg 1984; Krohn 1971). In contrast, the corpus analysis that Tangherlini proposes is synchronic examination of multiple texts within a distinct time, space and society. In his essay, he analyses corpuses of nineteenth-century Danish archived folklore texts as well as twenty-first-century messages that circulated on the social media lines. His selection of analytical concepts departs from the comparative motif analysis, and draws upon the theories and methods of Russian formalism and its French semioticians.

Like legend, myth is a basic folklore concept, but it is also shared by other disciplines, popular culture, and everyday speech, as Frog demonstrates analytically in his essay "Myth." In each scholarly discipline and cultural system, it has particular meanings, usages, and applications. Yet, all of them maintain its basic incongruity of belief in untruth, or at least in empirically unverified facts. Theories of culture, society, religion, language and literature seek to explain this incongruity and its persistence and create, as Frog argues, following Ronald Barthes (1915–1980), mythologies of myth (Barthes 1957). His essay is a comprehensive deconstruction of these mythologies, challenging in particular the idea of myth as story and genre and reaffirming its position as a concept in folklore and in folkloristics.

The romance, so to speak, between the epic, the second fundamental folklore genre with a Greek pedigree, and folklore began when 'folklore' was not even named. While available in manuscripts since the sixth century B.C.E. (Jensen 2011, pp. 281–328), eighteen centuries later, voices in the European literate humanities argued for the idea of Homer as an oral poet and as a symbol. Thomas Blackwell (1701–1757) advocated the oral roots of the Homeric epics (Blackwell 1735; Grobman 1979; Simonsuuri 1979; Whitney 1924, 1926), and inspired his student James Macpherson (1736–1796) to present the world with the poetry of Ossian, a Gaelic-Scottish bard of his own making (Bold 2001; Gaskill 1996; Curley 2009; McKean 2001; McLane and Slatkin 2011; Moore 2004, 2012, 2017; Nagy 2001; Porter 2001; Stafford 1988). In Italy, Giambattista Vico (1668–1744) turned Homer into a Greek national symbol (Bergin and Fish 1961, pp. 269–80; 1968, pp. 301–32; see also Berlin 1976, pp. 171–73; Bidney 1969, p. 267; Caponigri 1968, pp. 188–201; Mali 1992, pp. 154–61, 189–98; 2003, pp. 70–72, 76, 126–27; Miller 1993, p. 77; Wellek 1969, pp. 220–21). Later in the eighteenth century, in Germany, a synthesis of the oral and symbolic Homer was forged in Friedrich August Wolf (1759–1824), who advocated the vision of Homer as an oral poet (Wolf 1795). These views, nourished by eighteenth-century primitivism (Albrecht 1950; Bell 1972; Runge 1946; Whitney 1924, 1934), grounded one of the major literary foundations of European civilization in historical oral culture. But in the twentieth century, as Minna Skafte Jensen so well demonstrates in her essay "The challenge of oral epic to Homeric scholarship", the prevalence of the formula in ancient and current epic poetry established empirically the orality of the epic tradition that became a keystone of the Western Humanities. Moreover, unforeseen, and not even envisioned by Thompson from his hotel balcony, was the discovery of an active epic tradition across the Mediterranean and

below the Sahara. The African epic oral tradition that was thriving there for generations burst into the open by recordings, publications, and studies that challenged conventional ideas about the epic, African oral literature, and the Humanities.

In scale, the epic and the proverbs are at the extreme ends of oral literary creativity, and so are their performances. Bards perform epics on celebratory occasions, whereas all people can potentially quote proverbs at will either in daily conversations or in public speeches. The proverb defied generic definition. Giving up, Archer Taylor relegated its recognition to intuition, stating that "[a]n incommunicable quality tells us this sentence is proverbial and that one is not" (Taylor 1931; 1962; 1985, p. 3). Others, who have persisted in their attempts to define the proverb as speech genre, engaged in lengthy descriptions (Mieder 1985, p. 119; 2004, pp. 2–4; 2009, pp. 2, 974–76; Whiting 1932; Winnik 2003). Both empirical and theoretical studies confirm that the proverb is universal (Hakamies 2016), occurring in every known language, and it is a grammatical anomaly in its idiomaticity (Chafe 1968), sharing a level of verbal modality with narrativity and poeticality, and its rhetorical impact is due, in many cases, to its irrefutable logical structure. Proverbs are among the earliest genres that scribes transferred from orality to literacy (Alster 1997, 2005; Lambert 1960), and continued to function in literate cultures on both levels of orality and literacy through transference. In the essay "The Humanistic Value of Proverbs in Sociopolitical Discourse", after introducing proverb research as a multi-dimensional scholarly inquiry, Wolfgang Mieder analyzes public speeches of political leaders who quote proverbs. They do so mostly from canonical texts, sending their audiences a message of humanism. Implicit in his selection is a dual challenge facing folklore studies and the Humanities to rediscover proverbs in the everyday speech of literate culture, or to confront its alleged disappearance.

