

FINDING LOST FRUIT: THE CIDER POETIC,
ORCHARD CONSERVATION, AND CRAFT CIDER MAKING IN BRITAIN

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Maria Elizabeth Kennedy

I dedicate this work to my late dear mentor and friend Dr. Clara Henderson. I wish you could have celebrated its completion with me, and seen the final work. You were, and are, the role model I always needed: An adventurous, curious, joyful woman of the keenest intellect and the best humor. I continue to look to you for guidance, hope to live up to your example, and commiserate with your spirit over a cup of tea.

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I first went to Britain in the summer of 2004, having finished my undergraduate degree in English Literature, but with little idea of what to do next. After several summers spent working at Conner Prairie Living History Museum in Indiana, I had cultivated a love of the outdoors, an interest in old buildings, archaic forms of work, and a capacity for physical labor. I wanted to see the landscapes of the poets I had spent my undergraduate years reading. Unable to afford a pleasure trip, figured I'd work my way around on farms through the World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms (WWOOF) network. I got off a plane, got on a bus, and arrived in the middle of mid-Wales in a town with a name even the bus ticket agent couldn't pronounce: Llanidloes. This was the true beginning of everything that was to come later in graduate school, the beginning of this dissertation. What I found in my travels around rural Britain engendered a deep love for a place, and longing to return to it, and a desire to understand it, that have culminated in this dissertation.

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Maria Elizabeth Kennedy

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ORCHARD CONSERVATION, AND CRAFT CIDER MAKING IN BRITAIN

The conservation of orchards and the revival of craft cider making have created opportunities to maintain rural identity in a period of great economic change in the British countryside. Since the 1990s, a shift towards environmental conservation in agricultural policy has highlighted the importance of maintaining traditional agricultural landscapes for ecological benefit. The intersection of agricultural heritage and environmental conservation in Britain is a key site to investigate how people manage the relationship between the human and natural worlds. This dissertation focuses on the case of orchard conservation and craft cider making, to discover how the maintenance of a traditional landscape and the revival of a traditional agricultural practice have become popular and successful modes of adapting rural identity in a changing social world. This dissertation explores the poetic components contributing to an imagined geography of the British countryside and examines their particular expression through cider as a symbol of rural heritage. Through an intertextual and ethnographic study of the texts and performances of cider making and orchard conservation, I illustrate the discourses of conservation and heritage that shape orchard conservation and craft cider making as material realities of rural identity, and examine how they are put into practice by individual farmers and cider makers. This dissertation finds that the management of economic and environmental change in the countryside occurs not only through official

policy, but through the evolution of traditional poetics and practices where people craft their understanding of rural identity today.

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Introduction: Encountering Ciderland, Imagined Geographies

A Cider Press

When God decreed the apple,
His purposes were clear.
To make the orchards pink and white,
When spring at last is here.
And when the summer months have rolled,
To bend the boughs with burnished gold
For Doctors passing to behold
And think of fees with fear.

When God decreed the apple,
That press he also planned.
Which squeezes out the amber juice,
Beneficent and bland.
The juice that cheers when life seems vain,
The juice that makes you laugh again.
So come and drain a mug or twain,
Down in cider land.

Entering Ciderland

Where and what is cider land? A place? A region? A state of being induced by pints of amber juice? The lines of this poem invite us into a place of cheer, laughter, good company, a place of blossoming and gold orchards. This pastoral, however, is not without labor. It has its tools: the cider press that accompanies the apple in God's creation. In the poem's cider land, we are meant to work, but it is work that generates pleasure. My friend Pete Symonds described how he came to know this poem, which he included in his homemade publication, a compilation of songs and poems called *The Butler's 10 Minute Rule Songbook*:

Pete Symonds: I found this poem wrote on a toilet wall. Whether it's a well-known poem or whether some unknown sufferer wrote it in a moment of repentance I don't know but would like to know.

The provenance of this poem points to the more iniquitous corners of cider land and suggests that the poetic pastoral lives both in the imagination and in the more banal

geographies of real life. The poem brings up interesting questions about how ideas and ideals of rural life are imagined, how they are experienced, how they circulate, and how they shape the behaviors and material realities of rural England today. In “Doing the English Village, 1945-1990: An Essay on Imaginative Geography” David Matless describes the importance of attending to beliefs, myths, feelings, and impressions related to place:

This essay, by contrast, critically embraces the many imagined realities of the English village – its sentiments, its fantasies, its dreams, even its sugar-sweet pond ducks – as things real, powerful, political and moral; things serious and of importance in the culture of the country. Its purpose in doing so is in part to establish a complexity in the discourse of the rural.¹

Writing against what he calls the “rhetoric of reality,” Matless foregrounds the imaginary construction of the landscape, including the affective and emotional aspects of the imagination, as real entities that are no less important or powerful than the realities of poverty or isolation attended to in more quantitative sociological studies of rural life.

With this in mind, this dissertation explores an imagined geography of rural Britain expressed through a poetics of orchards and cider, which I will refer to throughout as the *cider poetic*. The cider poetic is comprised of recurrent expressive tropes in a variety of cultural genres including literature, festival, culinary craft, environmental policy, and landscape management. In specific cultural genres, like this poem scrawled on a bathroom wall, these tropes take on rhetorical and discursive forms, material embodiments, and vectors of circulation that create and recreate the imagined geography of cider land as a living cultural phenomenon shaping the understanding of rural heritage in Britain.

¹ David Matless, “Doing the English Village, 1945–90: An Essay in Imaginative Geography,” *Writing the Rural: Five Cultural Geographies*, Sage: 1994, 8–9.

Taking a poetic cue from this piece of latrinalia, and from the popular published work *Ciderland* by James Crowden, which profiles the practitioners of craft cider Britain, I set out to explore Ciderland as a region of real places and imagined qualities, performed through the expressive genres of the cider poetic. I seek to understand the practice of craft cider making, and the conservation of orchard landscapes as material embodiments of those imagined geographies that Matless insists are so real and powerful. But how do we get from imagined geographies to material embodiments? As we shall see, discourse and geography are powerfully intertwined, shaping and reshaping each other in both poetic and material spheres. To get there, we need to find our way to Broome Farm, the place that became the center of my explorations of Ciderland, where working the land and shaping the imagination were constant activities, manifested in the growing, making, drinking, and celebration of some of the best cider and perry to be found in England.

Entering Broome Farm's Orchards

The first time I arrived at Broome Farm, it was a windy day in February. I drove south from Hereford towards Ross on Wye, turning off the main A49 road at the Village of Peterstow down Wellsbrook Lane, following a faded sign pointing the traveller towards cider. Wellsbrook Lane leads down into a little valley, following a brook past the church, past the 14th century Wellsbrook Cottage and finally towards a white stone farmhouse at the top of a steep bank planted with perry and cider trees.



Going south down the A49 from Hereford, Wellsbrook Lane veers off to the left at this intersection. A tiny sign points the way to Broome Farm.

With my tires dipping into puddles of untold depth along the wet lane, I turned a sharp right and gunned the engine up the steep bank towards the farm. I parked my car and walked towards the old stone barns. One door seemed open, with voices floating out, and when I knocked, I was invited into a little sliver of a living space – hardly more than a hallway with a table against one wall and a bench against the other. Inside, three men were drinking hot tea and coffee –John Teiser, Mike Johnson, the owner of the farm, and Phil, his business partner. John Teiser, a new acquaintance, had invited me here to see a really interesting orchard.

Mike, a man close to sixty with white hair and the functional, weathered athleticism of a life spent enduring wet fields and tractor maintenance, put the kettle on and made me a cup of tea, and pulled out several books on apples as we talked about my research interest in old orchards. When the tea was finished, we headed out to the orchard to complete the chore at hand – John was here to collect graft wood from the unique trees in Mike’s orchard.

We walked through orchards of semi-dwarfing trees, planted closely together and pruned into conical shapes. Mostly, these were just large plantings of one or two varieties. But at the edge of the farm, we finally came to a recently planted orchard of half standard trees, young and spindly, but already showing their potential height. These trees would eventually be larger, more majestic than those in the bush orchards. As I was about to find out, they were of many varieties, all with curious names. Mike and John had the clippers and the bags, and they handed me the

folder with the lists of specimens they wanted and the map of the orchard. With the February wind blowing, I read out the names of the trees as they cut eight-inch samples of new growth from the previous year, meticulously labeling them and placing them into plastic bags.

Mike and John talked a lot about the health of the trees as we were walking along, stopping at trees and examining their braches and buds. It seems the trees had been very stressed by the last dry winter, as there weren't as many new growth shoots as would be expected. They pointed out trees that had scab and canker and trees that needed pruning and branches that needed to be cut off to put energy back into the center branch, the leader reaching up towards the sky. Through their eyes, the trees became individuals, afflicted by disease, flourishing in an ideal spot, suffering from a season of drought. The orchard suddenly became a complex and dynamic place characterized by the individuality of its arborous inhabitants, not only from their genetic varieties, but their unique organisms reacting to their environments. Some trees, of course, are singled out for their human ties, like the tree in the middle of the old orchard, ringed by a bench and lovingly planted with flowers in the summer, where Mike's father's ashes are scattered.



A Changing Farm

Broome Farm was not originally covered in orchards, except for the Old Orchard closest to the farmhouse, where an ancient Holmer Perry tree, perhaps 200 years old, looms over the younger trees, anchoring the history of the field as an orchard. The rest of the farm had been a dairy farm when Mike's parents moved there from the cottage just down the lane. For years, they raised Guernsey cattle there, renowned for their creamy milk, and owned a milk run. Mike remembers delivering milk as a young man, driving the milk float up and down narrow Wellsbrook Lane. Eventually, the milk run was sold, and the larger tankers that came to collect the milk refused to drive down tiny Wellsbrook Lane to collect milk from the farm. Mike left to travel and work abroad in Australia and Germany, and his father sold the dairy herd and turned to sheep when Mike returned. But sheep, Mike said, are a lot of work and don't make any money. So they looked for another agricultural venture, something that could keep a small farm of sixty-five acres going. Chris Fairs, orchard manager for Bulmers Cider Company, had worked on the Johnson dairy farm as a young agricultural student, and he convinced Mike and his father Kenelm to plant orchards on contract to Bulmer. The first orchards went in during the 1970s. Other orchards were planted in the 1990s. The farm continues to change. Mike's sister Hillary and her husband John run a bed and breakfast and restaurant in the farmhouse. Sheep graze the fields again, though now under the trees instead of in clear pastures. Mike's nephew Toby has a herd of Shropshire sheep, a particular breed of sheep that has been known for not eating the bark off the apple trees, making them practical for keeping the grass down in an orchard. The farm is located within the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and has received several awards from the organization.

With the task of graft collection accomplished, Mike led John and me down through the cellar door to taste the cider itself. The cider cellar, dimly lit, with its barrels lining both walls, and bottles of various amber hues on the shelves, was, at least on that day, still out of range of cell phone signals. First, Mike grabbed a plastic cup and filled it from the spigot of one of the barrels. There was a medium cider in one, a dry cider in the other. I thought that would be it, but then we went into the barn where all the barrels were lined up, and Mike started us off on sampling things from the different barrels – each one unique, made from different varieties and different blends of apples and pears. I was not yet versed in the vocabulary of tasting - the sharp, the astringent, the smooth, the smoky, the sweet. As I was tasting, many sensations and memories came to mind. One cider tasted like a meadow. One was really warm, rich, and buttery. One tasted fresh, like a bright sunny day. My favorite was the Brandy Pear, a dark amber-colored liquid which I thought tasted like the spices of Christmas. Discovering wealth of flavors present in these barrels, derived from these trees, was just the beginning of my introduction to seeing the complexity of the rural landscape and its aesthetic nuances. The particular qualities of this geography were just beginning to color the palette of my imagination, and simultaneously, train the sensitivity of my palate.

Apprentices and Pilgrims

I was certainly not the first pilgrim to land at Broome Farm and decide to stay and learn about the craft of apples. Apprentices before me included Gabe Cook, who had come here as a refugee from university and ended up living in a shack in the orchard for a few seasons. Kate Garthwaite, known to all as Canadian Kate, came all the way from British Columbia, Canada to learn how to make cider at a the formal course taught by Peter Mitchell at the college. She stayed at Broome Farm for more than six months before heading back home to start her own

business. Another woman named Orshi came from Hungary, who had European grant money to learn about cider, in order to bring it back a new business to her home country. Mike told me of a Jyrki and his family, who came from Finland to learn about cider, and start their own business on their farm back home. Jyrki told him it might have been the most important day of his life, the day when he came to Broome Farm. Mike's eyes began tearing up as he told me about the Finns. But it is not just foreigners who come to Broome Farm to learn about cider. Many English cider makers have come here to learn from Mike. Tourists drive in, following a map of the Herefordshire Cider Route (shown right), turning at the almost un-noticeable road sign pointing down Wellsbrooke Lane.² And many neighbors and friends stop by to drink his cider when they are finished with work for the day, taking the opportunity to bring samples of their own home brews for critical consideration.

There are places of pilgrimage in Ciderland, and Broome Farm is one of them, where people come to learn about cider, to drink it, to become part of a community of enthusiasts. Many people swear that their own cider, made in their own homes, tastes better when drunk at Broome Farm. Broome Farm is a place that generates its own festivals, inspires its own mythology, its own legend, and partakes liberally of the myths of the countryside in doing so. Although I will range around the region at large in the pages that follow, Broome Farm is the center of this dissertation. It is both a real place and a legendary place, at home in the liminal spaces of border country, and firmly in the heart of the imagined geography of Ciderland.



² "Herefordshire Cider Route | Homepage," <http://www.ciderroute.co.uk/site/index.html>.

When I left Broome farm that first day, my head slightly swimming from many tastes out of many barrels, I knew that I was coming back. I did not yet know that I would be the next cider apprentice. Phil, the business manager, later told me they never know when the next apprentice is going to show up, but someone always does. I made a deal to come back the next month to help lay a hedge. And three months after that, I was living down the road, spending the autumn pressing cheeses of apple pomace and chronicling the contents of the barrels.

Personal Geographies

Ciderland spans two distinct regions of Britain - the Welsh Marches and the West Country. Most of my research took place in the southern half of the Welsh Marches, so much of my ethnography will focus primarily on this region.³ My time in the field included stints living on a farm with friends in mid-Wales and in the town of Bishops Castle in Shropshire. I travelled several times throughout the West Country counties of Somerset, Devon, and Dorset, and conferred with research colleagues at the University of Gloucestershire's Countryside and Community Research Institute.

It was in south Herefordshire where I found my home for the bulk of my fieldwork, working amongst the cider orchards at Broome Farm, near the market town of Ross on Wye. I lived down the road from the farm in the hamlet of Sellack. My house was the converted coach house of the Caradoc estate, once owned by seventeenth century cider enthusiast Lord Scudamore. I frequently walked down the hill from my home, to the church of St. Tseilo on banks of the River Wye. My movements through the geography of the southern Marches were shaped by the watersheds of the rivers Severn, Wye, and Teme: eastwards out of the Welsh mountains, southwards towards the shores of the Severn Estuary.

³ See Appendix A.

My personal history is bound up in the geography of this research as well. I did not directly intend to set my fieldwork and research in the landscape of my own relations (in fact, my original research proposal sited my work in Devon and focused on organic farming), but I ended up there anyway. Tangential interest in family history had brought me to the Marches years before on a backpacking trip. Once there I found friends and other sources of interest that brought me back again and again. These friends became my entry into the field once I returned for the purposes of research, and their connections opened one door after another, leading coincidentally closer towards both cider and the sites of my own family history.

Though I spent relatively little time researching my own family, evidence cropped up unexpectedly, and I often felt that I was relearning the history of their landscape, trying to understand the geography that may have shaped their lives. My home in Sellack was a mere 25 miles from the churchyard in Llanarth, Monmouthshire, where my great-great-grandfather, George Jones, and his wife, Alice Tedman, are buried beneath a large holly tree. As a foreign researcher, it gave me a small claim to belong there, the fact that I could name the churchyard and point to the gravestone of my ancestors. I found that these family roots spanned the border of Wales and England, like so much else in the local cultural geography. I found traces of my ancestors in civil documents that name places of residence, birth, marriage, and death for them in Newport, Abergavenny, Llanarth, the Black Mountains, and the Forest of Dean.

The closeness of my own family roots to the geography of my research asserted itself in unexpected places, sometimes in eerie ways. While visiting me in the field, my mother and I stopped for tea at the Clytha Arms, a local pub near the churchyard where my Jones ancestors are buried. I knew the pub as a place that hosts a well-known cider festival. My mother remarked that the publican's surname was the same as that of her godfather, who had lived in the area. A

relation perhaps? We never found out, as we had to be on our way and the publican was out.

We found other familiar names in a Catholic church (a rarity in the area, but our family had lived in a small Catholic enclave in Llanarth) in Hartpury, Gloucestershire, while I was visiting the Hartpury Perry Pear Festival. Back home in the States, rummaging through old family photographs from the nineteenth century, I found one that bore the stamp of a photographer in Ross on Wye, a detail I only noticed long after I had conducted my fieldwork there.

These connections to my personal geography may have little impact on the meaning of my research, but they had a significant impact on my increasing attachment to the region. In my more irrational, superstitious, and emotional moments, I felt I had returned to a place where I truly belonged. My own family connections became a significant part of my personal imagined geography of Ciderland. Spurred on by this web of family history, connected through friends and chance meetings, drawn by the wealth of cultural activity around cider and orchard heritage, directed by the shape of the land and the track of ancient and modern roads, my own sense of the region was slowly evolving through dense network of interconnected people and places. Over time, historical distinctions and cultural continuities within the regions I traversed became clearer.

The Southern Marches

Lying just north of Ross on Wye, in the village of Peterstow, Broome Farm lies in territory that has changed hands between England and Wales several times through history. Ross on Wye no longer has a rail station and is the



terminating point of the only major motorway that reaches into the southern Marches. Here, in what locals simply refer to as “The Shire” is a region rich in orchards, cider makers, rare perry pear trees, and a distinct sense that these things comprise its heritage.

The Welsh Marches, a cultural region unregulated by administrative boundaries or strict cultural-linguistic identities, has historical roots as the border region between England and Wales. This region has been a site of political conflict for a millennium, the word “marches” meaning border. Perhaps the most notable physical evidence of a political border still in existence is Offa’s Dyke, an earthwork built by Offa, King of Mercia from 757 AD to 796 AD. Even today, the modern border between Wales and England roughly follows this earthwork, and the Dyke itself is now incorporated into a 177-mile national walking trail.⁴

The presence of the Dyke did not necessarily mean that the border was fixed or absolute, however. Many areas now on the modern English side of the present border, and historically on the Mercian side of the Dyke, still have Welsh place names. In southwestern Herefordshire, the area west of the River Wye was part of the Welsh Kingdom of Ergyng, later known as Archenfield. Here, there are ancient churches dedicated to Welsh saints, including Dyfrig, or Dubricus, and Saint Tseilo, for whom my home village of Sellack was named. The area was disputed territory between the English Diocese of Hereford and the Welsh Diocese of Llandaff, according to the 12th century Book of Llandaff, which documented land charters in the area.⁵ At the time of the Domesday book, written in 1086 to document the wealth of the kingdom newly held by the Norman King William the Conqueror, the area of Archenfield was an administratively semi-autonomous region neither completely Welsh nor English, where Welsh

⁴ See Appendix E

⁵ Hurley, Heather. *Landscape Origins of the Wye Valley: Holme Lacy to Bridstow*, 1st edition (Woonton, Herefordshire: Logaston Press, 2008).

was probably the spoken language, and the population was allowed to retain Welsh customs and laws.

From the time of the Norman conquest, William the Conqueror installed several of his closest allies as Lords of the March, based in Shrewsbury, Ludlow, and Hereford. The necessity of fortification in the midst of conflict between the Welsh and their Norman and English neighbors is still evidenced by the number of castles, large and small, littered across the landscape, now mostly in ruins. Shrewsbury author Edith Parteger, widely known by one of her pen names, Ellis Peters, wrote many historical novels of this medieval era in the Marches. From the 1970s through the 1990s, she published depictions of the medieval era of Norman conquest and political struggle in the Border region through her mystery novels of Brother Cadfael and her historical novels of the *Brothers of Gwenedd*, a fictionalization of the last prince of Wales, Llywelyn ap Gruffudd.

The Norman Marcher Lords who built and maintained castles along the border in the medieval period were appointed by the king, but their lands were excluded from English law until 1535, when the Laws in Wales Acts (also known as the Acts of Union) reorganized them into counties on either side of the new border, and affirmed the jurisdiction of the crown. These various levels of autonomy serve to show how politically and culturally complex the border region was during the medieval period, first between the Welsh and their Mercian English neighbors, and later between the Norman lords and their Welsh and English subjects. The border, rather than being the defined dividing point that Offa's Dyke would suggest, was porous, characterized more by its varying levels of autonomy from the ruling political kingdoms than by its domination by any one of them.

The shifting political border between England and Wales moved back and forth over centuries until finally being settled in 1535/36, though it took until the Local Government Act of 1972 to confirm the county of Monmouthshire as being officially a part of Wales. Though linguistically Welsh, it had been treated in some respects as an English county, though often incorporated into Wales on a national level. Monmouthshire is the southernmost Welsh county on the border, and geographically it is quite similar to southern Herefordshire.

While Offa's Dyke and the Marches region stretch the whole length of the border between England and Wales, the places that will make up our investigation of Ciderland belong to the southern part of the region, which corresponds roughly with the medieval Diocese of Hereford, comprising the southern portion of the county of Shropshire and most of Herefordshire. This diocese of Hereford still exists today in ecclesiastical terms, but is superseded in secular affairs by the modern political administration of the counties of Herefordshire and Shropshire.⁶ The boundaries of the diocese often follow the boundaries of several significant groups of hills that surround the region: The Malvern Hills to the East, the Black Hills to the West, the Shropshire Hills to the North, and the hills of the Forest of Dean to the South.

From Shrewsbury, just north of the boundary of the diocese of Hereford, south to Ross on Wye, is a journey of just over 60 miles, completed in a drive of two hours along the modern A49 roadway. Understanding these historical, cultural and ecclesiastical boundaries contributes to an understanding of the layers of meaning written into the geography of Ciderland. These man-made boundaries also correspond with the geographical contours of the hills and the river valleys that have shaped the movement of people, the character of agriculture, the particularity of

⁶ See Appendix C "The Diocese of Hereford, founded in AD676 covers the whole of the county of Herefordshire, southern Shropshire and a few parishes in Worcestershire Powys and Monmouthshire. The Diocese is roughly 1660 square miles with a population of about 285,000." From <http://www.hereford.anglican.org/visitors/index.aspx>

dialect, and sense of place of the region, perhaps more so than a modern administrative boundary could describe.

A more modern regional identity can be found in the association of the Three Counties, comprised of Herefordshire, Worcestershire, and Gloucestershire. They are united by shared agriculture, demonstrated in the Three Counties Show, the most important regional agricultural show for the farmers of the area, located in the town of Malvern. Importantly for this study, the Three Counties Cider and Perry Association links together the cider producers, many of whom compete in the cider competition at the Three Counties Show.⁷

Within the Three Counties area, the Forest of Dean comprises a significant sub-region with its own distinct dialect and culture, with significant contributions to the culture of cider. Rising above the Severn Vale, and visible for miles around south Herefordshire and Gloucestershire, May Hill juts out into the plain and is a key landmark in the Forest of Dean. The local saying is that the best perry is made within sight of May Hill. Fermented from the juice of hard tannic pears, that grow almost exclusively in this region, perry pear trees seem to prefer the mild moist climate of the air that sweeps up the Severn Estuary and around the slopes of May Hill. And though one could usually count on people from Herefordshire to crack an unflattering joke about the people from the Forest of Dean, the distances separating them were small. From the top of the orchards



⁷ “Three Counties Cider & Perry Association,” *Three Counties Cider & Perry Association*, accessed December 23, 2015, <http://www.thethreecountiesciderandperryassociation.co.uk/>.

at Broome Farm, renowned for its perry, one could see May Hill in the distance.

The county of Herefordshire itself, the heart of this study, may have been best described by Ella Mary Leather in *The Folklore of Herefordshire*, the first comprehensive work on the folklore of the county, published in 1912:

The county of Herefordshire is bounded on the east by the Malvern Hills, on the west by the Black Mountains; northward, it is separated from Shropshire by the Teme, which at Ludlow runs at the foot of the Clee Hills; at its southern extremity, the Wye flows round the Great and Little Dowards. It forms a natural basin, the surface diversified and broken by wooded hills, everywhere well watered by the Wye and its tributaries. A garden of orchards and pastures, it is a county of great natural beauty; from almost every part of it one may see to the west the great rampart of the Black Mountains, or Hatterals, with the Radnor hills rolling away beyond, and the peaks of the Brecon Beacons; Southwards, the Skyrrid and Sugar Loaf break the horizon; to the east, the peaks of the Malverns make a background to fertile valleys filled with orchards in all their glory of pink blossom in Spring, or laden with the rosy apples in Autumn; a country of green meadows, hopyards, and waving cornfields, of grey church towers with their thatched or timbered cottages clustering round them in the hollows; all set in a framework of undulating woodlands.⁸

The natural boundaries of the hills, and the flows of the rivers through their watersheds, gave the region a sense of intuitive structure, composed with a sense of common geography: combinations of isolated hill country and rolling wide valleys of rich agricultural land, always in rather close proximity.

Leather noted the continuity of landscape, political history, and folklore, and drew a border marking the boundary between the Welsh and the Saxon heritage of the region along the river Wye, which runs through the middle of Herefordshire:

From a very slight study of the place-names on a modern map, it would be possible to conclude that the part of Herefordshire bounded on the west by the Wye was never really subdued or occupied by the Saxons. To the east, nearly all the names are Saxon [...] It is a matter of historic knowledge that the people of

⁸ Ella Mary Leather, *The Folk-Lore of Herefordshire* (Wakefield, Yorkshire, England: S.R. Publishers, 1970) xii.

Erging (Archenfeld) made terms with the Saxons, and were allowed to retain their customs and a measure of independence [...] I venture to think that the folk-lore of the county largely corroborates the evidence of place-names. It is rare to hear of fairies east of the Wye or the Dyke.⁹

She continues on, however, noting other agricultural customs which cannot be easily assigned to ethnic boundaries. Citing customs of special interest to the orchard and cider heritage of this study, Leather uses folk custom of particular uniqueness to tie together the region:

It is not easy, at this time of day, to determine with accuracy the geographical limits of our peculiar custom, 'Burning the Bush.' Fosbroke says it was confined to 'Herefordshire and parts of Monmouthshire.' Lees (*Pictures of Nature round Malvern*) makes no mention of it at Colwall, Mathon, though he observed (in 1850) the mistletoe hanging in the farm-house kitchen, and the Twelfth Night fires in the spring wheatfields.¹⁰

Leather's observations demonstrate both the distinctions that shape a region separated by ancient linguistic and political boundaries, as well as the commonalities of agricultural custom that unite regional identity across the border.

Wales and England, the southern Marches, the Diocese of Hereford, the Three Counties, The Forest of Dean: these are the various overlapping regions that comprise the imagined geographies of the northern parts of Ciderland.

The West Country and the Marches: Borderlands of Old England

South from the Marches, jogging around the port city of Bristol on the Severn Estuary, is the West Country region of Wiltshire, Dorset, Somerset, Devon, and Cornwall. I made several trips down into the West Country, visiting famous cider farms such as Burrow Hill and Wilkins Cider and newer producers such as Orchard Pig at West Bradley Orchard in Somerset. I interviewed important writers and activists in craft cider and orchard conservation there, such as

⁹ Ibid., xiv–xv.

¹⁰ Ibid., xv.

author James Crowden and pomologist Liz Copas, and read about the earliest campaigns for orchard conservation and craft cider led by activist organization Common Ground, based in Dorset, and early projects of the National Trust and Natural England based in Somerset. I drove down to the Powerstock Cider Festival near Bridport, set in a small village hall off a tiny lane in a deep Dorset valley. James Crowden says of Somerset cider:

Somerset Cider is without a doubt some of the finest in the world. Here on the small farms that surround the Somerset Levels and Moors, the art of cider making has the status of an ancient religion, where superstition and belief are inextricably entwined with the landscape of myth and legend [...] It is a land of migrations, of summer settlers. The sumorsetae, who came down from the low hills and ridges, grazed the rich green pastures with their cattle and sheep, and when the winter's flood waters came, retreated once more with their animals to higher ground. It was here that they built the villages we see today and planted the orchards, that became the nerve center of the community.¹¹

Somerset and Herefordshire have a rivalry in the cider world – two counties at the hearts of their respective cider regions. Much small-scale farm cider making dwindled in Herefordshire in the twentieth century, as farmers switched over to large-scale apple production to supply Bulmers Cider Company, based in Hereford. The revival in small-scale craft production has been within the past twenty years there. But in the West Country, and in Somerset in particular, smaller producers continued on, many of them serving local farming communities, as well as tourists spending their summer holidays on the coasts and moors of Somerset, Devon, Dorset, and Cornwall.

Just as the northern parts of Ciderland were characterized by the shifting borders between Wales and the England, the West Country is also marked by the imagined geographies of ancient Celtic and English Kingdoms. Wessex, the Kingdom of the West Saxons, bordered a Celtic British kingdom, that of Dumnonia, which covered the areas that are now the counties of Cornwall and Devon. In both the Marches and the West Country, the historical kingdoms of

¹¹ James Crowden, *Cider - the Forgotten Miracle* (Somerton: Cyder Press 2, 1999), xiii.

Wessex and Mercia helped shape the political borders and cultural identity of modern England. Tracing these regions back to their Anglo Saxon roots highlights the lingering cultural and distinctions that mark a place beyond its current political, administrative, or linguistic boundaries. It also points to the deep contours of “Englishness” that these regions celebrate as part of their heritage. Wessex, especially, is celebrated as the homeland of King Alfred the Great, one of the legendary heroes and founding father of the English nation.¹²

Cultural and Agricultural Continuities on the Borderlands

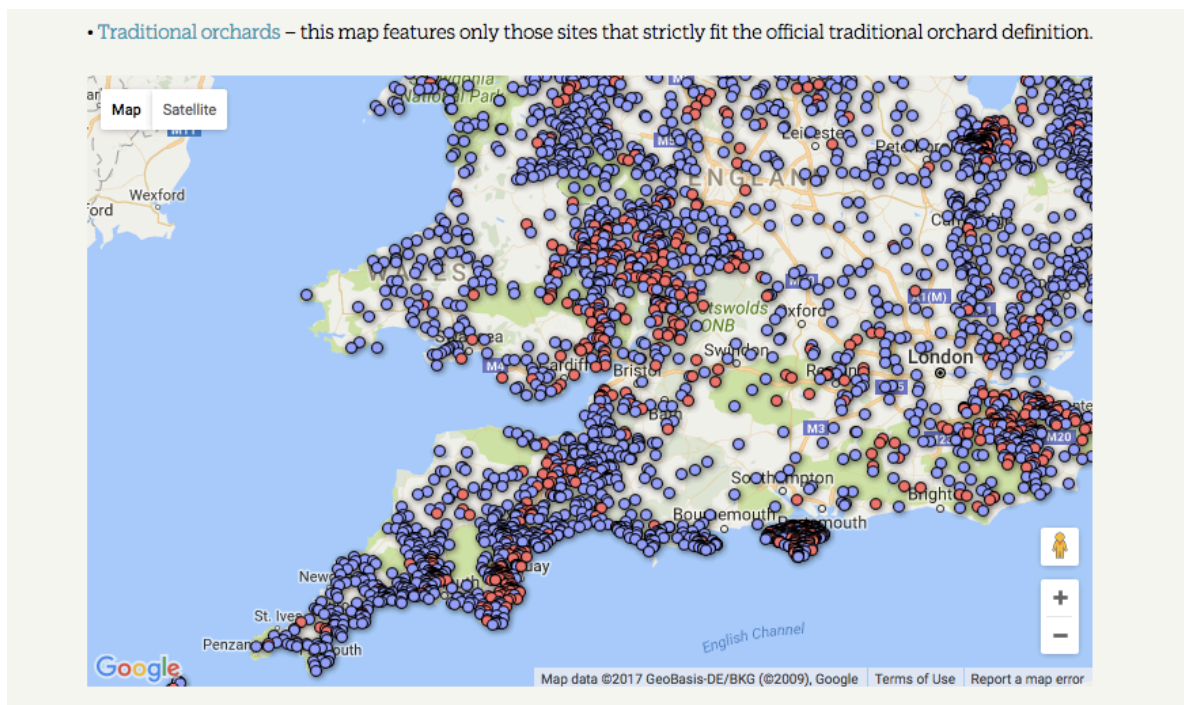
The deep heart of an idea of England as a place, a history, and a culture is emphasized in these regions where its finds its cultural and political boundaries. Constantly challenged and reshaped at its edges, Englishness as an identity is pronounced in these places where Anglo Saxon kingdoms were at closest proximity with their Celtic neighbors. And as we shall see, Englishness is deeply implicated in the cider poetic. Herefordshire itself is often fondly called “The Shire” by its inhabitants, a reference that highlights the foundational political unit that shaped local and regional communities during the Anglo Saxon period, and which still shapes the root identity of the region today. Border regions put such cultural identities into relief, defining the differences that separate groups, highlighting the idealized characteristics at the center of each and forming their own unique hybrid cultures where the two mix. The characteristics of the borderland: both the heightening of difference between English and Welsh cultures, as well as the unique cultural blending that has occurred over millennia of shifting borders, creates an east-west axis of Ciderland. The continuities that link the region from east to west across the shifting border between Wales and England can also be seen across the expanse from north to south, from the Southern Marches to the West Country.

¹² See Appendix D

Ciderland is linked by its common agricultural landscape of apples and cider, perhaps most visually apparent in the map displayed by the National Association of Cider Makers on their website (right), which highlights the two great apple regions of Britain. Labeled as the West Country, this map encompasses both the Southern Marches as well.¹³ Another map highlights the density of this orchard landscape in



Ciderland: created by the People’s Trust for Endangered Species, this map (shown below) locates traditional orchards, as designated by national environmental policy, with a dot (red dots



¹³ “Apples & Orchards | The National Association of Cider Makers,” <http://cideruk.com/orchards-apples/>.

have been ground-proofed, blue dots have been positioned via arial photo or documentary evidence).¹⁴ The sheer volume of traditional orchards – not counting modern orchards – shows the expanse of Ciderland as documented through its agricultural unity. The imagined geography is anchored to material realities of the landscape, which can be seen through its orchards.

This shared agricultural identity highlights different kinds of borders that define the region today: modern borders with the cosmopolitan, multi-cultural, and industrial areas of urban London to the east and industrial cities to the north. As a biographer of Herefordshire's folklorist Ella Mary Leather said, "Herefordshire was at that time the ideal region for Mrs. Leather's researches – far enough from 'The dark satanic mills' of the Industrial Revolution and as yet untouched by the movement away from the cities of the second post-war period."¹⁵ The Herefordshire Leather was researching in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was still deeply provincial and slow to adopt the changes of industrialization, especially in farming. The West Country and the Southern Marches have the distinction, due to their more varied and hilly geography and distance from London, of having retained much of their small fields, small farms, and mixed agriculture, giving their landscapes the feel of having clung to their history more tightly. And due to their distance from the capitol, they have remained culturally more provincial, avoiding the plight of bedroom communities and suburban sprawl that characterize the "Home Counties" near London. Kent and the East Anglian counties of Suffolk and Norfolk have their ancient English heritage too, as well as a heritage of orchards producing eating apples. And Surrey and Sussex have beautiful scenery. But these regions, more so than the West

¹⁴ "Orchard Maps," *Peoples Trust for Endangered Species*, <https://ptes.org/get-involved/surveys/countryside-2/traditional-orchard-survey/orchard-maps/>.

¹⁵ Lavender Jones, *A Nest of Singing Birds: The Life and Works of Ella Mary Leather of Weobley. Author of "Folklore of Herefordshire."* (Lavender Jones West Midlands Folk Federation, 1978), 19.

Country and the Marches, have been transformed by urban encroachment or the spread of large-scale arable agriculture.

These musings on regional identity are intended not only to set the ethnographic scene for the chapters to come. They are also intended to set the parameters for our study of landscape heritage and conservation within a realm that connects ideas and feelings about place to material enactments of place. In following the jump from imagination to geography, the questions at hand are: Where do the imaginative components of a place come from? How are these imaginative components structured into texts and performances that reflect shared cultural feelings and ideas? And how are these textualized ideas and feelings translated into material impacts on the landscape? Our interpretive tools for the understanding of landscape-based heritage must include the tools of decoding texts.

From Geography to Intertextuality

The distinctions between urban and rural that mark the imagined geographies of Englishness are the central idea of Raymond Williams's landmark work, *The Country and the City*. Not inconsequentially, Williams was born and grew up in the Marches, on the Welsh side of the border near the town of Abergavenny, only thirty miles from my field site at Broome Farm. He begins *The Country and the City* with a meditation on his own origins in this border country, his movements back and forth between country and city over the course of his own life. In meditating on his own memories of his childhood in the Marches, Williams complicates notions of the countryside as a static, idyllic, natural landscape. In this passage, he notes that the countryside itself is constantly changing:

At the end of the lane by the cottage where I was a child, there is now a straight wide motor road where the lorries race. But the lane also has been set, stoned, driven over: it is a mark on the land of no more than two generations, since a

young farmer married the daughter of a farmer and was given a corner of a field on which to build their house, and then his workshop with the lane to it, and then the neighboring houses, and then successive workshops converted to new houses. The first workshop was my parents' first home.¹⁶

Williams resists the temptation to devolve into a dualistic contrast of the countryside of the Marches with the urbanity of the city, but the project of his book is to explore the power of this dualism, and why it dominates the British imagination in its poetic and literary depictions of the nation's geography.

For Williams, "the contrast of the country and city is one of the major forms in which we become conscious of a central part of our experience and of the crises of our society."¹⁷ In essence, the dualism of the country and the city creates a moral contrast between country spaces characterized by nature, serenity, and balance, and city spaces characterized by decay, chaos, and greed. However, this moral contrast, communicated through the poetic tropes of the pastoral, addresses different circumstances according to the particular historical and political conflicts of each era. The enduring moral contrast of country and city that is set up in the pastoral is a poetic mode which can be deployed to shape whatever contemporary events and social crises are at hand. The pastoral, in this sense, is not only a genre of literature, but also a set of ideas that shape the cultural imagination. The poetic components of the pastoral, when used in new expressions, signal this enduring cultural idea and apply its influence to shape new discourses. This is what Williams calls a structure of feeling; I use this concept to explore how the poetics of cider shape the revival of craft cider and the conservation of orchards today.

Structures of feeling are produced and experienced in very subjective, visceral ways. Powerful structures of feeling may manifest themselves in multiple texts sharing similar aesthetic properties, creating opportunities for the cross-pollination of poetic forms between individual

¹⁶ Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 4.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 289.

texts. By looking at texts as reflections - not of historical facts - but of poetic argument and cultural meaning, we allow them to have meanings that are rhetorical and that define relative values.

This interpretive stance is an important one for folklorists, for it frees us from tracing diachronic relationships between texts and performances in a strictly linear, historical manner of cause and effect, to drawing synchronic relationships between texts themselves and between texts and cultural performances that share similar poetic components and structures of feeling. Diane Goldstein encourages us to see this relationship between texts and performances in terms more complex than linear cause and effect. She directs our attention instead toward the underlying cultural meaning that motivates the creation and performance of multiple kinds of texts:

...intertextuality focuses on the nonchronological and nongenetic reciprocal ties between texts, their 'relationships of meaning, allusion, and connotation' [...]
Read intertextually, the problem is not whether one story causes or influences the other, but more correctly, that one story and the other are caused and influenced by the same *cultural imperative*.¹⁸

The cultural imperative, however, can only be identified through its presence in multiple texts across genres. Applying this intertextual approach to the study of craft cider and orchard conservation in Britain allows us to see how a structure of feeling permeates contemporary heritage and conservation movements. Just as Williams traced the pastoral as a poetic mode that could be mobilized to suit the needs of different historical moments, I propose in this dissertation the study of the cider poetic as an expressive mode that is being used to animate contemporary discourses of rural heritage and conservation in Britain today.

¹⁸ Diane Goldstein, *Once upon a Virus : AIDS Legends and Vernacular Risk Perception* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2004), 123.

Palimpsests: Ways of Reading the Cider Poetic

The palimpsest is a useful way to discuss the intertextual nature of the cider poetic. In particular, the metaphor of the palimpsest is useful to describe the ways that expressive forms layer on top of one another over time, partially revealed and obscured by the accumulating mass of texts that refer to and borrow from each other. Gerard Genette, using the palimpsest as a metaphor for this process of reference and borrowing, described the work of poetics as, “all that sets the text in a relationship, whether obvious or concealed, with other texts”¹⁹ The palimpsest metaphor serves especially well to address the process of reading expressive structures and poetic material across space and time, when direct performative transmission between individuals is not possible, but when other kinds of access to texts is possible. In a highly literate, post-industrial society like Britain, the accumulation of texts regarding the history of orchards and cider is considerable, and the access to this material is relatively good, whereas access to direct lines of transmission of traditional crafts and practices related to orchard maintenance and cider production is not always available. Indeed, one of the primary material texts that is available is in the landscape itself, in the abandoned orchards and forgotten trees that litter the countryside, material texts of the landscape left by farmers a few generations ago. But it is this very gap between available texts and knowledge of practice that has inspired a popular desire to reconnect the two. In this gap a contemporary structure of feeling making use of the cider poetic emerges.

Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett’s description of the heritage palimpsest is a particularly useful model for understanding how a landscape like an orchard can become dense with associations as multiple texts (literary, policy, marketing, etc) and performances (ritual, tourist, agricultural) mark it over and over again in different ways:

¹⁹ Gérard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree* (U of Nebraska Press, 1997), 1.

Landmarking, historic recreation, and cultural conservation are instruments with a history. They leave their own traces on the sites they mark as heritage. When one site is landmarked repeatedly, each time for a different reason, and used for different purposes, even at one point in time, the result is a heritage palimpsest.²⁰

With the interpretive tools of textuality in mind, we can begin to see the imprint that the structure of the imagination leaves on the landscape and how it is mobilized to address social change in rural Britain. Not only does the imagination shape the material form of the landscape, but also the social life and use of that landscape. Heritage and conservation of agricultural landscapes are the results of rich processes of imaginative geography. They are the pragmatic discourses resulting from contemporary structures of feeling about the landscape, where people are affectively responding to old texts, creating and performing new ones, constantly adding to, recycling, and reframing the poetic materials of earlier eras. This interpretive approach to heritage is particularly useful in situations of revival, where chains of performative transmission from person to person are broken.

In revivals, the making of conservation and heritage discourses is active, visible, but not always rational or deliberate. They may proceed from feeling or be directed by the poetic signposts available from earlier materials. Susan Lepselter has written of this poetic process as “resonance,” a term I will use periodically throughout this work to describe how the cider poetic becomes a source for new kinds of discourses. She describes resonance, in her case with regard to narratives of the uncanny, as:

...the intensification produced by the overlapping, back and forth call of signs from various discourses. The uncanny narratives here acquire affect, intensity, and meaning through their resonance and dissonance with other more familiar cultural narratives, those that can seem like the inevitable shape of the real and are less overtly marked as constructed narratives [...] Resonance is not an exact reiteration. Rather it's something that strikes a chord, that inexplicably rings true, a sound whose notes are prolonged. It is just-glimpsed connections and hidden

²⁰ Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture : Tourism, Museums, and Heritage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 56.

structures that are felt to shimmer below the surface of things. It is what makes people say, *It all fits together*.²¹

In moments where things don't all come together, where the past is distant and sources of traditional knowledge few and far between, the power of cultural poetic resources to suggest new ways of fitting together a discourse that makes sense of the past is an important resource to understand. While Lepselter's study pays specific attention to the mode of the uncanny as a "strange mirror, reflecting and distorting the dominant discourses imploding inside an empire,"²² her study of cultural poetics suggests not only a form of academic analysis, but also a form of cultural work used by people to make sense of the world they inhabit during times of instability. In Britain today, with its empire disintegrated and the social order that once organized the countryside shifting to accommodate Britain's diminished place in a globalized world, the cider poetic represents an active semiotic arena for the refashioning of rural heritage discourse.