The proverb and the riddle are an oppositional pair semantically, respectively representing law and play. What the proverb is in idiomaticity, the riddle is in poeticality—a playful metaphor that challenges cultural categories and the coherency of language. Like the proverb, the riddle is universal, although in some cultures, as well as apparently in modern literate cultures, its use and performance are limited to childhood, an age in which neither cultural nor linguistic rules have been internalized. As much as a challenge is at the core of riddling, the riddle itself has been a challenge for folklore scholarship. The article "The Riddle: Form and Performance" of Annikki Kaivola-Bregenhøj is an historical and analytical essay examining the proposals of folklore scholars to solve "the riddle of the riddle" as Senderovich (2005) felicitously titled his book. The riddle occurred in ancient literate sources and was incorporated into early canonic texts. Having emphatic ludic dimensions, yet in the respective narratives of Oedipus and Samson, the riddle solutions had tragic consequences. In her essay, Kaivola-Bregenhøj analyzes the endeavors of folklore scholars to solve the riddle of the riddle, from its definition through its linguistic, structural, formulaic, thematic, functional and metaphorical principles, up to its competitive and playful performance in society. By exploring the riddle, unbeknown to her, Kaivola-Bregenhøj sought to explore the nature of humanity, as the Israeli poet Nathan Alterman (1910–1970) wrote in 1950, "a human is a riddle that solves riddles" (Alterman 1979, p. 177).

Lisa Gabbert continues this exploration in her essay "Folk Drama", turning to another dimension of performance. Her article is a dialogic exposition of scholarly approaches to folk drama involving distinct theories about dramatical behavior, ranging from impulsive mimesis, to evolution, rhetoric, behaviorism, and tradition. Gabbert considers America as the primary stage of "Folk Drama," in which immigration brought traditional folk dramas from Europe, Asia, and Africa, and contributed to the creations of dramatic celebrations in rural and urban communities. As she demonstrates, folklore scholarship has integrated interdisciplinary theories and applied them in the ethnographic descriptions of continuous traditions of folk drama.

The fourth part includes four essays concerning current folklore theories. A year before Stith Thompson published his essay "The Challenge of Folklore," Richard M. Dorson (1916–1981) published an article about "Current Folklore theories" (Dorson 1963) and four years earlier he proposed a theory for American folklore (Dorson 1959). It would not be

an exaggeration to suggest that folklore is a discipline in search of theory. Archer Taylor pointed out in an essay that was quoted earlier that folklore "has not been able to free itself completely from the antiquarian and dilettante tradition of collecting curiosities" (Taylor 1952, p. 59). This tradition kept haunting the discipline well into the twenty-first century. In his last address before the American Folklore Society, Alan Dundes (1934–2007) admonished his fellow folklorists for the absence of a grand theory in folklore studies, and they addressed this issue either by searching, as he did (Dundes 2005), for a psychoanalytical theory for folklore, or addressed the issue of the value of either a grand (Haring 2016) or a humble (Noyes 2016) theory.

The present four essays propose neither. Rather, each presents a challenge to the Humanities that was honed by folklore in practice (Bronner 2019). As John Holmes McDowell presents in his essay, "Folklore and Sociolinguistics," the mutual influences of these two disciplines, since the last quarter of the twentieth century, resulted in the exploration of speaking and the ethnography of communication, as McDowell analyzes in his essay, but standard studies in Humanities have virtually ignored this development in folklore studies. For example, during the last half a century, 'Performance' has become a key concept in folklore studies, synthesizing theories and methods in semiotics, rhetoric, sociolinguistics, and the humanities, but the latter virtually ignored it as it is studied in oral culture. For example, a key essay on 'Performance Studies' (Mckenzie 2005) mentions 'storytelling' in its introductory statement, but ignores Performance Studies in folklore, save one essay. As McDowell argues, the study of language abstractly, without including its speakers and their speech events in its analysis, misses the reality of human communication.

In her essay "Secrets of the Extraordinary Ordinary: the Revelations of Folklore and Anthropology," Ruth Finnegan turns away from the overt into the mysterious and supernatural dimensions of folklore and the modern research exploring them in the minds of humans and animals. From its initial phases, folklore, anthropology, and psychology researched superstitions, beliefs in divine and supernatural domains and beings, divinations and dreams, the attempts to control the future through magic and witchcraft. In modern rational society, as Ruth Finnegan points out, scientific scholarship seeks to explain the extraordinary by ordinary means, offering natural explanations to creativity in music, poetry, fantasy, the arts and spirituality, and in doing so maintaining their effect in the Humanities.

While Finnegan finds modern science keeping company with the supernatural in the natural minds of human, Lee Haring in his essay "Folklore among the PALMs" observes folklore in the academic Humanities. For a scholar whose research focuses on folklore in Madagascar (Haring 1982, 1992, 1994, 2013), his acronymic ironic metaphor is not lost. Indeed, as he amply demonstrates, the academy is not an oasis for folklore. The identification of the subject with its study has been a sore point for folklorists themselves (Beck 1997; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998). Yet, as Haring argues so well, drawing upon the thought of Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889–1951), "What Wittgenstein says of philosophy is equally true for folkloristics: it is 'not a body of doctrine but an activity'" (4.112 (Wittgenstein 1974, pp. 29–30)).

The last essay in this collection is also about the last phase of civilization that Stith Thompson could not have seen nor envisioned from his hotel balcony in Northern Italy in 1964, namely the phase of digitality. Human society has been through cultures of orality and literacy and has now reached the culture of digitality. In oral cultures, past and present, bards, men and women of words, authors, and poets project our humanity into language in oral epics and proverbs, songs and tales. They transformed the human experience into spoken and written language. How will they do so into desktops, tablets, and smartphones? How will readers and listeners experience them? This is the enigma that Trevor Blank discusses in his essay "Folklore and the Internet: The Challenge of an Ephemeral Landscape", and the rest of us are left pondering. The challenge is not only facing folklore but also the Humanities and humanity.

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