Heritage Discourses: Ways of Constructing Imagined Geographies

The palimpsest gives a helpful metaphor for looking back at the accumulation of texts and the process of landmarking over time, and may suggest how people interact with the accumulation of texts and see intertextual links between them. The history and genealogy of the signs comprising the cider poetic often lend a sense of authenticity or legitimacy to contemporary public and private uses of orchards. Wassails, cider festivals, conservation projects, environmental policy – all of these cultural enactments draw on such varied and multiple textual references to stories, art, customs, and other texts of orchards and cider. The ways in which people describe orchards today often draw upon multiple texts and signs referring

²¹ Susan Lepselter, *Resonance of Unseen Things : Poetics, Power, Captivity, and UFOs in the American Uncanny* / (University of Michigan Press, 2016), 3–4.

²² *Ibid.*, 17.

to a variety of literary, historical, artistic, and cultural sources. New texts and performances write over and add to older texts, drawing on what is already there, drawing connections between texts, highlighting and connecting disparate signs to suit the current structure of feeling.

Laurajane Smith's book *Uses of Heritage* reminds us that attention to narrative and discourse in heritage studies can allow us to understand the terms under which heritage is framed and the actors, power relations, and forms of knowledge that those frames predicate:

Heritage is also a discourse. The idea of discourse does not simply refer to the use of words or language, but rather the idea of discourse used in this work refers to a form of social practice. Social meanings, forms of knowledge and expertise, power relations and ideologies are embedded and reproduced via language. The discourses through which we frame certain concepts, issues or debates have an affect in so far as they constitute, construct, mediate and regulate understanding and debate. Discourse not only organizes the way concepts like heritage are understood, but the way we act, the social and technical practices we act out, and the way knowledge is constructed and reproduced.²³

Thinking of heritage as a discourse in this manner helps illustrate the mechanism of the cider poetic as a cache of expressive forms and patterns that can be drawn upon to construct heritage discourses of rural England. The imaginations of rural Britons have access to a scattered but rich field of texts on which to improvise as they confront the task of structuring a new countryside relevant to the needs and opportunities of the twenty-first century.

Conclusion

The revival of the craft cider industry and the conservation of orchard landscapes reveal how discourses of heritage are constructed to address social change in rural Britain. Rather than being considered the maintenance of outdated social realities, heritage and conservation work can be seen instead as a way that people negotiate their relationships to place in an extremely mobile and uprooted world.

²³ Laurajane Smith, *Uses of Heritage* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 4.

In an era when orchards are specially marked out for conservation status, and when cider must be marked as craft to distinguish it from mass-produced industrial products, it would seem that they have lost their ordinary, everyday status in many people's experience. James Crowden, whose book *Ciderland*, inspired my use of this term to describe the continuity of an imagined geography that relates to material similarities in landscape, cultural history, and agricultural heritage between the West Country and the Southern Marches, describes the orchard landscape that distinguishes these regions:

In fact, cider and perry are so deeply embedded in the psychology and mystique of the West Country that it is very difficult to disentangle the tradition from the landscape itself. For hundreds of years cider orchards have played a vital part in the rural economy. The vast scale of this orcharding, even in the late nineteenth century, is perhaps difficult for us to comprehend today. Every spring in the West Country there would have been more than 120,000 acres of orchard in blossom. In those heady days almost every farm had its own orchard....²⁴

Crowden is comfortable collecting both regions together under the term West Country, but I like his term *Ciderland* better. He writes, "My journey through Ciderland has taken me from Andy Atkinson's Cornish orchards at Duloe, three miles inland from Looe, right up to Ivor and Suzie Sunkerton at Pembridge, six miles west of Leominster in Herefordshire."²⁵ The idea of Ciderland ties together these regions, so close in proximity and culture, based on their common agricultural heritage, landscape, and history as a cultural borderland of not only the Celtic fringe to the west in Wales and Cornwall, but also the urban sprawl to the east towards London, and the industrial territories to the North. These border regions are landscapes of domesticated, agrarian life. It is here that we find environmental conservation focused on the subtleties of the domesticated landscape, on the cultural heritage of agricultural communities. It is here that one

²⁴ James Crowden, *Ciderland* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2008), 4–5.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

of the most characteristic landscapes - the landscapes of heritage and conservation - are not wildernesses, grand mountains ranges, forests, or coasts, but orchards and meadows.

Throughout this dissertation, I will explore the poetic components that contribute to Ciderland as an imagined geography, the discourses that shape its heritage and conservation, and the cultural practices that manifest this imagined geography as a lived material reality in the world.

In Chapter One, I investigate the nature of the orchard's particular poetic resonance through an ethnography of books that I encountered in my fieldwork and an examination of their poetic components. These books represent an important vector of circulation for the cider poetic. They are literary performances of cultural narratives. They convey the idea of cider and orchards as significant sites for ecological and cultural heritage in the late 20th and early 21st century to literate audiences and provide an important bridge of history and tradition that contributes to revivals of craft and conservation of landscapes.

In Chapter Two, I explore the social identities through which rural heritage is performed, demonstrating the salience of the cider poetic within a general discourse of rural heritage. I also demonstrate the importance of these social identities to the transmission of knowledge about cider-making, a particularly important performance of rural heritage.

In Chapter Three, I identify three distinct discourses of conservation and investigate the impact of these on the material composition and maintenance of the landscape.

In Chapter Four, I look at conservation practices in action at the individual, group and institutional levels. I distinguish different cognitive and experiential modes of engagement with the cider poetic that shape how people interact with orchards and cider as spheres of conservation activity.

In Chapter Five, I conclude with an analysis of the revival of Wassail, a festival celebration of orchards and cider that has seen significant revival in England over the past ten years. Wassail includes elements of traditional folk custom that dramatize in symbolic forms many of the social processes detailed in the previous chapters and create opportunities for new kinds of social groups to engage in rural heritage.

There are dimensions of social and cultural discourse which I will not address, or that I address only in passing, not because they are unimportant, but because the limits of this study could not discuss them in full. I mention the most important omissions here, to alert the reader to areas of study which suggest further avenues of research, but which are not a major part of this dissertation. Race and its relationships to nationality are perhaps the most notably absent discourses in this study, and they will surely become increasingly important, especially as Britain addresses its relationship to global movements of people and goods in its Brexit negotiations, which were just beginning as the final revisions to this dissertation were being made. The corners of the British countryside I visited during this study were still visibly white. The striking cultural diversity of Britain's cities had not yet penetrated deeply into the rural communities I encountered in any significant way, aside from the ubiquitous curry restaurants and their South Asian workers, who are present in even the smallest rural towns, but often not socially integrated. Migrant agricultural workers from Eastern Europe are present in greater numbers and debates about their integration are more vocal. They are necessary to today's global economies of farming, and yet uncomfortably tolerated rather than accepted by many countryside residents, who consider them outsiders. While the upheaval of Brexit can be seen as a potential closing of cultural borders by a nationalist movement concerned with limiting immigration and restoring English sovereignty, the material realities of a globalized, culturally diverse British population

are already there to stay. Whether Britain will remain a country segregated by diversity in its cities and lack thereof in its countryside, remains to be seen and deserves further study.

Similarly, while masculinity and its social roles are a focus of discourse in chapter two, there are larger issues of gender worth addressing in more depth than this dissertation could accommodate. What role have women especially farm wives, played in the material maintenance of orchard heritage, and how are women becoming more involved in agriculture and artisan businesses today? I suggest avenues of further study on this topic, and hope to continue addressing the issue of gender in further work on this topic beyond the dissertation. Class, too, a central issue of British social life, is alluded to in the formation of the concepts of the folk and folklore, but is not a central topic of this study. However, as farm economies continue to change, traditional class relationships relating to land ownership will continue to evolve and deserve more attention.

Another practical aspect of the research and its social implications, which also involve issues of gender and class, deserves mention. Though I spend a good deal of time addressing the importance of the cider cellar as a social space, and the kinds of discourse that occur there, I have largely avoided the issue of alcohol consumption and its consequences. British drinking culture is deeply embedded in the fabric of rural life, and the pub is often a source of community identity and stability, even as social norms change.²⁶ Abuse of alcohol within this customary form of socialization is a serious problem and is publicly acknowledged in the discourses of health and sustainability promoted by the National Association of Cider Makers in defense of their industry. It is enough to say that I witnessed abuses, in addition to appreciation, of alcohol during the ethnographic research that comprises this study, but in the interest of focusing on how

²⁶ J. Heley, "Rounds, Range Rovers and Rurality: The Drinking Geographies of a New Squirearchy," *Drugs: Education, Prevention, and Policy* 15, no. 3 (2008): 315–321.

individuals conceptualize heritage and put into practice its relationship to environmental conservation, I have not dwelt on the issue of alcoholism in any depth, except to suggest obliquely that it exists. Alcoholism, and its cultural construction (one might usefully interrogate what behaviors are considered errant by different cultural or social groups)²⁷ is a difficult aspect of the heritage of cider, one that has personal consequences both for those who live and work in the sphere of cider making and drinking, and for researchers who venture into arenas of its influence.

Finally, an area of discourse that I wished to develop further, is that of vernacular or emic language within the world of orchard management, cider making, and cider drinking. Regional dialect has long been a fascination of folklorists, linguists, social historians and even ethnobotanists.²⁸ The emergent emic language of craft cider appreciation deserves its own study. As taste and smell become central sensory discourses in the appreciation and production of craft cider, it will be important to interrogate this sensory discourse even further, to see how it relates to discourses of the environmental conservation and cultural heritage.

Pilgrimage to Ciderland

Marking the salient nodes of the region's agricultural distinctiveness, James Crowden sees its cider farms as places of pilgrimage where the imagined geography of Ciderland becomes tangible, where the most cherished ideals of rural identity are manifest in material form:

One thing is certain is that cider farms in the West Country are still places of worship and pilgrimage despite the modern moves in technology. These farms have a devoted following and enjoy an almost mythical status in people's

²⁷ Mark Jayne, Gill Valentine, and Sarah L. Holloway, "Geographies of Alcohol, Drinking and Drunkenness: A Review of Progress," *Progress in Human Geography* 32, no. 2 (April 1, 2008): 247–63, doi:10.1177/0309132507087649.

²⁸ David Reedy et al., "A Mouthful of Diversity: Knowledge of Cider Apple Cultivars in the United Kingdom and Northwest United States," *Economic Botany* 63, no. 1 (March 1, 2009): 2–15, doi:10.2307/40390431.

imagination. To some, they represent the true spirit of the land, bastions against industrialization, bureaucracy, and mediocrity. There is a heady whiff of independence and nonconformity which many find attractive.²⁹

Crowden's description of the significance of the West Country always verges on the mythic, and his language stands confidently on the edge of hyperbole, but this attitude is partly what characterizes Ciderland as a place where heritage and nostalgia for English identity find expression. Ciderland is a region of real landscapes, but also a region of the imagination, somewhere that still remains free of those aspects of modernity, which, according to Crowden, tend to stifle the spirit of the land and its people.

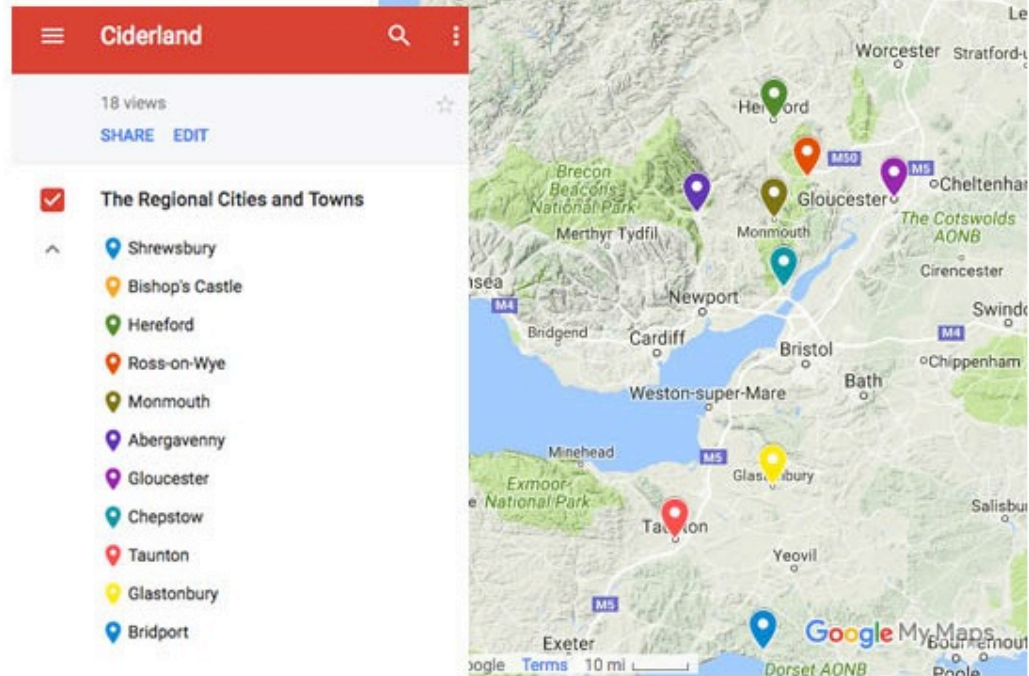
Ciderland is a region ripe for nostalgia of Englishness, but Englishness on the edge of something else: other cultures, other times, and other landscapes. On the border territory between wilderness and city, between the cosmopolitanism of London and the nationalism of Wales, the Marches and the West Country have long been a middle ground, a crossing point where Englishness is simultaneously defined, challenged, and transformed. But this region is encountering the contemporary conflicts over the environmental restrictions on land use, economic changes in farming, and social changes in attitudes to class, race, and gender. Ciderland as a region of the imagination must be conserved and created anew in the face of these changes, and its inhabitants continue to draw on the tropes of the cider poetic as they create new texts and performances that translate the idea into material reality.

²⁹ Crowden, *Ciderland*, 4.

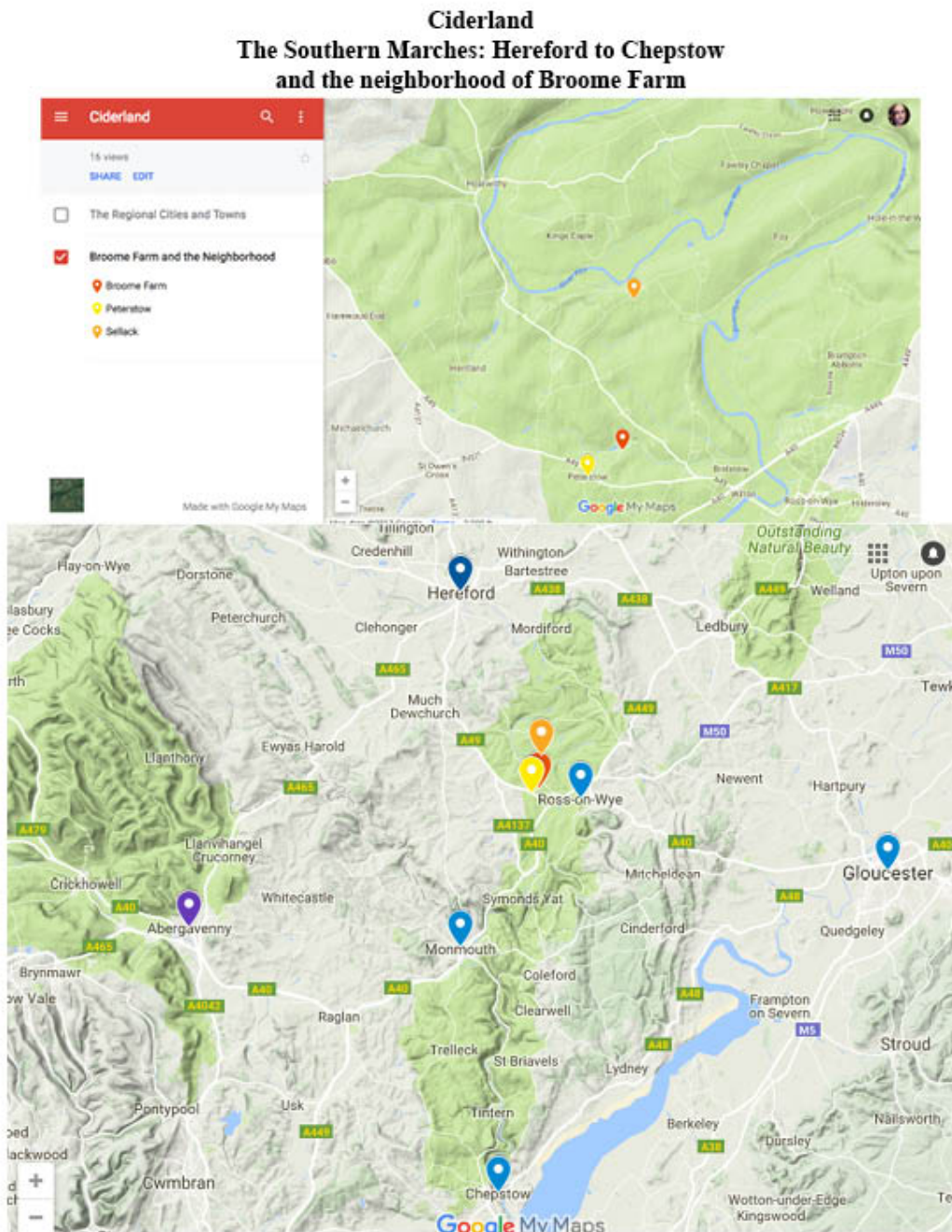
Appendix A: Map of Major Cities and Towns in the Fieldwork Region

**Ciderland: Southern Marches
and West Country**

**Towns and Cities of importance
in Maria Kennedy's
Field Research 2011-2013**



Appendix B: Maps of the Primary Fieldwork Region



Appendix C: Map of the Diocese of Hereford³⁰



³⁰ “A Map of the Diocese of Hereford Including Part of St Davids in the 16th Century - Herefordshire History,” <http://www.herefordshirehistory.org.uk/archive/herefordshire-historic-maps/147036>.

Appendix D: Map of Anglo Saxon Kingdoms³¹



³¹ Britain Express, "Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms," *Britain Express*, <http://www.britainexpress.com/History/Anglo-Saxon-Kingdoms.htm>.

Appendix E: Map of Offa's Dyke, Offa's Dyke Path, and Modern English-Welsh Border³²



³² “Irresistible Offa,” <http://www.irresistibleoffa.org.uk/>.

Appendix F: Map of the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty³³



³³ “Wye Valley Society | Home,” <http://www.wyevalleysociety.org.uk/>.

Chapter One

The Cider Poetic: Textual Analysis of a Popular Aesthetic

In the Bookshop

In August of 2011, I had just recently arrived in Britain. I was taking road trip from the Marches down to the West Country. Stopping in Taunton, Somerset, I found my way to Brendan Books, an independent bookshop. I was browsing for books on local topics, mining the bookshelves for titles and texts that might reveal the characters and narratives of local heritage. Displayed prominently were several books on cider and orchards, including *Cider the Forgotten Miracle* and *Ciderland* by local author James Crowden and *The Common Ground Book of Orchards*³⁴ by the conservation group Common Ground.

I remembered seeing *Cider the Forgotten Miracle* years before, sitting on the coffee table in the farmhouse just twenty miles from Taunton where I had worked as an agricultural volunteer in 2004. I had leafed through its pages copying quotations down in my journal while drinking cider produced from the farm's own orchards. Now in Taunton, I purchased all the books and placed them in the growing library of local lore that filled a file box in the trunk of my car. Eventually, these books would become basic reference works for my fieldwork. But at the time I bought them, my research was not yet focused on orchards and cider. It would be several months more before my study honed itself from a more general interest in sustainable agriculture and its relationship to cultural and environmental heritage into a more specific study of orchard conservation and craft cider making. But in a way, it was always there, just waiting for me to open my eyes to the texts that were already on display in the bookshop. Orchards and cider were

³⁴ See: Crowden, *Ciderland* and *Cider – the Forgotten Miracle* ; and Common Ground (Organization), *The Common Ground Book of Orchards: Conservation, Culture and Community*. (London: Common Ground, 2000).

the agricultural heritage of the region, and these were just some of the first texts I would encounter among many others in a variety of genres.

As objects, books are powerful material vehicles for circulating narratives. Books speak to commonly held feelings and ideas and generate new communities as they circulate, gradually becoming, if they are successful, iconic or canonical. They become touchstones, resources for further action, discourse, and development of the cultural poetic. Books allow people to transfer knowledge and meaning about orchard places and the craft of cider when they cannot always physically visit an orchard or work side by side with a traditional cider maker. Through them, readers come to know and understand the value of orchards, may be moved to visit them, and may appreciate for the first time the activity of cider making.

The books examined here are those whose contents and messages resonate amongst individuals and communities in the world of craft cider, drawing them together through their shared reading, borrowing, and even stealing. One book, a volume of scientific botanical descriptions rather than a literary work, called *Perry Pears*, edited by Luckwill and Pollard in 1963, was so rare and coveted by orchard enthusiasts and cider makers, that several people lent it to me only with great caution, citing past instances of loss or ‘theft’ by other friends and acquaintances.³⁵ Mike Johnson of Broome Farm lamented the loss of his own copy to someone who borrowed and never returned it. He had a facsimile copy of the book, reprinted to satisfy the current demand, but it lacked some of the aura of the original edition. Its contents, scientific rather than literary, convey their own poetic argument for the unique beauty and significance of the perry pear tree to the heritage of the Ciderland region.

³⁵ Leonard Curtis Luckwill, Bertie Thomas Percival Barker, and Alfred Pollard. *Perry Pears. Produced as a Memorial to Professor B.T.P. Barker. Edited by L.C. Luckwill & A. Pollard. [By Various Authors. With a Portrait.]*. (Pl. 4. Published for the National Fruit & Cider Institute by the University of Bristol: Bristol, 1963).

Books are only one kind of text, and they are not the only contemporary texts that will concern this study. Policy texts and festival texts will be examined in later chapters, and I will look at historical texts that became authoritative sources for the development of heritage and conservation discourses. Books are just one kind of text through which cultural aesthetics can be performed. The examination of books in ethnographic, rather than literary terms, was pioneered by Janice Radaway in *Reading the Romance*, which considered reading as a cultural practice and highlighted the responses of readers, rather than the intentions of authors.³⁶ Though the bulk of this chapter will focus on the poetic content of the books, it is important to recognize that this poetic content exists materially and circulates in contexts of reading and sharing. As Michael Foster has noted, the written text is an important mediator not only of the ideas or practices it may represent, but is itself a cultural production worthy of analysis for its performative power:

Although one objective of this study is to read through written documents to get at the otherwise unknowable practices they encode, this mode of analysis must be complemented by consideration of the document itself as an object of interpretation – appearing in a specific situation, with a certain author (known or unknown) and a particular readership (known or unknown). Each text gives voice to the cultural practice under discussion but also speaks of the time, place, and ideological circumstance of its own production.³⁷

In the highly literate culture of Britain, books are important modes of transmission for cultural knowledge. They represent a particularly resonant material form of discourse that can be passed from person to person, and from generation to generation. Books are not only useful for passing on practical information, but they are also part of the fiber through which the structure of feeling of the cider poetic is built. Folklore studies of the past have often privileged the traditions passed on through oral or performative modes of transmission, but

³⁶ Janice A. Radway, *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984).

³⁷ Michael Dylan Foster, *Pandemonium and Parade: Japanese Monsters and the Culture of Yokai* (University of California Press, 2008), 4–5.

this is not sufficient for the context of post-modern Britain and its post-modern, post-industrial condition. It does not adequately account for the experiences of the mass of Britons who are at least moderately educated, middle class, many of whom have been divorced from active connections to traditional crafts and lifestyles that characterized rural life a generation or two before. An intertextual analysis that focuses on books as one form of cultural text within which the cider poetic can circulate broadens the scope for understanding how people use a variety of cultural genres to accomplish the task of transmitting knowledge across generations during times of cultural change. The hunger to bridge that gap, especially as regards the conservation of orchards and the craft of cider making, is witnessed through the circulation of these books.

Christmas Along the Wye

On Christmas Day of 2012, I woke up in my flat in the old Coach House at Sellack. I got dressed and gathered together my hastily wrapped Christmas gifts. The night before, on Christmas Eve, I had been up late singing carols at the pub several miles upriver along the Wye at the Cottage of Content, where I waited tables occasionally for extra pocket money. We never made it to the Hoarwithy Church for the midnight service – the singing in the pub was too lively, the room too warm, and the friends laughing and drinking too happily to think of leaving. There was Broome Farm cider on tap and Wye Valley Brewery ale in the pint glasses. When I had arrived, the pub was packed tight with all the neighborhood people and the regulars. Under the low ceilings of the old building, people squeezed in and out of groups around tables, past the lively fire in the hearth to the tiny bar to order pints in rounds for their groups of friends and family, passing the sloshing pint glasses back through the crowd. I squeezed into a booth in the back corner with my friends Kate and Toby. Someone handed me the carol sheet to sing along.

People gradually drifted out until only the young people and the publicans, Richard and Helen, were left, singing carols loudly, off-key, shouting in Christmas well past midnight.

The pub visits on Christmas Eve would soon be followed by more on Christmas Day. But first, there was Christmas breakfast down at Wellsbrook Cottage with my friends Mike Johnson, the cider maker, and his nephew Toby and Toby's girlfriend Kate, two of my closest friends. Over a breakfast of eggs, toast, and sausages from Toby's own pigs, we exchanged a few small gifts. From Mike, I unwrapped a book by Laurie Lee: *Cider With Rosie*.³⁸ We had talked many times about how much he loved the latter book, especially its evocative language, but I had still not read it. Mike's gift to me was both an offering and an insistence. I needed to read this book.

We continued on our parade of Christmas visits, first to the Red Lion, where the publican Dave opened for a few hours at noon and offered a free pint to all the regulars, many dressed in their nicest clothes coming from the church or heading to family dinner. Next, we drove back to the Cottage of Content for another free pint, ending finally at Kate's parents' house for Christmas dinner. Travelling across the neighborhood from pub to pub and house to house in the tiny hamlets that dotted the countryside north of the town of Ross on Wye, it felt as if traditional tracks of sociability were being retraced and strengthened. On this day, when the supermarkets and the chain stores are mostly closed, the pubs, churches, villages, and hamlets thronged with people retracing a geography of sociability whose structure lies just beneath, or perhaps to the side, of the competing layers of contemporary life. Retracing these pathways, from Broome Farm, to our quiet breakfast at the fourteenth-century Wellsbrook cottage, past the Peterstow church, to the Red Lion pub, following the Hoarwithy Road along the banks of the River Wye to the Cottage of Content, we retraced many of our usual daily journeys. Along these intimate

³⁸ Laurie Lee, *Cider With Rosie* (Random House, 2011).

roads, our daily concerns usually extended outwards, to the cattle market at Hereford where Toby thought about the price of pigs, or the town of Monmouth where Kate drove an ambulance, to the Bulmers factory at Ledbury where Mike's apples were hauled to be pressed into cider by international business conglomerate Heineken.

But on Christmas, our journeys along the same roads were different. On this day, we travelled only to see each other, our friends, neighbors, and family. In the palimpsests of geography that we constantly move through, our Christmas journey cut a groove into the geography of social ties in our little rural corner of Herefordshire. These ties are modern, but in their localized proximity to each other, also retrace the geography and scale of a life seemingly gone: that of the small country village in the era before the car, when people walked footpaths by necessity rather than for leisure, and horse carts determined the pace of life. This era is not so long gone in this corner of England, and I met many older people who remembered this way of life from their own youth.

Cider With Rosie, the book Mike had given me that Christmas morning, recalls this era and its way of life in evocative, descriptive language of heightened senses, rendering the life of an English village in highly colored, nostalgic detail. Set in the Gloucestershire village of Slad, *Cider With Rosie* is a memoir of the interwar period that has become a ubiquitous presence in the popular imagination of rural life now lost. Literary works like *Cider With Rosie* help to mark in the imagination a layer of past geography and social life that we still sometimes retraced in our experiences of the countryside. Whether or not *Cider With Rosie* portrays a kind of village life that ever really existed, it provides a map for the imagination, highlighting layers of geography that still exist quietly within a mash of architectural, geographic, and social artifacts that construct the shape and movement of contemporary relationships.

The Cider Poetic

Cider With Rosie, *Cider the Forgotten Miracle*, *The History and Virtues of Cyder*,³⁹ and *The Common Ground Book of Orchards* provide literary blueprints for the geography of cider. They provide maps for the imagination, narrating layers of orchard geography within the landscape, telling us how to transfer our reading of them on the page to seeing them in the fields. Guidebooks like these help to highlight layers of geographical heritage within the palimpsest of the material landscape; each one structures the idea or feeling of the landscape of cider through particular poetic strategies that recur in actions and practices on the landscape itself. In a way, these books are scripts that inform, and sometimes dictate, the performance and experience of the landscape. In them, we can begin to see how certain ideas about orchards and cider take form in repeated patterns of representation. The images, characters, tropes, settings, dramatic arcs, and rhetorical styles of describing orchards and cider within these literary works are all part of what I call the *cider poetic*. The cider poetic, however, is not limited to expression within literary works. As we will see throughout this study, aspects of the cider poetic appear in other experiences and expressive genres as well, but their manifestation on the pages of printed books, and the interaction of those books with people and communities, is a good place to start.

The intimacy of the customs of Christmas, and books like *Cider With Rosie*, cast our journeys through the villages along the Wye in the mood of a lost era. Mike Johnson, as well as other cider makers, told me repeatedly that the book was essential to my education in cider. Mike, it seemed to me, still had at least one foot in the rural past that Lee's world described, and his family farm - Broome Farm – often embodied aspects of the nostalgic sensory world that the book develops as a trope of the rural idyll.

³⁹ R.K. French, *The History and Virtues of Cyder* (Robert Hale Ltd, 2010).

Mike's cider cellar, gathering place of eccentric locals, old timers, young dreamers, and energetic innovators of rural life, was a crucible of the cider poetic, a place where bodies tired from physical labor found relaxation and minds alive to bawdy wit, blues music, and where conversation found expression. In the Broome Farm Cider Cellar, many people came to learn about and drink cider, for to learn about cider, one has to appreciate its many flavors. Learning about cider is an education that starts with the senses first, as does Laurie Lee's illustration of a vanishing rural world.

There are other books that are essentials for defining the world of cider, historical treatises and documents that chart the history of orchards and cider in England, as well as how-to manuals that offer technical advice on the practice of the craft itself. The works I will explore here, however, were all written after 1950 and are more literary or historical than technical. They represent contemporary narratives of cider, demonstrating how the cider poetic is evolving to structure the ideas of the countryside and its orchards in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. These relatively contemporary texts appeal more to the imaginative capacities of the reader than to his or her functional or technical questions. They have influenced the perception and interest in cider in both popular and specialist audiences that are now producers and consumers of craft cider. They have influenced conservationists of rural agricultural land, and participants in the revival of rural heritage and community life. These literary texts suggest why orchards and cider matter to the present generation.

These books propose various attitudes to memory, heritage, and the past, which recognize the richness of traditions which might not fit easily into modern or contemporary contexts. They recognize a sense of loss or disjuncture that they seek to remedy through particular rhetorical stances or poetic strategies. *Cider With Rosie*, for example, helps position a certain kind of rural

life and countryside landscape in a nostalgic past of the senses which is particularly accessible and iconized in the intoxicating encounter which lends the book its title. *The History and Virtues of Cyder* elaborates on the social and mechanical components of reviving that past, and *Cider the Forgotten Miracle* romanticizes the accomplishment of that revival through the revalorization of labor. *The Common Ground Book of Orchards* creates a theoretical framework within which orchards are justified as sites of conservation and living cultural heritage. The book positions orchards as a landscape that can stand for broader concerns about the way individuals and communities relate to their landscape's cultural resources. Common Ground's activist framework positions cider within a positive, present-oriented stance. These books present various themes and poetic structures of orchards and cider. They are components of the structure of feeling that the cider poetic evokes across books and across other cultural genres. In each book I discuss here, I will focus on the dominant themes and poetics that characterize the work. As I move through other cultural genres in later chapters of the dissertation, these themes and poetics will re-emerge.

Nostalgic Scripts:

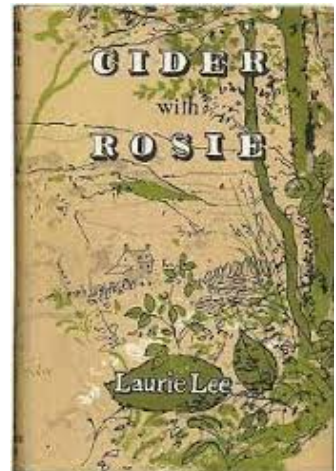
Laurie Lee's *Cider With Rosie*: Poetics of Childhood and the Senses

The last days of my childhood were also the last days of the village. I belonged to that generation which saw, by chance, the end of a thousand years' life. The change came late to our Cotswold valley, didn't really show itself till the late 1920s; I was 12 by then, but during that handful of years I witnessed the whole thing happen. Myself, my family, my generation, were born in a world of silence; a world of hard work and necessary patience, of backs bent to the ground, hands massaging the crops, of waiting on weather of growth; of villages like ships in the empty landscape and the long walking distances between them; of white narrow roads, rutted by hooves and cartwheels, innocent of oil or petrol, down which people passed rarely, and almost never for pleasure, and the horse was the fastest thing moving."⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Lee, *Cider With Rosie*, 216.

Evidence of the passing of an era is given in the passage above. The era of quiet isolation enforced by the pace of bodies – bodies of men and horses and most importantly, of children – passes away in the face of machines and maturity. The focus on the body and its relationship to the past is a crucial part of the cider poetic, for cider was always intended to affect the body and its senses through taste, smell, and intoxication. In *Cider With Rosie* we see several aspects of the cider poetic in action: the mood of nostalgia, the trope of childhood, and an emphasis on sensory experiences as a primary mode of knowledge. Laurie Lee's much loved memoir of his Cotswold childhood in a rural village is only incidentally about cider, but it paints a picture of a rural world in which cider seems to belong, a world where its intoxicating properties are a sensory link to a pre-industrial landscape where life was curiously physical and socially mysterious.

Published in 1959 and adapted since then for television, radio, and theatre, *Cider with Rosie* recalls Lee's childhood in the rural village of Slad and the nearby town of Stroud in Gloucestershire during the interwar period. It became a best-selling novel and was frequently read in English schools. The author wrote further autobiographical novels about his experiences leaving home and traveling to Spain to fight in the Spanish Civil War, but returned to live in London and finally in Slad, where he died and was buried in the local churchyard in 1997. Literary editor Robert McCrum, writing in the *Guardian*, described the popularity and influence of Lee's book as both a blessing and a curse:



To those who were made to read *Cider With Rosie* at school, Laurie Lee is English literature's Laura Ashley, an artist, commercialized by success, who branded a slice of English rural experience with an ineradicable pattern. He also

had the rather rare distinction of becoming a minor but apparently secure part of the English literary canon while he was still alive.⁴¹

No subsequent work of Lee's enjoyed as much success as *Cider With Rosie*, and it occupied a grey area between autobiography and novel that inspired criticism about the veracity of his stories and his tendency to cast his own life story in the mode of myth rather than fact. Friends and colleagues described him as an extremely charming, flirtatious man, though his personal life was riddled with intense and sometimes troubled relationships with women, hidden epilepsy, and a tendency to drink.⁴²

Cider With Rosie draws a detailed picture of the domestic life of home and family, gradually easing out into the wider social circles of neighborhood village and town. The sense of loss in the book evokes themes of nostalgia for the rural idyll. Cider is never the theme or the topic of the book. It remains incidental, but as the title suggests, it becomes indexical of the intensified experiences of social intimacy, heightened sensory engagement with the body and nature, and transcendent, transformational awareness of the relationship of the self to the changing world. As Lee grows up, the intense intimacy of his immediate surroundings is gradually complicated, and the dense webs of interpersonal ties that characterize his rural childhood are dismembered by both the inevitability of adulthood and the noisy, impersonal mobility of modernity.

Lee's nostalgia for this vanished village life still resonates in the 21st century, over a generation later; the bucolic, if raw and lusty, images of life in the country still color ideals of rural life today. Lee's description of his loss of the rural landscape is explicitly linked to the end of his own childhood, as the passage that opened this section demonstrates. This passage, from

⁴¹ Robert McCrum, "The Tragic Success of Laurie Lee | Books | The Guardian," *The Guardian Observer*, November 21, 1999, <http://www.theguardian.com/books/1999/nov/21/robertmccrum>.

⁴² Valerie Grove, *The Life and Loves of Laurie Lee*, Later Edition edition (London: Robson Press, 2014).

the last chapter of the book, summarizes its motivation – a desire to illustrate the last days of what the author perceives as a vanishing world, the last vestiges of the pre-industrial material and social life bounded by the pace of horses and the social hierarchies of squires and tenants, populated by old and young. Lee's description of the dissolution of the rural world continues:

Soon the village would break, dissolve, and scatter, become no more than a place for pensioners. It had a few years left, the last of its thousand. They passed quickly, painlessly, in motor-bike jaunts, in the shadows of the new picture palace, in quick trips to Gloucester (once a foreign city) to gape at the jazzy shops. Yet right to the end, like the false strength that precedes death, the old life seemed as lusty as ever.⁴³

The novel's focus on the link between childhood experiences of the countryside and feelings of sensory memory, translated into a mood of nostalgia, is particularly important. The senses are a vehicle through which the world of childhood is experienced and expressed. By emphasizing sensory register of memory, a register that is at once impossible to recapture in its original, ephemeral form, but perhaps possible to imitate, the novel sets up a language of nostalgia that holds out the possibility of return.

Nostalgia expressed through the senses, childhood described through the senses, provides an adult reader the possibility of reactivating the senses, and reviving some small piece of an experience otherwise gone. The body and its senses become a reference point where memory and history might be realized, an idea which has exciting implications in the exploration of cider as an object of heritage that is primarily experienced through the senses of taste and smell, but which has many more complex and nuanced sensory manifestations, like the muscle memory embedded in its traditional labor, the slant of light on the eyes in the late December cider pressing room, or the sound of cows munching contentedly on spent apple pomace in the farmyard. Sensory memories like these, located in the realm of childhood, are simultaneously

⁴³ Lee, *Cider With Rosie*, 217.

distant in time and tantalizingly within reach for the reader willing to explore his or her own sense experiences in the present.

Narratives of childhood in the countryside provide a parallel experience of loss on a personal level, and in *Cider with Rosie*, Lee's personal memories are communicated through a language of the senses that connect the reader to the physical world of the Gloucestershire countryside. The loss mourned in *Cider With Rosie* is the inability to resurrect the past in the senses. Even though one can describe senses remembered, or recreate new sensory experiences that approximate the old, the ephemeral moment of experience is always gone. The sensuality of this disappearing world is one of the most palpable of its qualities and characterizes the single incident which lends the memoir its title, contributing a rich resource to the cider poetic. In the second-to-last chapter, "First Bite at the Apple" Lee recalls his faltering first sexual encounters with the girls of his village as he enters adolescence. A transition from innocence to knowledge is too simple a dichotomy to describe these explorations, for as Lee describes it, the rural environment always offered children models to examine in the barn and the field. He describes childhood lives filled with bodily sensations and stimulations of various kinds that portend the advent of adult sexuality and courtship from early ages. Lee's afternoon in the grass, getting drunk on cider for the first time with the calculating and precocious Rosie, marks a heightened experience fuelled not only by youthful sexual exploration but also by the headiness of the cider itself, which he describes in language of hyperbolic nostalgia:

"It's cider," she said. "You ain't to drink it though. Not much of it, any rate." Huge and squat, the jar lay on the grass like an unexploded bomb. We lifted it up, unscrewed the stopper, and smelt the whiff of fermented apples. I held the jar to my mouth and rolled my eyes sideways, like a beast at a waterhole. "Go on," said Rosie. I took a deep breath.... Never to be forgotten that first long secret drink of golden fire, juice of those valleys and of that time, wine of wild orchards, of

russet summer, of plump red apples, and Rosie's burning cheeks. Never to be forgotten, or ever tasted again.⁴⁴

The language of the passage positions the sensory experience as at once immediate, rooted in colors, textures, smells, while also being timeless, expansive, and symbolic. The real, immediate cider becomes the wine of unspecific "wild orchards" of an abstract "russet summer," generic "plump red apples," moving finally back into the specific features of "Rosie's burning cheeks." The immediate sensory experience moves into the realm of memory, where it can never be forgotten, but also never experienced again through the same encounter. But in recalling it, Lee's novel perhaps invites the nostalgic reader to seek out new sensory experiences, to recreate the conditions where memories like this are created.

Laurie Lee's nostalgia is characterized by the tension between the immediacy of sensory experience and the realization of its passing, when one becomes self-conscious of the power and presence of memory as an integral part of bodily experience. As the vehicle of both senses and memory, cider is so strong an icon of nostalgia and memory as painted by Lee, that the language of the passage itself has worked its way into the cider poetic in palpable ways, recognizable in conversation and referenced in other texts. Cider maker Tom Oliver described to me the book, which he read as a child, as "the first written word to bring the Golden Fire to life with all the potential that it holds."⁴⁵ As his comment about the significance of the book for him shows, the language of the text has left powerful imprints in terms like "golden fire," which is also not coincidentally, incorporated into the text of a recent popular history of cider.⁴⁶ The phrase carries with it not only the topical reference to cider, but the weight and meaning of sensory awakening, memory, and nostalgia.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 209. Lee

⁴⁵ Personal communication, October 3, 2013

⁴⁶ Ted Bruning, *Golden Fire: The Story of Cider* (Sandy: Authors Online, 2012).

Part of the appeal of cider and orchards as sites of memory and nostalgia is their powerful effects on the senses, their ability to facilitate new experiences that recall old memories. Just as the countryside will never return to its pristine pre-war condition, iconic moments of memory like Lee's youthful sexual encounter with Rosie, are moments that can never be recaptured. But in the intoxicating moments of sensory experience that cider facilitates, one might hope to approximate a shadow of sensory experience that comes close.

Cider With Rosie creates an association between cider and nostalgic images of the countryside, experienced through the specific frames of memory and childhood, and peppered with the pervasive themes of sensory experience, sexuality, and also eccentricity and pain. Lee's rural idyll of the senses is not always comfortable – his descriptions of poverty, illness, social isolation and strife, as well as his acknowledgement of crimes such as murder, incest, rape, and theft illustrate the dark and eccentric directions in which human characters can grow when left in rural outlands where, in his description, law and institutional control rarely reach. Instead, people's individual eccentric characters grow into, towards, and against each other, sometimes pushing back against each other's infractions, effecting an organic, if sometimes seemingly amoral balance. Take for example, Granny Trill and Granny Wallon, the rival eccentric old ladies who live in different portions of the farmhouse also inhabited by Lee's family. Singular in their personalities, they can live neither with nor without each other:

Granny Trill and Granny Wallon were rival ancients and lived on each other's nerves, and their perpetual enmity was like mice in the walls and absorbed my early days [...] Like cold twin stars, linked but divided, they survived by a mutual balance. Both of them reached back similarly in time, shared the same modes and habits, and the same sense of feudal order, the same rampaging terrible God. They were far more alike than unlike, and could not abide each other.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Lee, *Cider With Rosie*, 78–91.

Though the warring grannies arrange their existence to avoid each other, Lee describes their constant interaction as a, “sustained mutual awareness based solely on ear and nostril. When Granny Wallon’s wines boiled, Granny Trill had convulsions. When Granny Trill took snuff, Granny Wallon had strictures.”⁴⁸ When one Granny finally dies, the other follows not long after, her self-righteous eccentricity rendered inert without its counterpart. Other cantankerous, unique, and singular characters populate the little village, bumping up against each other but usually, like the grannies, finding some kind of mutual balance. In the countryside, there is space for eccentricity, and thus, at least in Lee’s version of the rural idyll, they flourish there until the end of his childhood, until the advent of the more mobile, industrialized world enforces an adherence to its morals, its systems, its mechanized measurements of life.

Influences of Childhood Memories on Cider Makers

The relationship between childhood and rurality that is so powerfully inscribed in *Cider With Rosie* is also evident in the personal narratives related to me by cider makers themselves. Geographer Owain Jones has explored the relationship of childhood and images of the rural in literature, specifically attending to *Cider With Rosie*. Jones explores how discourses of rural childhood in literature can translate into other popular and official discourses which structure the lives and experiences of contemporary rural childhood. He says:

Underpinning much of the structuring of children’s worlds in the countryside are various bodies of discourse which portray childhood in the countryside as some form of ideal [...] The structuring which crystallizes out of such discourses comes in many interacting, deliberate and incidental forms, and will shape both spatial and temporal patterns of everyday life through physical, ideological, aesthetic, disciplinary and creative forces.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Ibid., 91–92.

⁴⁹ Owain Jones, “Little Figures, Big Shadows: Country Childhood Stories,” in *Contested Countryside Cultures: Rurality and Socio-Cultural Marginalisation*, ed. Jo Little and Paul Cloke (Routledge, 1997).

This stance, relating the discourse of the rural childhood idyll found in literature to other discourses which can materially structure experience, informs my interest in these literary texts of rurality and specifically of cider and orchards. Through them, we can begin to understand how the nostalgic longing for a rural idyll can index both material and imaginary pasts which are irrevocably intertwined. In his analysis, Jones links narratives of rural childhood to Raymond Williams's analysis of narratives of the vanishing rural in *The Country and the City*, noting that the narrative of loss and nostalgia is not simply about vanishing material landscapes, but also about ongoing laments for imaginary ideals and golden ages which transcend the specific instance of industrial modernity, but which also speak to that era of intense change.⁵⁰

Several cider makers told me of distinct memories of childhood experiences in the countryside that influenced their later interest in cider making. An interview I conducted with cider maker and orchardist Jim Franklin of the village of Little Hereford contributes a personal experience to the nostalgic childhood narrative. Franklin's memories are interesting because in many ways they parallel the vanishing world Lee described in his novel, but they take place about thirty years - a generation - later than the novel. Jim recalls growing up in a remote village called the Leysters, situated in an upland area between the market towns of Tenbury Wells and Leominster in the northeastern corner of Herefordshire:

Jim Franklin: My mother brought me back to live at the Leysters to live with my Grandmother, who was ill when I was seven I suppose, so most of my life was in this area.

It's difficult to say, when you say, 'What was it like?' I mean there were no streetlights. If you went in from church on a cold Sunday night, you know, you had to light a candle, and it was... um.. it's more natural actually, than it is today.

You lived more naturally, you know, you sit by the firelight, no television obviously, and a radio which was, on a good day you could hear it, you know. So you entertained yourself, and that's what you did.

⁵⁰ Jones, 162-163.

And there was no pictures. When I got a bit older, I used to come into Tenbury to the pictures on the local bus. There was a bus service that came through, twice a day [....]

I mean nobody had cars, you see. You had a horse an trap. bdm bdm bdm.

Maria Kennedy: Really? In the 1950s?

Jim Franklin: Oh God, yes, yeh. [....] It's amazing isn't it where we are now. Staggering. [....] I mean I appreciate technology and I always marvel at it, because I've got a very base start haven't I, from the candle.

But people take it so much for granted, so they don't appreciate it do they, so it's lost on them really. And when you switch the electric fire, oh its nice, instead of going to chop it down. So it's a good learning curve.

But I suppose that's lost now, because, it was the end of an era wasn't it. It was a chopping off point of history, basically [...] I think it's fortunate to have memories like that, because, the kids today are going to have a memory of a bloody computer, won't they, or the TV.⁵¹

Although he remembered such times with fondness and valued these experiences, Jim was by no means living his life in the past. A successful businessman, he had owned a bakery and restaurant in Tenbury before buying property, planting an orchard on contract with Bulmers, and subsequently starting his own craft cider business. He helped found the Three Counties Cider and Perry Association, which still supports local craft cider makers. He was well-travelled, recalling during our interview his trips abroad to Chicago and New York. His attitude about the quality and desirability of certain types of childhood memory rooted in active sensory experience, as opposed to the passive and virtual experiences contemporary children have with television and computer today, is striking. Though it has a familiar ring, the tone of an older generation illuminating the superior qualities of their own time in contrast to the degeneration of contemporary values and experiences, it points also to specific qualities of life which have changed and which mark a particular loss – the loss of sensory engagements with the world.

⁵¹ Jim Franklin, interview by Maria Kennedy, February 12, 2012.

Even though these changes in lifestyle mark an increase in comfort and ease in daily and common life, the transition also indicates a change in the character of experience and memory.

One of Mike Johnson's mentors, Jean Nowell, who began making cider after returning to live in the area of South Herefordshire where she had grown up, connected her interest in cider to her memories of life on her family's farm near Ross on Wye. Talking to Mike and me in her home near Much Marcle, Herefordshire, Jean, now in her 80s, recalled how she began cider making in the 1980s:

I think I got started partly because in my early childhood, near where Mike lives, on a farm there, my father made it. I think he made perry and cider. I only remember the cider. It was available in the barrel for the people on the farm, and me and my brother were allowed to just drink it if we fancied it. So that left me with a liking for it. I think if you drink it when you are a kid, you've always got a kind of a taste for it.⁵²

Jean's memories of cider in her childhood were channeled into her rediscovery of cider and cider making many years later, when she began trying to make it herself. She had little knowledge of techniques, and even her father did not seem to remember exactly how they used to make it in years past. Guidance and mentoring from other local cider and perry makers who had carried on the tradition, and a good deal of trial and error, helped her eventually become a respected maker and mentor to a whole new generation of cider makers. But the aspect of memory and taste in her comment is revealing: "I think if you drink it when you are a kid, you've always got a kind of a taste for it." If the senses are a vehicle of tradition, then the memory of taste is a catalyst to the rediscovery of technique. This aspect of the cider poetic is not only an important part of a distinct kind of structure of feeling, but it is also a part of the process of heritage.

In a way, *Cider With Rosie*, as a literary memoir, is the formalized version of this personal narrative genre that recounts the parallel experiences of transition from childhood to

⁵² Jean Nowell and Mike Johnson, interview by Maria Kennedy, January 21, 2012.

adulthood and from a sensory, material, pre-industrial world to a world that is filled with technology, and is increasingly mobile and cosmopolitan. The nostalgia both within the text of *Cider With Rosie*, as well as attached to it by readers, is all the more powerful because it provides a public, eloquent model of the experience of rural change that cider makers like Jim Franklin and Jean Nowell also communicate in their own personal narratives of their own rural childhoods.

Personal memories and the poetics of childhood and the senses are not the only route to reviving cider's rural heritage, however. In the following section, I look at a very different kind of book, one that appeals to the evidence of history as a model for revival. While the senses appeal to visceral, personal experiences of rural heritage, the models of agricultural life referenced by Roger French's *The History and Virtues of Cyder* suggest an experience of heritage that is founded on idealizations of common social relations and the pursuit of scientific advancement.

Revival Scripts:

Roger French's *The History and Virtues of Cyder* : Poetics of Improvement

Roger K. French's book, *The History and Virtues of Cyder*, published in 1982, develops the theme of the Enlightenment as both a golden age for cider and for England itself, and digs into the historical material on cider to re-present it for a modern audience. At the time his book was published, French was a lecturer and director of the Wellcome Unit for the History of Medicine at the University of Cambridge. His book engages in a distinctly revivalist project to rewrite the history of cider in a way that contextualizes cider-making as a traditional rural art

whose significance could be traced through changes to social, economic, and political structures of rural life.

For French, the rise and fall of cider as a drink of quality can be directly correlated to the rise and fall of a particular kind of social and scientific approach to agriculture that flowered in the early Enlightenment era in England. During this time, the idea of “improvement” was a philosophical imperative that applied rational approaches to social relations, as well as a practical approach to scientific endeavors in horticulture, food production, and the organization of farm economies. French’s book was not just a work of history. It was a call for revival, an effort to reactivate the historical texts and records of cider in the practice of the contemporary countryside of England. His book represents a script of action, both to reorganize the appreciation of cider’s place in the past and to recognize its potential to reorder the present and future of rural life. Its legacy as a motivating text for aspiring cider makers in contemporary England demonstrates the success of his vision.

French first came to my attention through Dave Sanders, maker of Gryfter Cyder in Herefordshire. Just as Mike Johnson had insisted I read *Cider With Rosie*, Dave insisted that I read *The History and Virtues of Cyder*. I ordered a copy online and began reading it in my spare moments. French’s historical information introduced a whole new world of texts, people, machines, and techniques into my lexicon of cider. But French’s dedication to the revival of cider in the life of the countryside became most apparent when I found myself in the midst of his material legacy, walking into his house and his cider cellar, and driving past the remnants of his orchard.

I found myself at his house quite unexpectedly, on a visit with Dave Sanders to see another cider-maker friend in the village of Checkley, Herefordshire. We drove out east from Hereford and into the hills of the Woolhope Dome. The broad rich arable fields that dominate the landscape around the city gave way to winding hilly lanes, high hedges, patches of woodland, checkered pastures, and patches of orchards, both old and new. As we wound around one lane, we passed some ancient apple trees, one so old, and so laden with bright red fruits, that its spindly branches arched down towards the ground, drooping over the roadside hedge. We turned into a drive leading down to an old timber frame farmhouse. A few industrial plastic beverage containers large enough to hold one thousand litres of liquid, often used by cider makers, were sitting next to the drive. We poked our heads around the back garden, where we finally found Dave's friend, Ed French. Only after a handshake and several minutes of conversation did I realize that Ed French was Roger French's son, and that I was standing in the house of the author of *The History and Virtues of Cyder*.



Though Ed French lived and worked in Cambridge, he traveled out to the house at Checkley to make his cider in the same place his father had. The bent tree I had noticed across the road, he told me, was a Yarlington Mill apple, a late-maturing variety. He led Dave and me through the house, where a large old wooden press sat in a room adjoining the kitchen. He brought out several bottles of his sparkling Foxwhelp cider for us to try. Slightly bubbly from its bottle conditioning, the Foxwhelp cider was crisp, dry, and acidic on the tongue. We sat at the



table sipping as Ed and Dave exchanged shoptalk about their cider making – the apple crop (lousy this year), different details of equipment (Dave had a new scratter – or apple mill), and the economics of business (what festivals to sell at, or whether it was worth distributing to pubs).

Ed took us on a walk through the fields and lanes surrounding the house where he had spent summer holidays with his father, showing us the orchards his father had planted, as well as some magnificently derelict old orchards on nearby property, so ruined and decrepit that the enormous perry pear trees had fallen to the ground, or had gaping hollow trunks. Some apple trees clung to life, having fallen over and regenerated a few limbs. In one standard, but relatively young orchard, the lichens, an environmental indicator of very clean air, were so thick on the branches of the trees that it almost looked like a light covering of snow. Even for Herefordshire, a fairly backwater county (and proud to be so) this was a particularly remote corner of



countryside where the landscape was inefficient enough for industrial farming to render lost fields and orchards like these undisturbed by progress, profit, and pesticide.

After visiting his house, I later realized I had also been driving past another orchard belonging to French for many months. The orchard, about ten miles away from the house at

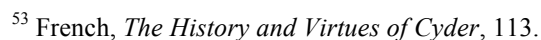
Checkley, stood hidden beside a tiny road which snakes beside the River Wye north of the village of Hoarwithy. I often drove along this road on my way to work at a nearby pub. The orchard itself was overgrown, perched on a steep slope and in a location impossible to access with farm equipment. It had become difficult for the current owner, cider maker Tom Oliver, to maintain and was slowly being reclaimed by brush. Even when I knew to look for it, it was still hard to see until winter stripped the leaves off of the trees. Then, the round green globes of mistletoe hanging in the branches, peaking out from above the high hedges on one side of the road revealed the location of the orchard, and every time I passed by it, I would think of Roger French. Remote corners like these at Checkley and Hoarwithy, economically impervious to the methods of modern farming, are places where the material remnants of outmoded agricultural patterns can be found.

It was in these real places in the countryside that Roger French began his project to revive the art of cider, emulating the enlightened cultivation of trees, the quality of production, and the appreciative enjoyment of cider that he admired so much in the writers of the Enlightenment era. Sitting in a kitchen that was empty much of the year, listening to Ed and Dave discuss the nuts and bolts of producing cider and selling cider, it seemed unfortunate that the house and the orchard should be lonely and untended so much of the year. But it also seemed appropriate that it was still devoted to the practical operation of the ideal French outlined in his book.

French's writing forms the basis for the argument for the inclusion of cider in the culinary repertoire of England. This rhetoric positions cider not only as a product of rural heritage representative of simple country fare, but as an established artisanal product with a hidden, but significant, place in England's history of fine dining. French's book is divided into three parts. In the first section, he outlines a history of cider from Classical times onward, with

Throughout the book, French refers often to historical texts and treatises on cider. Before moving on to talk more of French's book itself, it is useful to take a detour into the Enlightenment and Victorian writers who constitute many of his sources and who continue to influence other writers on cider today. French's mining of these authors for the historical precedents of a renewed blossoming of craft cider would provide a model for others to follow in rediscovering these texts themselves.

From the Enlightenment Era forward, each subsequent movement promoting the improvement of agriculture through attention to orchards and cider making has highlighted the theme



⁵⁴ Ibid., 73.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 131.

of lost knowledge, revival, and return to a golden era of enlightened self-sufficiency. Each revival has its own spin on self-sufficiency, moving the dial inwards and outwards, sometimes focusing on the individual, on his estates, his neighborhood, his county, or his nation. Self sufficiency expands and retracts by degrees, highlighting different kinds of social relationships with larger communities, but still the theme echoes across these various revivals: The cultivation of orchards and the making of cider will encourage economic and social stability.

Beginning with French, authors who write on cider today refer back to the seventeenth century as a golden era, when cider was the drink of gentlemen and a subject to be discussed in the high circles of scientific inquiry. One of the most influential texts on cider, the *Pomona, or an Appendix concerning fruit trees in relation to Cider*, an addendum to the longer work *Sylva* was published in 1664 by John Evelyn, one of the founders of the Royal Society.⁵⁶ Evelyn advocated the planting of fruit trees as part of a plan of improvement for agriculture. Improvement, in this context, was intended to increase the quality and consistency of methods of apple cultivation and cider production.

Evelyn's manual offers practical advice on how to propagate, plant, and care for cultivated orchard trees. His intention is to distribute information widely to the educated and elite classes of gentlemen who would have the power, influence, and money to implement his suggestions, and in so doing, to lift the practice of agriculture out of trial-and-error traditional practices to a more scientific level. In this quotation from Evelyn's *Preface* to the volume of collected essays from a number of writers, he emphasizes the precedent set by the planting of fruit trees on Royal properties during the reign of Henry the VIII:

⁵⁶ John Evelyn, *Sylva; or, A Discourse of Forest-Trees, and the Propagation of Timber in His Majesties Dominions. As It Was Deliver'd in the Royal Society, the XVth of October, CII)CLXII ... To Which Is Annexed, Pomona; or, An Appendix Concerning Fruit-Trees in Relation to Cider, the Making and Several Ways of Ordering It* : Evelyn, John, 1620-1706 : Free Download & Streaming : Internet Archive, 1664, <http://www.archive.org/details/sylvaordiscourse00eveluoft>.

It was by the plain Industry of one Harris (a Fruiterer to King Henry the Eighth) that the Fields, and Environs of about thirty Towns, in Kent onely, were planted with Fruit, to the universal benefit, and general Improvement of that County to this day; as by the noble example of my Lord Scudamor, and of some other public spirited Gentlemen in those parts, all Hereford-shire is become, in a manner, but one intire Orchard: And when his Majesty shall once be pleas'd to command the Planting but of some Acres, for the best Cider fruit, at every of his Royal Mansions, amongst other of his most laudable Magnificences; Noblemen, wealthy Purchasers, and Citizens will (doubtless) follow the Example, till the preference of Cider, wholesome, and more natural Drinks, do quite vanquish Hopps, and banish all other Drogues of that nature.⁵⁷

Evelyn's text is full of persuasive rhetoric of this nature, lauding the planting of fruit trees as a matter of public health and economic gain, recognizing that such gain will require long-term investment and foresight by those with greater economic flexibility – namely, the king and the landed gentry. He even suggests an act of Parliament:

To fortifie this profitable Design, It were farther to be desired, that an Act of Parliament might be procur'd for the setting but of two or three Trees in every Acre of inclos'd Land, under the Forfeiture of six-pence per Tree, for some publick and charitable Work, to be levy'd on the Defaulters. To what an innumerable multitude would this, in a few years, insensibly mount; affording infinite proportions, and variety of Fruit throughout the Nation, which now takes a Potion for a refreshment, and drinks its very Bread-corn.⁵⁸

Evelyn's statement about the populace drinking its bread-corn in the passage above, as well as his comment on "vanquishing Hopps" in the previous passage, reveal that part of his promotion of cider is in direct opposition to ale and beer. He considered hops, the herbal flavoring of beer relatively new at that time, as unhealthful, and beer as an uneconomic misuse of grain.⁵⁹ In addition to this objection to beer, Evelyn also emphasized the importance of producing and enjoying cider as a domestic product of equal or superior quality to imported wine, which could suffer either from adulteration by unscrupulous merchants or could simply become unavailable or expensive if trade with the continent was inhibited by political conflict.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 2.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 4.

Planting fruit trees was, in Evelyn's rhetoric, the equivalent of a public works project to maximize the use of resources and enhance the public health by improving the available materials, knowledge, and techniques for the production of cider. To this end, his *Pomona* was posited not only as a political or philosophical statement, but also as a how-to manual intended to apply a more scientific approach to production practices that were unreliable and could result in spoilage, waste, and distasteful products. Evelyn writes that the Royal Society has a role to play in promoting good practice, and thus increasing use of available fruit, reducing waste of failed products, and stabilizing the supply through judicious management of production between good harvests and bad:

But there are already more Persons better furnished with Fruit, then with Directions how to use it as they should; when in plentiful years so much Cider is impair'd by the ignorant handling, and becomes dead and sower, that many even surfeit with the Blessing; it being rarely seen in most Countries, that any remains good, to supply the defects of another year; and the Royal Society would prevent all this hazard by this free Anticipation.⁶⁰

Evelyn's preface to the practical works on grafting, planting, and fermentation that follow offers a framework for the importance of cider within larger discussions about agricultural improvement, public health, and economic growth during the politically volatile seventeenth century, when new, experimental approaches to running an estate were paralleled by experimental approaches to running the nation.

Within this framework, the meaning of the term "improvement" begins to become clearer. Dr. Vittoria Di Palma examines the rhetoric of improvement in the English consciousness during this period with further specificity about its application to the topics of orchards and cider. She emphasizes that "improvement" through the planting of orchards ultimately positioned "England as Eden":

⁶⁰ Ibid.

The widespread cultivation of apple trees would mean, in effect, recreating paradise in England, redeeming the country's sins, and populating it with moral, healthy, and wealthy denizens, drinking cider in their very own Elysium Britannicum. Not merely fit for Adam and Eve, or the heathen gods for that matter, through the discourse of improvement, cider was proclaimed the tipples of choice for the English citizen.⁶¹

Citing one of the earliest tracts during this era advocating the planting of fruit trees, a letter by Sir Richard Child written to Samuel Hartlib, Di Palma says:

...fruit tree cultivation and the production of fruit wines became central to the advancement of English husbandry. In the 1650s, Child's letter acted as a spur to other publications by members of Hartlib's circle; in the 1660s it was used as a blueprint for early scientific efforts to describe, understand, and exploit the English landscape by Fellows of the Royal Society. And although orchards and cider had only formed a small part of Child's enterprise, they soon became subjects of a plethora of specialized publications, recognizable components of the seventeenth century discourse of improvement.⁶²

The Enlightenment cider writings, which contributed so importantly to the early publications and concerns of the Royal society, gave way to further writings and projects by gentlemen farmers and naturalists in the 19th century which carried on the project of improvement.

At the local level in Herefordshire, a gentleman farmer named Thomas Andrew Knight took the project of improvement to heart, conducting plant breeding experiments at his estate and publishing *Treatise on the Culture of the Apple and Pear, and on the Manufacture of Cider and Perry*⁶³ in 1797 and the *Pomona Herefordiensis* in 1811.⁶⁴ Later, the Woolhope Naturalists Club was established in 1851, born out of interest in local geological discoveries, particularly around the Woolhope Dome, home to a Silurian geological feature and from which the society took its

⁶¹ Vittoria Di Palma, "Drinking Cider in Paradise: Science, Improvement, and the Politics of Fruit Trees," in *A Pleasing Sinne: Drink and Conviviality in Seventeenth-Century England*, ed. Adam Smyth (DS Brewer, 2004), 177.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 164.

⁶³ Thomas Andrew Knight, *A Treatise on the Culture of the Apple & Pear: And on the Manufacture of Cider & Perry* (H. Procter; sold in London by Longman and Rees ..., and J. White, 1801).

⁶⁴ Thomas Andrew Knight, *Pomona Herefordiensis: Containing Coloured Engravings of the Old Cider and Perry Fruits of Herefordshire. With Such New Fruits as Have Been Found to Possess Superior Excellence. Accompanied with a Descriptive Account of Each Variety* (Agricultural Society of Herefordshire, 1811).

name.⁶⁵ Wide interests in archeology, geology, biology, mycology, history, and local architecture characterized the group at its inception and still do so today.⁶⁶ The club gained national and international attention, however, for its ambitious project to collect, scientifically record, and publish a catalogue of apple varieties in the region, which they brought, along with samples of cider and perry, to a congress of apple growers in Rouen, France, the Seine-Inferieure Pomological Exhibition of 1884. The result, the *Herefordshire Pomona*, was a lavishly painted volume, more decorative than useful as a field manual, but still celebrated for its detail and accuracy.

French's Cyder Revival

For French, writing his revival in the late twentieth century, cider becomes a marker of quality in the production capacity of the rural farm economy, as well as a marker of social pride in the relevance of that economy. From his vantage point, at the end of a long period of capitalist economic development that led from very socially interdependent systems of agriculture to increasingly mechanized systems, French sees orchard cultivation and cider making as a way of restoring a sense of pride, excellence, and quality to land management. For him, the ideals of Enlightenment improvement represent an era when rational, scientific approaches to agriculture were in an ideal balance with the social interdependence and self-sufficiency of a well-run farm. Improvement, characterized by scientific experimentation and rationality, was applied to agriculture at a human scale during the Enlightenment, rather than an industrial scale, and it is this relationship between rationality and human scale production that

⁶⁵ David Whitehead and John Eisel, *A Herefordshire Miscellany : Commemorating 150 Years of the Woolhope Club* (Hereford, U.K.: Lapridge Publications, 2000).

⁶⁶ <http://www.woolhopeclub.org.uk/Default.shtml>

appeals to French as an ideal model of self-sufficiency that has suffered under industrial methods of production in the modern era.

Specifically he links the degradation of quality in cider to the social and material changes wrought by the industrial model of agricultural production. As the social hierarchies which constituted the class structure of the Enlightenment era began to give way to industrial capitalism, so too did the quality and importance of cider wane:

It was the landowner, with a choice of orchards and fruit, who experimented and kept the best for himself and his family. The production of cyder soon became a cottage industry, and the modest householder with a small orchard could still enjoy an excellent wine from his own land. But in the eighteenth century the industry was gradually taken over by the cider merchants who bought the fresh juice, not the final product, and practiced all manner of sophistications upon it to obtain as much of the final drink from as little of the juice as possible. By now, too, the farmer and the landowner had taken to giving his farmhands cyder as a part of their wages, and like the merchant he found it a satisfactory arrangement to keep the best of the cyder for himself dilute the rest to make it go further.⁶⁷

This rhetoric of the degeneration of traditional cyder as a product, concurrent with the degeneration of the social structures that constituted the pre-industrialized farm economy, creates a historical narrative of cider, and rural life, and thus England in general, as entities in decline. When cider is made well, it is part of the self-sufficiency of the farm estate, whether that estate is big or small, aristocratic or that of the humble yeoman farmer. It is only when it leaves the family table and becomes a means of currency, a way of paying laborers, or a commodity to be bought, sold, (and adulterated) by merchants that it signals decline in quality and cultural significance. In this sense, for French, cider becomes a symbol of enlightened self sufficiency, unpolluted by market economies, standing for the best kind of agricultural and social management that Enlightenment gentlemen sought to promote through their rhetoric of improvement. French's book is not only an opportunity for him to rewrite the history of cider,

⁶⁷ French, *The History and Virtues of Cyder*, 3–4.

but also an invitation to revive its production, and consequently restore some of the virtues of self-sufficiency, quality, and sociability to rural life. Introducing this potential project after his historical narrative, French explains:

This section is a plea for the revival of cyder and a description of how it should be made. In arguing for this revival the historical evidence for the old techniques is presented as a guide to modern practice [...] in creating a new orchard the ciderist is in the position of his seventeenth-century predecessor when English cyder was at its height [...] it is still worthwhile for anyone who lives where apples can grow to devote part of his land or garden, or to buy a plot, for the purpose of making his own cyder in the traditional (but not modern) way for the consumption of himself, his family and his friends. He will have the satisfaction of reviving a centuries-old practice and producing a natural, wine-strength drink, without additives and without the aid of a pre-packaged kit, of superb delicacy and flavor.⁶⁸

In a very real sense, French's book has been successful in its aims to inspire a cider revival, a revival of a craft tradition of a fine product, distinct from the very rough farmhouse scrumpy which he described as "made by isolated individuals in various villages in the West Country today, but invariably the product is at least half water. It is the survival of what the farmhands and household servants drank, but is in no sense cyder."⁶⁹ French influenced a generation of amateur and professional cider makers who came after him, especially in the Three Counties Region of Herefordshire, Worcestershire, and Gloucestershire where his own house and cider making projects were located.

Tom Oliver, maker of Oliver's Cider and Perry, was one of this new generation of craft cider makers in Herefordshire who not only read French's book but also became a personal friend. Oliver described how important French's approach to quality craft production was to him, and how he came to appreciate cider as something that could inspire finer sensations and insight, something that rose above a mere beverage that filled a space at the table to an art form which one could strive to perfect, sometimes littered with failed experiments along the way, as

⁶⁸ Ibid., 73.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 4.

even French's cider making was. Oliver pointed to French's book and his personal influence during an interview conducted at his home in Herefordshire in July of 2012:

Tom Oliver: I loved that book. And Roger - I bought the orchard at Hoarwithy. Was Roger's old orchard that I bought off of him. That's the orchard I should never have bought.

But I did it because he was - it turned out he was not long for this earth, as they say. And he'd been a big inspiration, visiting him at Checkley and going down to his cellar beneath the kitchen that he had dug out. And you'd have to wear your wellingtons, and there'd be no electric there because it would be a foot deep in water.

And he'd have all these bottles. He'd recycle all his bottles, so he'd have them in a wine rack, with a cork and a wire on but not a proper wire, one he'd made up himself. Some bottles had exploded. Some bottles were horrible - they'd not stayed intact. But every so often he'd pull out one and it would be the most wonderful naturally conditioned cider.

I had a Kingston Black from his cellar, and that was the pivotal moment for me. I then realized that you could make extraordinary heady alcoholic apple ciders. And they were, they were... They were just a great trip, they were a great journey.

Drinking this one, I just knew at the time, I just knew that this was great. It was everything that modern drinks aren't. Modern drinks, the best they ever are, is your first sip.⁷⁰

Roger French's love affair with the enlightenment cider writers such as John Evelyn, and Tom Oliver's inspiration via Roger French, bring the Enlightenment paradigm of rationality and self-sufficiency, and artisanal quality forward into our poetic of orchards and cider. Craft cider, skillfully made, is the ultimate improvement of the materials of the landscape, one that transforms not only the materials at hand, but also man's senses and social sphere.

French's call for revival of cider making in the spirit of Enlightenment values of improvement suggests an interrogation of our own discourses of self-sufficiency and sustainability today. Today, the competing forces of the environmental conservation movement

⁷⁰ Tom Oliver, interview by Maria Kennedy, July 17, 2012.

and industrial agriculture can both trace their roots back to the same enlightenment imperative of scientific rationalism in agriculture. However, French's emphasis on self-sufficiency and human-scale rather than industrial production, shows how an alternative rhetorical framing of rationalist discourse can challenge what is often seen as the prevailing and natural outcome of the Enlightenment improvement project: the modern industrial approach to farming. Several centuries into the modern experiment with the scientific method as an organizing ideological principle in Western thought, cracks and contradictions in scientific rationalism and its effects on economic, industrial, and social institutions are still subjects of social critique. Orchards have proven to be a powerful vehicle in which to review, replay, and re-imagine this history and ideology, and Roger French's book can be seen as one such critique. In the following book, *Cider, the Forgotten Miracle*, by James Crowden, we will see this critique of rationalism as industrialism renewed, and the Enlightenment rhetoric of improvement revived again, but with an added emphasis on the themes of physical labor and a renewal of the poetic of sensory experience that emerged in *Cider with Rosie*.

Working Scripts:

James Crowden's *Cider the Forgotten Miracle*: Poetics of Romanticism and Labor

James Crowden's book, *Cider the Forgotten Miracle*, was one of my own first windows into the world of orchards and cider. It was amongst other books about apples in the sitting room of the old Georgian farmhouse at Goren Farm where I was a farm volunteer with World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms in the summer of 2004, deep in the countryside of the Blackdown Hills in Devon. I had been spending my days at the farm mostly working in the walled vegetable garden, weeding, and occasionally helping with the sheep that grazed the

derelict orchards surrounding the farmhouse, a farmhouse that had almost been condemned due to its state of disrepair.

The farm, left to decay in under the ownership of an elderly man, had been purchased by Julian Pady, younger cousin of the elderly owner. Julian, a widely travelled engineer in the oil industry, decided to return and rescue the family property. Julian began to fix up the house, making wildflower hay from the unimproved and ecologically diverse meadows, raising a small flock of sheep and Red Devon cattle, and replanting old varieties of apple trees in the orchards next to the house. Julian also made a small quantity of cider in the old cider shed at the end of the barn where the massive oak screw press slept most of the year. Chairs discarded from polite company in the sitting room came to rest here. Their ripped upholstery became an easy material to recline on after dirty work in the garden, while sipping a glass of sharp scrumpy tapped from one of the looming dusty barrels.

This place, Goren Farm, was where I first read about the history of cider, and no more appropriate place could there have been, for it had all the trappings of rural life that the poetic of cider conjures up. It had the derelict farm, inhabited by the elderly Ken, a slightly eccentric old man, from whose past drifted tantalizing suggestions of both tragedy and rich local history. Ken Pady was mostly silent as he spent his days cutting logs to sell for firewood before retiring to his bare kitchen, where he listened to the radio and fed the cats who waited urgently for his return. And there was Julian too, the slightly less mad and more practical younger cousin, who was trying to wrest the place into profitability, productivity, sustainability, and livability. He told me he knew he had to get hot water into the place before he could imagine he'd be able to convince a girlfriend to live there. It was here, in the eastern corner of Devon just a few miles away from

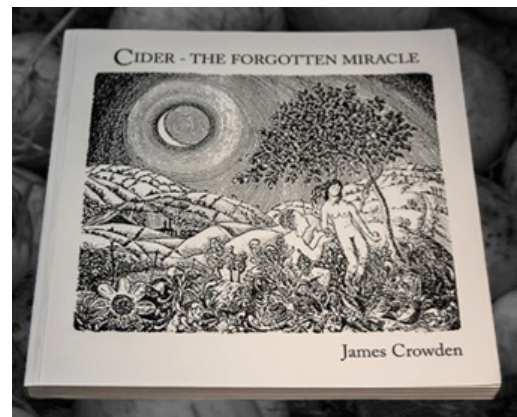
the boundary with the counties of Somerset and Dorset, that I sat down to read the opening paragraph of *Cider the Forgotten Miracle*:

Somerset Cider is without doubt some of the finest in the world. Here on the small farms that surround the Somerset Levels and Moors, the art of cider making has the status of an ancient religion, where superstition and belief are inextricably entwined with the landscape of myth and legend, as if the fermentation was regarded with veneration, like some kind of miracle, which in a sense it is. As if in the dark of the cider house itself, they were in touch with invisible forces, only half tamed, another world dimly perceived, as if there were some kind of process at work beneath the skin, not just of the farmer, but of the apple itself.⁷¹

Crowden's elegy to cider distilled the nebulous associations I had sensed about my rural, agricultural surroundings into one particular aspect of them: the cider, the orchards, and the cider cellar. Other cider makers I came to know through my studies agreed that Crowden somehow got it just right.

My own encounter with Crowden's book happened years before I began to research cider and orchards in earnest, but once they become subjects of interest to me, I began to notice the book on the shelves of the cider makers I encountered, like Mike Johnson and Tom Oliver. With his book in hand, I ventured down from my research home at Broome Farm in Herefordshire to the West Country, stopping to visit Crowden himself at his home in Winsham, Somerset, to speak with him about his experiences in the cider house at Burrow Hill, and his approach to writing.

James Crowden wrote *Cider the Forgotten Miracle* after working at Burrow Hill Cider Company in Somerset for twelve seasons. Now a working as a writer full time, his experiences working on the landscape and traveling in societies where people still



⁷¹ Crowden, *Cider - the Forgotten Miracle*, xiii.

lived close to the land have influenced his writing. Crowden was born in Plymouth, raised near Dartmoor, and served in the army in Cyprus, travelling throughout the Middle East and Central Asia. On returning to the UK, he earned a degree in civil engineering and studied ethnology at Oxford, but he decided to return to the West Country to work on the land. As his biography on his website describes, Crowden's interest in the work of the countryside was not merely a passing one, but something to which he devoted a good portion of his working years: "For twenty years James worked in North Dorset and South Somerset as a shepherd, sheep shearer, cider maker and forester. The choice of manual work was deliberate and gave him a deeper understanding of the landscape."⁷² *Cider the Forgotten Miracle* grew directly out of the work he had known intimately, as he told me during an interview at his home in Somerset:

I had stopped working for Julian - I was too busy doing other things. I thought, well I'd been working for him, not for twelve years but for twelve seasons. And I'd done the sheep shearing there, and I'd heard so many cider stories over the years, thought, well if I am going to stop working here, I might as well write it down.⁷³

The stories he wrote down included histories of cider making - from the innovations of bottle-conditioned sparkling cider to distilling – that focus on the deep roots of the craft and its political and social contexts. But the book begins and ends with work. The first sentence of the first chapter reads:

When you go to work at the cider farm, the main thing to do is to take enough clothing, for it can be pretty nippy on a winter's morning, as well as wellingtons, packed lunch and a woolly hat to stop the apple juice from getting in your hair or down the back of your neck.⁷⁴

The celebration of work, the romantization of labor, defines Crowden's work and his life. When I went met Crowden at his home in Winsham, a small village near the border of Somerset and

⁷² "James Crowden," <http://james-crowden.co.uk/>.

⁷³ James Crowden, interview by Maria Kennedy, December 10, 2012.

⁷⁴ Crowden, *Cider - the Forgotten Miracle*, 3.

Dorest, he apologized for this as being a “working farmhouse,” and indeed it had the feel of a jumble of useful things, things appreciated for their ingenious and practical design, as well as for their antiquity or curiosity. These fascinating objects – a mixture of English and foreign antique tools, old books jumbled together - included jars of preserves in the kitchen beside fine Japanese teacups, and an old radio. Rather than being displayed, these objects were ready at hand to be used, even if it took him a minute to find a particular thing. At one point, Crowden rose from the table where I had my recorder set up and vanished into another room, coming back with several old volumes that we had been talking of, which he happened to have in early editions.

James Crowden was, unsurprisingly, as one would infer from the many quotations from early cider writers in *Cider the Forgotten Miracle*, not only a reader but a collector of old books on cider, an heir to the legacy Roger French had left as an historian of cider. The book he was so eager to show me was a 1738 edition of *Cyder, A Poem* by John Phillips, a long disquisition on the merits and methods of orchard cultivation and cider making in the style of Virgil’s *Georgics*.⁷⁵ Not only was the book remarkable for its antiquity, but also for its provenance. It had once been owned, as evidenced by the signature on the leaf, by Msr. Gaymer, a titan of the cider industry whose business, now owned by the enormous C&C group which also owns Magners Cider, still bears his name. *Cider the Forgotten Miracle* is full of allusions to the early writers on cider, not only in its textual quotations, but also in its design, adorned with woodcuts and printed in fonts which echo the visual styles of the earlier cider books of the 17th and 18th centuries.

The way Crowden describes making and drinking cider captures not only the details of production and its history, as French’s book had already done, but also the mood of cider and its

⁷⁵ John Philips, *Cider a Poem in Two Books* (London Printed by G. Stafford for T. Cadell, 1791), <http://archive.org/details/ciderapoemintwo00philgoog>.

society, of the men who made it, the physicality of its making, and the politics of its value.

Whereas Roger French wrote of cider in terms of historical golden ages, James Crowden writes of the history of cider in mode that signals religion, myth, and legend. He writes:

Good cider farms are worshipped for many miles and in the autumn the faithful congregation hone in on the barn as if it were a wayside chapel or a place of pilgrimage. They inspect the sacrificial altar carefully and watch every move, just to get a bit of the action [...] Oak barrels are admired and touched just to make sure that they are not a mirage, some figment of their imagination, or worse still plastic. The names of certain apples and orchards are revered, and repeated like a mantra, the cider tested, held up to the light, sipped, run round the mouth, the palate tickled, downed, admired. Glasses and gossip are topped up, barrels tapped, and the order made. Communion with the Apple God.⁷⁶

His romanticism is visceral, sometimes politically radical, deeply invested in the bodily experience of physical labor while reverent towards the writings of the Enlightenment and Victorian gentlemen whose experiments enriched their orchards and set the standard for quality production of the nation's own indigenous wine. Crowden's romanticism is both self-aware of its occasional indulgences in hyperbolic rhetoric but also unapologetic for them. In fact, his hyperbolic rhetoric and elaborate phrasing suggest a stylistic echo of the enlightenment writers he admires. On the facing page of the quotation above, quotations from earlier cider writers introduce the theme of the chapter. From John Worlidge, contemporary of John Evelyn and contributor to his *Pomona*, Crowden borrows this passage written in 1678, "Yet this Wine, i.e. Cyder, being that which incites some to speak too much, will I hope beg my excuse and speak for itself. It being one of the best and most advantageous pieces of improvement of our Country farms yet known." And from William Marshall, writing in 1796, Crowden includes this sentence, "Their Orchards might well be styled their Temples, and Apple Trees their Idols of Worship."⁷⁷ Whereas French's revivalist spirit focused on the rhetoric of improvement that saw

⁷⁶ Crowden, *Cider - the Forgotten Miracle*, xiii.

⁷⁷ Ibid., xii.

cider as a rational, productive agricultural and social advancement bettering the nation, Crowden's homage to the cider writers emphasizes the feeling, the spirit, the muscle, the less rational, more primitive soul of cider. While both authors romanticize the story of cider, French romanticizes a rationalist version of its history, writing his revival as a cider of the mind. Crowden, meanwhile, romanticizes a cider of the body and the soul, cider as labor, love, desire, religion, power, and money. If French's cider is the cider of super-ego, Crowden's is the cider of the id.

Crowden sees nostalgia and pragmatism as possible co-conspirators in the work of conserving and renewing the orchard landscape. He engages the craft production of cider in terms of human labor. And he celebrates the cider house itself, where the community of workers gather. This community defies nostalgia as lonely contemplation. The cider house is where workers and neighbors co-create the idea of Ciderland as an imagined geography made real through their labor. And it is in cider houses and cellars where the communal practice of cider making and cider drinking creates an alternative to the world of capitalist production. In his book, he says:

But cider is more than just farm produce. In the West Country good stories are, however, prized as much as the cider itself but the old cider houses or cider clubs are now a rarity. It was here that stories were enriched and embellished, business was done, and in some areas these had the status of a village parliament [...] These cider houses varied, some were like pubs but others were either sheds or barns filled with tatty armchairs or the sitting rooms or even farm kitchens. I remember one at Nempnet Thrubwell run by two old ladies, and very popular it was too. There was not sign up or anything, you just knocked in the back door. They were direct links with the land without any interfering middlemen or health inspectors, or personnel in suits carrying briefcases full of regulations.⁷⁸

Crowden continued to describe the importance of the cider house during our interview, saying:

In Dorset [...] the tradition of hillbilly cider making has sort of survived there, because nobody has bothered to turn it into a business. One or two are now. But

⁷⁸ Ibid, xv.

the sort of cider clubs, barn drinking, ironically have fared better in Dorset than it has in Somerset.

There were a lot of sort of cider houses which were either sometimes just two old ladies - there was no sign up you would just sort of knock on a certain door and get let in and you could have a bit of cider [...] and there are one or two, but It's normally very localized and you have to be in with that particular farmer.

But in Dorset there are quite a lot of cider clubs. It's almost like a revolutionary activity, like walking 200 years ago. It's an anti-establishment thing, yes. There has definitely been a recent resurgence, definitely in the last 20 years, definitely in the last 10 years.

The number of people, small scale, making cider is very impressive, and people replanting orchards, that is very good.⁷⁹

The cider house as the center of communal, anti-establishment creativity for those working and living close to the land is a central theme of the cider poetic and a lived reality among the cider makers I came to know throughout this study. For Crowden, the communal creativity of the cider house is also evidence of the living tradition of cider making that is cultural heritage that stays alive on the landscape through work, not through preservation in a museum.

Crowden's idea of cider as heritage is not comfortable in a museum – it defies objectification or reduction to display and embodies a living tradition of work. He describes the cider house at work in the midst of Autumn as an antithesis to the museum, even though the people who come to watch it might first approach it as they would a museum exhibit. The cider house is where work is being done, not merely for display, but as an integrated part of commercial and community life:

This is where the cheeses are built and the two hydraulic presses live. This is the front line, the factory floor. This is where the hard work takes place. This is where goats and sheep, men and boys are sorted out, for it requires not just skill but enormous stamina. This is the bit that people are fascinated by, they come for miles to watch. Maybe it is a rare sight to see men working physically any more,

⁷⁹ Crowden, interview.

anyway what may appear to be a ‘museum’ is the real thing, and it is highly efficient. In fact it is a marvel of human and mechanical engineering.⁸⁰

James Crowden’s cider shed resists museumification, but there is no doubt that for him, and for those other working craft cider makers whom I came to know during this research, display practices in the context of heritage are an essential part of both performing a kind of identity that promotes local pride and community solidarity, as well promoting their product to tourists and vendors further afield, for whom the keywords, ‘local’, ‘natural’, and ‘traditional’ have become clarion calls for high quality or ethical consumer choices. In Crowden’s world, cider and orchards, though they are sites full of mystery, sometimes supernatural, sometimes historical, sometimes folkloric, are always sites of activity and work, which is what keeps them from descending into the realm of the museum, without an independent productive purpose.

It turns out that work, physical labor, is also at the root of his writing, and the genesis of *Cider the Forgotten Miracle* itself, born from the stories told during long repetitive hours of labor. This theme can also be seen in his volume of poetry, *Blood, Earth, and Medicine: A Year in the Life of a Casual Agricultural Labourer*. Turning to his poetry allows us to see his motivations about the nature of agricultural work, of which cider making and orcharding are perhaps the spiritual zenith. In the introduction to the volume of poetry, he explains:

What interested me was the work and the way in which it influenced people’s lives and their thinking. Farming has changed out of all proportion in the last 40 years, and mechanization, although leading to greater efficiency, has taken a fair chunk out of people’s knowledge and intuition. The residue of eight thousand years of farming I decided did not lie so much in a tractor manual as in the unspoken attitudes of certain shepherds and casual laborers, who perhaps more than any other group represent the patterns of agriculture before the Enclosure Acts. These combined with incomers and second homes have done more to change village structure than the Norman Conquest.⁸¹

⁸⁰ Crowden, *Cider - the Forgotten Miracle*, 27.

⁸¹ James Crowden, *Blood, Earth and Medicine: A Year in the Life of a Casual Agricultural Labourer* (Parrett, 1991), 8–9.

Crowden's attitude, however, about what, where, and with whom cultural knowledge about the agriculture and rural life reside clearly resonates with earlier writers on social history.

Writers of the mid twentieth century such as George Ewart Evans sought to record through oral history the lives of agricultural labourers as bearers of an almost lost source of knowledge about life and work in a pre-mechanized world. George Ewart Evans's *Ask the Fellows Who Cut the Hay* is perhaps the most notable work in oral history of this kind. He emphasized the importance of knowing and recording the lives of agricultural workers, many of whom, at the time of his writing in the 1950s, were the last generation that could remember and comment on the social structures and agricultural techniques of pre-mechanized farming systems in Britain. Evans says:

It is probably that when the history of the countryside in the twentieth century comes to be written, the revolution in agriculture, particularly the application to it of the internal combustion engine, will be considered the chief agent in the final break-up of the old community. Farming, moreover, has until recent years contained vestiges both in implements and vocabulary, and more rarely in actual farming practices, of the old rural way of life that has its roots in a past far beyond the longest memory of man.⁸²

Evans and Crowden both share a highly romanticized attitude about the agricultural laborer as the bearer of a certain kind of knowledge of British social, cultural, and technological life, and in drawing the distinguishing line separating modernity from the ways of life known before at the point of agricultural mechanization, also clearly identify this group as the kind of "folk" identity that contrasts most sharply with the modern, cosmopolitan, industrialized social life we know today.

However, by identifying the agricultural laborer as a folk identity, a nostalgia for the class system and its relational power is also maintained, where social needs, cultural values, and

⁸² George Evans, *Ask the Fellows Who Cut the Hay* : By George Ewart Evans, 2d ed. (London: Faber and Faber, 1962).

material resources could be negotiated through the more personal interactions that governed social intercourse, rather than what comes to be seen as the impersonal, bureaucratic machinations of civil democracy. The romanticism attached to the agricultural laborer is thus contradictory, both politically radical and socially conservative, pulling us towards ideologies that are unrealistic and perhaps mutually exclusive. On the one hand, socialist radicalism sees him as a laboring everyman deserving of recognition and representation as a bedrock of culture rooted in its processes of production. On the other hand, conservative nostalgia locates him in a mutually dependent social hierarchy which operates through personal relationships and social bonds that are supposedly stronger than passing economic or political episodes. We will further investigate the nature and consequences of identifying the agricultural laborer as a folk identity and source of cultural heritage in chapter two. For now, it is important to recognize it as a recurring theme or trope in the cider poetic, one which recognizes agricultural laborers, sometimes called “old boys,” as important figures in maintaining the traditions of the countryside, people who have access to ancient and threatened knowledge of rural life.

Labor itself becomes for Crowden a vehicle for narrative, a way in which one can come to know a lifestyle, an environment, a social economy, and the people who inhabit it. From within this work, a kind of expressive life springs forth. Crowden, through his poetry and prose, has attempted to unlock the expressive character of the rural world of which cider is a material art form. When I asked him about the style of his writing in *Cider the Forgotten Miracle*, whether it was intentionally circular, if it was supposed to replicate the kind of conversation I had often experienced in the cider cellar at Broome Farm, he laughed a bit, putting his writing in the context of the time he had spent working at Burrow Hill Cider:

James Crowden: I just wrote it as you would say a story. It wasn't laid out like you know, chapter one...in fact I bunged in the “Sparkling” chapter at the last minute because I was discovering things as the presses were rolling.

Maria Kennedy: But even outside the structure of the whole book, inside the little chapter, it kind of spirals aroundcoming back to the...

James Crowden: That’s just story-telling you see. That’s how I do talks, it is less boring than doing it in the conventional way.

Maria Kennedy: As I was rereading it the other night, I was like, oh I feel like I'm in the cellar right now, Mike's cellar

James Crowden: Yes, well it was, it came out of that, because when you're [...] Yes, well, we would talk - it’s a very boring thing, making cider, particularly when you are building cheeses the whole time, so you have to talk. And I was working with a particular man called Pigeon, and several others.

Maria Kennedy: I've met him.⁸³

James Crowden: You've met him. Oh well, he's once met, never forgotten. [...] So I worked for many years with Pigeon, telling stories. So Pigeon would never really do an honest day's work, but he'd tell a very good story on the way. So the story telling is as important as the cider, you see. So there we are.⁸⁴

Stories originate in work for Crowden, and some of the virtues of cider are in the way it, alone amongst many dead and dying occupations of the countryside, still has the possibility to engage the person and his or her body in physical labor, both in the orchard and in the pressing room.

In some ways, for Crowden, the cider writings of the 17th and 18th centuries represent the golden age of cider, for it was during this time that the work of orcharding and cider making was most profoundly theorized and expressed. During the long decline ever since this era, according to Crowden, cider slowly became not the object of considered speculation on efficient and clever labor – akin to science – but rather the fuel to labor. When aristocratic sensibilities turned again to wine after the Napoleonic wars, cider became a part of the truck system, where agricultural

⁸³ My own encounter with Pigeon, in fact was quite colorful. Pigeon was a man who relished self-consciously constructing an eccentric personality, an interpretation I mused on as he explained to me the origin of his name, derived from an incident when he had bitten the head off of a Pigeon.

⁸⁴ Crowden, interview.

laborers where paid in kind rather than cash. Cider became the drink that fueled men in the fields. And now, it is no longer even that. Crowden's book, essentially an extended reverie on the labor of cider, brings us back full circle to meditations on the labor of cider itself, cider for its own sake, much like the writings of his Enlightenment era predecessors. Crowden writes to remind us of why such labor matters, of why the process is as important to meditate upon as the product.

I repeat part of the quote I included earlier, to emphasize his attention to process as the essential element of the romanticism and mystery of cider, the vehicle through which "another world dimly perceived" can be accessed: "As if in the dark of the cider house itself, they were in touch with invisible forces, only half tamed, another world dimly perceived, as if there were some kind of process at work beneath the skin, not just of the farmer, but of the apple itself." Crowden's characterization of cider weaves together these several strands of reference and rhetoric – nostalgia, social and political radicalism, the realism and romanticism of labor.

While the romanticism and nostalgia of *Cider With Rosie* was predicated on a language of sensory experience and themes of childhood, James Crowden's work in *Cider the Forgotten Miracle* and his other works focuses on a romanticism of labor that emphasizes craft, artistry, and community based in work on the land. The senses are heightened here, but they are the senses of bodies and landscapes at work. Even the apple itself has work to do in the orchard. In the next section, it is the work of the orchard itself in an ecological and agricultural sense that rises as a theme of the cider poetic.

Conservation Scripts:

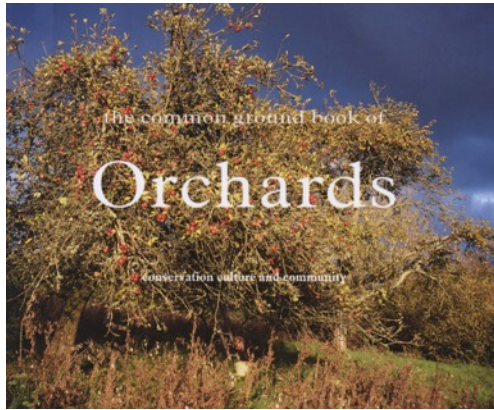
The Common Ground Book of Orchards: Poetics of Ecology and Community

The West Country that is home to James Crowden's cider experiences is also home to one of the most influential activist groups promoting the cause of orchard conservation, Common Ground. Based in Dorset, the county neighboring Somerset and Devon, Common Ground was founded in 1983 by environmentalists Angela King, Sue Clifford, and Roger Deakin. *The Common Ground Book of Orchards*, published in 2000, and their earlier, smaller handbook, *Orchards: A Guide to Local Conservation*, published in 1989, highlight the importance of orchards as landscapes worth saving, landscapes which contribute to Common Ground's special interest in what they call "local distinctiveness." Common Ground and James Crowden have worked together to promote the appreciation of orchards and cider in the West Country. In 1999, the year that Crowden published *Cider the Forgotten Miracle*, Common Ground named him Poet Laureate for Apple Day. Together, James Crowden and Common Ground share an ethic that orchards and cider, and rural landscapes in general, can be conserved through projects that intertwine the stories, art, and cultural experience of place with the material and scientific management of landscape resources.

While the books introduced thus far have focused specifically on cider, Common Ground's focus on orchards in general, whether or not they produce cider, broadens the scope of the cider poetic. Cider orchards represent a particular form of horticultural husbandry distinct from growing fruit for the table and have a history in the countryside all their own. While fruit that is grown for the table can be used for cider, fruit that is grown specifically for cider is not suitable for use as table fruit. The trees are managed differently, and the orchards therefore are quite different in their form. While modern table fruit is grown on closely spaced trees which are often trellised to maximize the size of the fruit and the productivity of the trees, cider apples are

grown on larger trees, and the fruit is allowed to drop to the ground where it is harvested by picking it up either by hand or with mechanical harvesters. Even though the size of modern cider apple trees has gradually shrunk to accommodate more mechanical harvesting, older “traditional” orchards contained large trees that could grow to a height of twenty to forty feet. These trees were intended to accommodate livestock grazing, or even the growing of other crops like potatoes, underneath the mature trees. Common Ground does not necessarily privilege the cider orchard above other orchards. It celebrates cherry, damson, plum, and nut orchards as well. But through their writing, they highlight the diversity of orchards and the uniqueness of individual types. Common Ground encourages its readers to think about the structure and uses of orchards in the landscape, and to preserve the heritage that orchards contain as repositories of wildlife, horticultural and culinary material, and as social places.

The Common Ground Book of Orchards contributes a vocabulary of environmental conservation to the cider poetic, an idea of orchards as places structured by both natural and human processes. Common Ground published an array of books, essays, and pamphlets, including *The Apple Source Book*, *England in Particular*, and *Holding Your Ground: An Action Guide to Local Conservation*. Their approach to conservation is markedly different from purely ecological, cultural, or historical approaches, instead insisting on their interdependence. Rather than preservation of fixed landscapes, ecologies, or cultural forms oriented to specific historical times, they emphasize continuing personal and community engagement with these resources at the local level, advocating for dynamic and changing cultural uses of these resources in ways that preserve individual engagement, community action, and ecological diversity.



If Roger French advocated revival, and James Crowden emphasized a living tradition of labor, Common Ground's books propose an activist stance. They are manuals for conservation at the local level. Common Ground's emphasis on orchards as sites of community and conservation helped broaden the appeal

and understanding of orchards as meaningful and emblematic landscapes. They increased awareness of rare apple varieties for both cider and table fruit, as well as emphasizing the orchard as a site for ecological conservation, biodiversity, community history, and social action. They recognize conservation as both scientific and cultural, informed by specialist and vernacular knowledge:

The knowledge of scientists is different from vernacular understanding. We need both. Particularly we need to value and keep wisdom practiced in its place. Indigenous knowledge, intangible benefits, subjective perceptions, emotional attachments and expressions of value need other languages and other champions.⁸⁵

This eclectic and open approach to conservation also characterizes Common Ground's anti-institutional stance. For a highly influential organization, whose efforts at instituting "Apple Day"⁸⁶ as a new calendar custom have resulted in many independent celebrations in villages and towns across England, it never sought to formalize its structure or pursue a mission of growth. As they say in the appendix to the *Common Ground Book of Orchards*:

⁸⁵ Common Ground (Organization), *The Common Ground Book of Orchards*, 2000, 12–13.

⁸⁶ "Apple Day, 21 October, was launched in 1990. From the start, it was intended to be both a celebration and a demonstration of the variety we are in danger of losing – not simply in apples, but richness and diversity of landscape, place, and culture too [...] Apple Day is now an integral part of the events calendar of many villages, local authorities, city markets and the National Trust. It is a focus of activities organized by the Women's Institute (WI), the Wildlife Trusts, museums, art galleries and many horticultural societies, as well as for schools, colleges and environmental study centers. The first Apple Day celebrations, in the old Apple Market in London's Covent Garden, brought fruit to the market after a 16 years' absence." (Common Ground, 2000:123)

We seek no members and create no structures. Through collaborations we build links between organizations and disciplines, local people and professionals. We act as a catalyst and mentor; by broadcasting ideas and demonstrating by example we try to extend the constituencies for conservation and create foundations for real democracy.⁸⁷

Acting outside of the norm of Britain's highly structured environmental organizations, both private and governmental, within which the founders had previously worked professionally, Common Ground's rhetoric of anti-institutionalism is unique. But it also speaks to another theme found elsewhere in the cider poetic: rebellion, individualism, even anarchy, but not as ends in themselves. This anti-institutionalism speaks to a deeper interest in community, as built through interactive, rather than institutional processes. This sense of community is described through their core idea, *local distinctiveness*.

Early in *The Common Ground Book of Orchards*, the authors describe their central idea of local distinctiveness. It is worth quoting their words at length, for their explicit manifesto of their founding principles of conservation, and the application of these to orchards in particular, is significant not only in the context of this study's interest in orchard conservation and craft cider, but in understanding the impact Common Ground had on local conservation movements in general throughout England in the three decades of their activity:

Importantly, it [local distinctiveness] focuses on locality, not region or country or city. It is about accumulations not about one moment in history, about constant dynamism not preservation. It includes the invisible as well as the physical – symbols, festivals, legends may be as important as hedgerows, hills, and houses [...] The significance of a place lingers in the stories and resonances the place holds for those who knew it and loved it. Many of these will be personal, but many will be shared. Identity is bound up with affection for or alienation from everyday knowledge and the popular understanding of features of the ritual of festivals. The commonplace defines identity – locally abundant plants, specific building techniques, seasonal recipes. Traditional orchards can continue to provide an important bank of fruits and knowledge for a time when local produce

⁸⁷ Common Ground (Organization), *The Common Ground Book of Orchards*, 2000, 189.

and varieties may be valued in new contexts. They maintain identity and authenticity, and keep intricate local expertise and cultural connections alive.⁸⁸

Common Ground's theoretical approach to conservation has also suggested the theoretical grounding of my approach to this study – their focus on dynamic cultural processes which interweave the cultural and ecological conservation suggests the idea of the heritage palimpsest proposed by Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett that I referenced in the introduction:

Landmarking, historic recreation, and cultural conservation are instruments with a history. They leave their own traces on the sites they mark as heritage. When one site is landmarked repeatedly, each time for a different reason, and used for different purposes, even at one point in time, the result is a heritage palimpsest.⁸⁹

The heritage palimpsest suggests that different kinds of conservation activity, from multiple times and perspectives, can converge on a particular space, leaving distinct resonance on the meaning of that place. Open for multiple interpretations, approached from many directions, the heritage palimpsest of a continually landmarked place is rich for many kinds of social interaction. Common Ground has applied this approach in their conservation projects in ways that move cultural critique out of the realm of scholarship and into popular, local practice. Their theory of local distinctiveness, and the ways in which it is enacted and manifested, provides a framework not only for other organizations and individuals to enact their own movements and conservation efforts⁹⁰, but also suggests a way for us to comprehend how the resonances of orchard conservation and craft cider that I have begun to outline through this chapter's exegesis of literary texts are mobilized and activated in other cultural performances as well.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 14–15.

⁸⁹ Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture*, 56.

⁹⁰ Throughout my fieldwork, I encountered many people who pointed to Common Ground as an inspiration for their own conservation projects and efforts. Notably, I spoke at length with Sue Copper, Director of Caring for God's Acre, a churchyard conservation charity, and Peter Carty of the National Trust, and members of the Colwall Orchard Group. It is difficult to document in this project alone, with its specific focus on orchards, but the larger influence of Common Ground on local and community conservation efforts in England deserves its own study. For further reading on the influence of Common Ground see: David Crouch and David Matless, "Refiguring Geography: Parish Maps of Common Ground," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 21, no. 1 (January 1, 1996): 236–55.

Common Ground, rather uniquely among conservation organizations in Britain, highlights the actors and actions of conservation, more than the objects of conservation. For it is not the objects of conservation - the trees or orchards - which are of primary interest. Rather it is their place in a network of objects, actors, communities, skills, and meanings which gives them value. As a document bringing together their many smaller projects aimed at orchard conservation, *The Common Ground Book of Orchards* exemplifies their dynamic and un-totalizing approach to conservation. Divided into thematic chapters including “Local Distinctiveness,” “Community Orchards,” “Planting New Orchards,” “Sharing with Nature,” and “Apple Day,” just to name a few, the prose is lyrical, sometimes meandering, offering a cornucopia of information and examples of projects. It is the sort of book one can dip in and out of, foraging for nuggets of relevant ideas and facts. Its suggestion is that the book could always add more information, that it remains unfinished, inviting the reader to conceive and carry out his or her own project to add to the compendium.

Within this approach to local distinctiveness, though, orchards and apples have gained currency as a symbol of both the national and the local, things common enough to have been incorporated into the unique landscape fabric of many different regions and localities, and yet unique enough to have regional and local particularity. *The Common Ground Book of Orchards* opens with a description of the regional diversity orchard types:

In Cumbria, damson trees keep company with stone walls, in Shropshire they march along hedgerows, as do cherries in some parts of Norfolk. Giant cherry trees 18 metres high, gather in (the few remaining) orchards along the north coast of Kent, whilst further south into the Weald squat cobnut plats pick out the ragstone soils of the greensand ridge. Hereford, Somerset, and Devon are counties renowned for their cider apple trees, Gloucestershire for its many kinds of perry pears.⁹¹

⁹¹ Common Ground (Organization), *The Common Ground Book of Orchards*, 2000, 11.

This geographical diversity fractures a totalizing approach to rural identity that may have characterized the nostalgic and generic rural idyll which developed in reaction to the massive industrialization and urbanization of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. And this fragmentation signals a space where personal histories and experience can begin to creep in between the cracks of more object-oriented approaches to heritage where the past was more clearly defined, the present so ordered by its archive of historical objects, and the future so clearly mapped by an ideology of progress and modernity.

This is not to say that orchard conservation projects, in practice, have not turned to the traditional methods and tools of producing heritage – those object-oriented, historically bounded efforts to capture, display, and perform a particular slice of history. This certainly has been the case, and the remainder of this study will examine some of these heritage activities and analyze the ways in which their rhetorical uses of these heritage tools create and display identity-forming visions of the character of modern life using the materials of the past. Like folk songs, orchards have spoken to the modernist urge to objectify, collect, map, and catalogue. These conservationist activities still occur, and are still useful. But orchards also demand care and cultivation.

James Crowden, who has worked closely with Common Ground on several projects connecting school children with orchards through poetry, described cider to me as “revolutionary” and “anarchic.” He sees the way that people organize themselves around cider and orchards as a way of stepping outside of institutional authorities of various kinds. As his words on the importance of the cider house as a community venue showed in the previous section, he sees the cider making that thrived there not only as a continuing tradition of old practices, but as a way of socializing that marks out a commons. He sees cider making as a way

of thwarting government taxation and undercutting the capitalist machinations of large breweries, who have gradually come to control the availability and price of cider available commercially through their control of retail markets in pubs. Likewise, the custom of twelfth night wassailing in the orchard is a wild night of partying that thumbs noses at religious authority and local class elites. Crowden sees orchards, and the practice of cider making in particular, as places where local group activity can exert its own strength and autonomy in the face of national and global forces. His vocabulary of anarchy and revolution are stronger than Common Ground's emphasis on "local distinctiveness," but both rhetorics affirm the importance of orchards as a commons.

I would like to suggest that the emergence of the notion of local distinctiveness from Common Ground signals an active popular critique and experiment in cultural revival in the context of landscape conservation. Folklorist Mary Hufford has pointed to the importance of activist movements like Common Ground, which bring together the multiple kinds of cultural and natural resources that have been arbitrarily separated in civil society:

A central task of cultural conservation is to discover the full range of resources people use to construct and sustain their cultures. Knowledge of the sort might be applied in supporting local groups as they manage environmental change and in planning for the full range of governmentally sponsored services that affect the education, health, and general welfare of a culturally diverse population.⁹²

Participants in Common Ground's orchard conservation projects are aware of the fragmentation and decomposition of geographical and national identity. Orchards, as agricultural landscapes, speak to this new geography of local distinctiveness and environmental ambiguity. I argue that in the case of orchard conservation and craft cider in particular, sensory and embodied experiences of the landscape become increasingly important as ways in which people connect to conservation as a social and experiential activity. The contribution of Common Ground to the

⁹² Mary Hufford, *Conserving Culture : A New Discourse on Heritage* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 4.

cider poetic is an increased vocabulary for connecting the romantic themes of the senses and labor with knowledge of landscape history and ecology in an activist stance that poses these resources as the indispensable components of community identity.

Conclusion

Beginning this dissertation with a survey of some of the literary works that have proved most effective as texts of the cider poetic allows us to understand the most enduring, transportable, and widely circulated narratives and themes related to cider heritage and orchard conservation. I have explored in each book dominant themes: of nostalgia based in childhood and the sensory world; of revivalism echoing a rhetoric of Enlightenment improvement; of a romanticism celebrating agricultural labor; and finally, of conservation composed of community and ecology.

These themes are by no means exclusive or monolithic in each work. I have tried to illustrate them with a broad brush, so that as I move to other cultural genres, we can recognize how these same themes are at work in less literary or textual discourses of cider heritage and orchard conservation. As the analysis of each work has shown, there is also significant overlap in the themes employed by each author and in the relationships between authors. James Crowden and Roger French, for example both drew liberally from the Enlightenment cider writers, but emphasized different aspects of their tone and discourse. Sometimes the overlaps were not merely textual, but they were also rooted in real relationships in social and material worlds, for example as James Crowden was intimately involved in the work of Common Ground. These two kinds of intertextual relationships, the first at the level of the text itself and the second at the level of the social life of the text, are intrinsic to my own ethnographic study of the cider poetic.

I have also attempted to show ethnographic evidence of lived experiences that correspond with or reflect the themes present in the books. These links across text and life are significant in two ways. First, some of the personal narratives corroborate the thematic coherence developed in individual books, suggesting a synchronic structure of feeling that permeates cultural expressions across texts, performances and genres. The personal narratives of Jean Nowell and Jim Franklin echoed the link between nostalgic memories of childhood and the appreciation of cider developed in *Cider with Rosie*. Second, some of the ethnographic personal narratives express direct influence on the development of a text or have been influenced by a text in a diachronic relationship. For example, Tom Oliver reported that his thoughts on artisanal cider making were directly influenced by Roger French's book. In this case, the book served as a script for modeling the development of the themes and tropes of the cider poetic into a reproducible narrative or performance.

I have used the word "script" throughout this chapter to suggest that we continue to be on the lookout for evidence of texts acting as scripts for further action. But this does not discount the more indirect, chaotic, and deconstructive borrowings that poach themes and poetic materials to construct new scripts for new contexts. While scripts that act as reproducing narratives indicate the continuity of shared social ideas, the deconstruction and reconstruction of the cider poetic into new narratives may indicate moments of social change.

The cider poetic's larger influence in society as an intertextual and multi-vocal resource for the construction of rural heritage discourses lies in the power of one expression or theme to suggest others through these complex webs of direct and indirect association of poetics, themes, narratives, and people. Through borrowing and circulation, these expressive materials layer,

overlap, and create intertextual pathways between texts, performances, and even across cultural genres.

I have shown both how these books have been influenced by other texts before them, but also how they have influenced the cider culture of today. Going forward, the ways that these books have structured their particular literary performance of these themes may influence future heritage discourses.

I certainly learned my lesson well. By paying attention to the books my friends in the field recommended, I came to understand not only their interconnected references and ideas on the page, but also the interconnected relationships between books, writers, and readers, and between poetics, people, and places.

Chapter Two

The Old Boys: The Social Roles of Heritage

Social Roles and Local Characters – Who are the Cider Makers?

“People obviously are interested in cider and perry, but they are also interested in the people making it, or the people concerned with it.”⁹³ – Tom Oliver

Cider makers are iconic figures. Associated with agriculture, they represent the values of rural life. They are repositories of knowledge about rural crafts of the past, but some are also innovative entrepreneurs, shepherding cider into the arena of local food and craft beverages that continues its growing appeal to globalized, urban consumers. In order to understand how cider and orchards continue to have resonance as icons of rural heritage in Britain, it is important to understand how people themselves take on - or are assigned - social identities that endow them with authority on matters of heritage. How do individuals manage these identities within the contexts of their own personalities and the unique conditions of their local communities? I discuss these issues within the frame of social roles: culturally constructed archetypes that have the capacity for particular agency within a community. Social roles allow (or compel) individuals to act in ways that transmit cultural values and knowledge. Conversely, social roles may be imposed upon individuals as a way of interpreting their actions. Social roles enable the people to inhabit and animate cultural ideas. But how are social roles constructed? And how do they enable cultural change over time? Like costumes that can be put on for a stage play, social roles can be altered to fit a particular actor, or they can be re-designed to update a performance to a particular audience. But something about the costume tells us what part the actor will play in the story. Similarly, social roles shape the individual parts played in evolving heritage narratives of rural Britain.

⁹³ Tom Oliver and Mike Johnson, interview by Maria Kennedy, August 15, 2012.

In this chapter, I discuss the inter-related historical, literary, and interpersonal components of two social roles that cider makers occupy in the contemporary construction of rural heritage: master cider makers, and the “Old Boys.” These roles can be overlapping, or an individual can move from one to the other. One role or the other may be more or less significant, depending upon the context in which it appears and the audience that interacts with it.

The story of who cider makers are and the social roles they inhabit, as I have discussed previously, is created through interlinked signifiers in everyday life: in literature, song, story, anecdote, and many other cultural genres. I have already discussed the particular constellation of evolving signifiers and themes that contribute to shared cultural understanding of orchards and cider in England as a “cider poetic.” To understand the construction of the social roles considered here, I return to the cider poetic as an idea of inter-related semiotic resources that are continually mined, used, and re-fashioned, when applied to the actions and personalities of actual people. As I discussed in the introduction, this semiotic resource, the “cider poetic,” contributes to what Raymond Williams calls a structure of feeling, where everyday life is evaluated through an evolving palimpsest of signifiers that are experienced in multiple genres.⁹⁴ But a structure of feeling must be felt by people. How is it perceived and acted upon? I suggest we think about this process through the lens of social roles, identifying where they appear in existing cultural genres, how they are constructed through heritage processes, and how they are applied and evolve in the experiences of real people. Finally, what does the evolution of these roles suggest about the future of rural traditions and the place of orchards and cider in the British countryside?

While Chapter One introduced some of the most ethnographically important literary and historical texts that contribute to the cider poetic, here I wish to show how these and other

⁹⁴ Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, Marxist Introductions (Oxford [Eng.]: Oxford University Press, 1977).

literary texts, as well as other cultural genres, contribute to the understanding of social roles that individuals inhabit in the story of cider. Beginning with some textual antecedents, we can see how the Old Boys are a social role allowing an individual to become a living repository of rural heritage. In this social role, abstract issues of rural identity, and the conflict surrounding the its perceived loss, are manifest in the characteristics of individual persons.

Further, I will investigate how the social role of the Old Boy feeds into another social role: the Master cider maker. The Master cider maker is a role that establishes continuity in rural heritage while also creating possibilities for artistic innovation and social change. These social roles, while they may at first seem static, in fact are evolving as individuals inhabit them in practice. Individual performances of these roles embody particular conflicts experienced in local communities.

The individuals who inhabit these roles become identified by their communities as unique characters, whose personalities activate generalized social roles in ways that are specific to local circumstances. These social roles are broad and malleable enough to encompass themes that transcend local particularities. Thus, they contribute to a discourse of heritage that travels beyond the local and can be used to address common issues at regional or national levels. Characters, meanwhile, are individuals who inhabit social roles in ways that reflect how larger social issues are played out in very personal ways according to local circumstances.

Ray Cashman's work on the local character anecdote in Northern Ireland has shown how narratives that address conflicts and tensions in a community are built around discussion of local characters. In *Storytelling on the Northern Irish Border*, he suggests that:

[...] local character anecdotes provide a vehicle through which people may contemplate human nature and evaluate a range of ways of being that are found in and shaped by the shared sociohistorical environment of Aghyaran. Moreover, hearers may evaluate their own orientations and stances vis a vis those of

anecdote characters. In the process, the individuals portrayed in these stories are assigned relative social status and incorporated as exemplars of familiar human types into local collective memory.⁹⁵

This process of sharing narratives and anecdotes allows the community to discuss larger social issues within the context of the personal experiences that make up their own world. My use of the term *character* draws on Cashman's exploration of local discourse, but my primary investigation here will be the broader category of social roles and how they inform the identities and performances of individual local characters.

I will begin by visiting the site of so much conversation and sharing of many anecdotes, the cider cellar at Broome Farm, a place where characters themselves, anecdotes about them, and the cider that amplifies the quality of both, circulate freely. The cider cellar is a heightened setting for the evaluation of rural heritage in general and cider making in particular. There I learned why Old Boys and Master cider makers are important vehicles for rural heritage. I explore both of these social roles in more detail, introducing literary, customary, and personal encounters with characters who have inhabited them.

Talking in the Cellar: Characters and Anecdotes

*"Don't you think we have a lot of interesting discussions down here [...] Maybe the alcohol releases people a little bit more, I don't know..."*⁹⁶ – Mike Johnson

One evening, sitting in the cider cellar at Broome Farm, I asked cider maker Mike Johnson and the assembled crew of regulars, "What or who is an Old Boy?" Mike's response, said with a laugh, was that it was a man over thirty-five, perhaps retired, who had, "A relaxed attitude to life." Mike, who himself could be referred to as an Old Boy, followed up with a straight face, saying that it really just meant an older man immersed in the history of his local

⁹⁵ Ray Cashman, *Storytelling on the Northern Irish Border : Characters and Community* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 8.

⁹⁶ Oliver and Johnson, interview.

area. “Old Boy” was a term sometimes of appreciation, and other times derision, applied to men of a certain age who embody some aspect of rural heritage. I had heard this term used many times in conversation, but its meaning was often vague, a little term tossed off to describe a wide range of ideas implicit to those who lived and worked in the countryside. In contrast with the meaning of the term in other contexts within America or Britain where it connotes ingrained power structures of gender and class, in rural Britain, its primary meaning relates to age, interest in old things, and often an association with rural life. Whereas in contexts such as chambers of commerce in America or the public schools of Britain, the term implies the intrusion of older social networks and suggests the power they still hold on contemporary life, in rural Britain, the term *Old Boys* implies the removal of older social networks from modern life, highlighting their decreasing relevance and power to influence the contemporary world. The difference is significant, for while the term Old Boys is often used to indicate resentment towards the resiliency of gendered and class power, here, in rural pub, in the corners of a cattle market, or in a cider cellar, it is often a term of respect or affection, even as it suggests irrelevance and anachronism. To understand the influence of this social role in rural Britain, despite its negative implications, let’s visit with two cider makers who have learned from Old Boys, who have taken both the good and the bad from their example. It is not only what they have to say about Old Boys that matters, but also the way the cider cellar fosters conversation and interaction around Old Boys, that illustrates the power social roles have in shaping personal interactions with rural heritage.

In mid-August of 2012, cider makers Mike Johnson and Tom Oliver sat down in the cellar to record an interview with me about their experiences with orchards and cider. Mike and Tom had both grown up on the farms where they now lived and made their cider, but they had

also left those farms as young men, travelled the world, worked in other jobs, and cultivated a deep love of music, especially the blues. Although our interview had been formally arranged, once Mike and Tom sat down in the cellar it made little difference whether my recorder was turned on or not. The conversation flowed as it always did between congregants in the cellar. The cellar was a place where people came to talk, to enjoy company.

Toby, Mike's nephew, leaned against a barrel, listening in quietly, as he always did in the cellar after he was done feeding his sheep, pigs, and pheasants. Mark, a friend and regular, stopped in, as did Rachel, another local farmer and cider maker, without ever realizing that there was an "interview" happening until someone pointed out that tape was rolling. A few people camping in the orchard stopped in to buy some cider as well. In many ways, it was just a normal evening in the cellar, with friends, neighbors, and customers stopping in to chat at the end of the workday. People helped themselves freely to the cider from the barrels, and Mike periodically opened up a special bottle to share with Tom. As the evening drew on, I eventually ran out of tape, and at that point, I had run through my prepared questions anyway. It had become one of those precious and rare occasions when two masters of an art talk together, their individual reflections bearing more insight through exchange than perhaps either one could have uttered individually.

An atmosphere of exchange, collegiality, and learning characterizes the Broome Farm cider cellar as well as and its owner Mike Johnson. Rarely one to take the spotlight or to be interested in voicing his own thoughts outright, Mike's personal opinions, knowledge, and creativity are better experienced and understood in the context of the cellar. One knows Mike by the people he gathers around him, and learns his thoughts by listening to him respond to the conversations of the friends, strangers, and peers who gather in his cellar.

Mike and Tom both came to cider making from agricultural backgrounds. Their narrative of making-do, improvising, or as Tom puts it, “having an aptitude for combining bailer twine and plastic bags,” is typical of the image of traditional rural masculinity: dexterity of mind as applied through manual labor. For both Mike and Tom, cider making started out as a dexterous agricultural adaptation to economic change. Tom explained his entrance into cider making not only as an interest in heritage or a traditional dying skill, but also as part of an economic necessity brought on by changes in agricultural livelihoods.

Tom: And then for me the thing - it was another agricultural situation that prompted it [making cider]. I'd grown up thinking I was - going to grow hops and hops were going to be my cash crop for life.

And then over a three-year period from '96 to '99 it became clear that that was not going to be the case. '99 - we stopped growing hops [...] So we were a classic example of farm diversification in a way.

Mike: Yeah, making the best of what you have [...] Which is what farmers are good at - or the successful ones really.

Tom: I think you've got an aptitude for combining bailer twine and plastic bags. And if you can do that, you're going to be good!⁹⁷

As one agricultural commodity, hops, became economically obsolete, Tom needed to find another means of making money from the potential of his farm. Craft cider seemed to be an answer, and in his search for mentorship, Mike's cider cellar became a resource, a place where

⁹⁷ Ibid.



**The Cider Cellar
at
Broome Farm**



the potential Tom imagined for his new venture was enabled and given support. New economic ventures do not happen in a vacuum, and exploring the social and cultural catalysts that enable them to come to fruition is an important key to understanding the nature of economic and social change in the countryside.

Mike's cider cellar, a meeting place for many sociable gatherings and animated discussions as well as a place of business, is considered by many in the Herefordshire cider region to be a site of cider pilgrimage. His mentorship of cider makers both local and international is well known, albeit extremely informal. I was the most recent in a long line of people who showed up at the farm, discovered an interest in cider, and camped out in the orchard for a season while working alongside Mike and his employees. I learned not only principles of production, but principles of taste, none of which can truly be acquired or understood without sitting and talking. Mike describes the atmosphere of the cellar, and the way that it fosters insight through dialogue and personal interaction, followed by Tom:

Mike Johnson: One of the great things about this cellar is, it does motivate people in all sorts of ways. Not just me, but, don't you think we have a lot of interesting discussions down here? [...] Maybe the alcohol releases people a little bit more, I don't know, (laughter) it could be –

Tom Oliver: It's the fact that you do maintain an openness, an invitation to people that is unique. And it's not just the consumer. It's obviously too, the fellow maker, given the way you have so many ciders and perrys, and a wholesale element, it is fantastic. You set the mark in sort of hospitality like that, at a heck of high, Olympic style (laughter) you do!

I can go back to the first time I came here [...] We went round to a lot of places at one stage, and I have to say, most of them were just awful. People were awful. What we were tasting was awful. It was just - you came away learning more about what I won't do than what I will do. But in a way it [Mike's cellar] was one of the shining exceptions. A) The welcome, but B) Obviously: this is what I would like to do. It spurred us on in a really nice positive way.



In other words, not only did Mike make good quality cider, but he also inspired a way doing things, a social model that made the product even more valuable.

The sense of social value that Tom felt is an important aspect of the phenomenon of the craft cider revival. By investigating this social value, one can understand how this craft revival has both drawn on some vanishing vestiges of rural culture, while also appealing to the contemporary audiences who find cider a compelling product. This connection between people, the openness for conversation, is something contemporary audiences can understand, a way for them to interact with rural life, even if they no longer have connections to the practical daily realities of agriculture.

Part of the social value embedded in the craft cider revival rests on the construction of opportunities for interactions with rural life that are personal, intimate, and interactive. With this in mind, characters understood within the context of culturally significant social roles become extremely important forms of heritage-making. Ray Cashman's exploration of the interrelationship of personality, character, and social change through the sharing of character anecdotes is important to revisit here:

Regardless of the personality type a particular anecdote invokes, these stories as a whole put certain ideological orientations and emotional stances on display for evaluation by audience members. That is, local character anecdotes provide a vehicle through which people may contemplate human nature and evaluate a range of ways of being that are found in and shaped by the shared sociohistorical environment [...] Moreover, hearers may evaluate their own orientations and stances vis a vis those of anecdote characters. In the process, the individuals portrayed in these stories are assigned relative social status and incorporated as exemplars of familiar human types into local collective memory.⁹⁸

Cashman's study addresses the specific use of a narrative genre called the character anecdote. However, his analysis of the anecdote as a way that people discuss individuals within the context of local issues demonstrates how particular individuals and social situations are judged against

⁹⁸ Cashman, *Storytelling on the Northern Irish Border*, 8.

these “familiar human types.” Redefined as social roles, these “familiar human types” can be seen as having assigned narratives of action. But individual characters may test and change familiar narratives, gradually changing the social role, the narratives associated with it, and the very idea of a community’s heritage itself. While the semiotic structure of the social role connects individuals to similar narratives at the broader cultural level, the individual characters are the ones who go down in local lore, whose particular stories are told and retold.

Within Mike’s cellar, discussion of local issues and local people is an ongoing activity. They are participants in this process, aware of their own evaluations of each other. The space itself is a creative and open-ended crucible for the evaluation of the social roles that have shaped the rural community they live in. The effect of Mike’s collegial approach, and emphasis on participation and connection has been in some ways to open up new avenues for a variety of people to interact with and participate in rural spaces and cultures in new ways, creating avenues into traditionally rural, male activities for people who fit neither description.

Tom is also aware of how social roles affect his ability to connect with his customers. Growing up on a farm, Tom had access to the Old Boys who still made cider, but he recognizes that there is an expanding audience of people interested in traditional rural life who have no direct access to it, except as his customers. He recognizes that consumers of his product are interested in cider not only because of its taste but also because they want to know him, which in turn provides them with a greater connection to the significance of cider as an object of heritage in the world:

Tom: The thing that interests me is that people obviously are interested in cider and perry, but they are also interested in the people making it, or the people concerned with it...

And it's not that these people have to have any wonderful thing going on really. It's just a fact - that direct communication with people who are actually doing it

because things are so far removed now in everything. If you meet the person who raised the pigs, you know. It does make a huge difference to people.⁹⁹

Tom's observation, that people are interested in the cider makers themselves, recognizes the wider trend in recent years toward the valorization of local and craft food production, which places emphasis on knowing the producer. Personal interaction with producers is seen to counteract the impersonal nature of industrial food systems; it re-humanizes commerce, supposedly creating stronger social ties at the local level and concern for the proper use of natural resources in the production of food.¹⁰⁰ This emphasis on the personal is not without merit, but it can also obfuscate the larger economic forces at work in creating the frames of choice and interaction regarding the macro construction of food systems.¹⁰¹

The focus on the craftsman as a person through whom one can access the means of production, the skills, the knowledge, and the materials that contribute to making a product may have reached a new level of cultural importance in recent years, but it is also rooted in a long tradition of identifying distinct types of people from whom authentic cultural experiences can be discovered. The very idea that cultural traditions can be known through contact with particular kinds or classes of people who have access to authentic experiences, knowledge, or activities is one of the founding concepts of the study of folklore, where identifying who the folk were was long a central concern to the discipline. More recently, critical revisions of the question, "Who are the folk?" have turned the discipline towards more political critiques of the power relations

⁹⁹ Oliver and Johnson, interview.

¹⁰⁰ D.c.h. Watts, B. Ilbery, and D. Maye, "Making Reconnections in Agro-Food Geography: Alternative Systems of Food Provision," *Progress in Human Geography* 29, no. 1 (February 2005): 22–40.

¹⁰¹ Julie Ingram et al., "Interactions between Niche and Regime: An Analysis of Learning and Innovation Networks for Sustainable Agriculture across Europe," *The Journal of Agricultural Education and Extension* 21, no. 1 (January 2015): 55–71, doi:10.1080/1389224X.2014.991114.

underlying the creation of “the folk” as a category of people¹⁰² and “the authentic” as an object of discovery.¹⁰³

With this in mind, cider makers stand out as a category of people who are recognized as sources of tradition in rural places, and thus, authorities on rural heritage. How various groups identify different kinds of cider makers as tradition bearers reveals different layers of access to knowledge and identity within rural life. Tom’s customers, often from urban or non-agricultural backgrounds, see cider makers generally as artisans, sources of tradition through their knowledge and practice of craft cider production. Enthusiasts or beginning cider makers seek out Mike and Tom as masters in their craft, authorities as experienced producers. And Mike and Tom themselves recall seeking out an even older generation, the so-called Old Boys, hold-outs of a bygone agricultural generation who knew and practiced cider making as an integrated part of the small, self-sufficient farm.

But parsing the different kinds of social roles that are assigned to cider makers reveals more nuance in the development of cider as a product through which people can encounter rural heritage. These roles are not static; rather, they activate individuals as characters in specific social encounters, through whom the poetic power of cider as a cultural idea is animated and dramatized.

The cider cellar at Broome Farm is a relatively rare place where many kinds of characters and audiences have the opportunity to meet and interact. Through Mike’s particularly welcoming and open atmosphere, it becomes a uniquely dynamic setting for the exchange of

¹⁰² Ian McKay, *The Quest of the Folk: Antimodernism and Cultural Selection in Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1994).

¹⁰³ Regina Bendix, *In Search of Authenticity: The Formation of Folklore Studies* (Madison Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997).

knowledge and experience. The first social role we will explore is the quintessential *Old Boy*, to whom Tom and Mike so often referred to in their own experiences.



Tom Oliver
at his Farm in
Ocle Pychard, Herefordshire

The Old Boys: Literary Portraits of Isolation and Anachronism

The idea of the Old Boys resonates throughout Britain. They are seen as personal vehicles for stories about rural heritage, living on the borders between the past and the present. Often identified as eccentric farmers, laborers, craftsmen, or mechanics, they are important characters in the identities of rural communities. Recognizable on both the literary page and in everyday social life, the Old Boys transcend fact or fiction. It is a social role inhabited by individual men, appearing in both life and literature as difficult, strange, and backwards: characters whose anachronistic habits and interests set them apart from the progress that marks contemporary life around them. The passage of time grinds across these individual men's lives with the slowness and force of a glacier, warping their physical bodies and their social identities as processes of modernization leave them behind.¹⁰⁴

In literature, the eccentricity of Old Boys generally - apart from the specific instance of cider makers - can be read as an intensification of the personal conflicts endured during periods of social and economic change in rural communities. In the Old Boys, we see the radical personal consequences of social, economic, and cultural change wrought on individual lives in rural communities. Some people cannot adapt. Some people choose not to adapt. The countryside, rather than being the site of pastoral or agrarian idyll where nostalgic pasts are always perceived as better, brighter, and simpler, is instead sometimes a site of dynamism, catastrophe, and revolution. E.P. Thompson's study of the English working class shows that the

¹⁰⁴ Lest the character of the eccentric old farmer be limited to men, the story of Hannah Hauxwell provides a female counterpart. A single woman eeking out a living alone on her family farm in the High Pennines of Yorkshire, Hannah became the subject of newspaper articles and an ITV documentary, *Too Long a Winter* in 1973. Her isolated life on the farm without electricity or running water, where she tended a few cows, and lived on 280 pounds a year, generated enormous national and international interest, prompting thousands of fan letters that led to material improvements in Hannah's life and several subsequent documentaries catching up on her activities two decades later. Despite her fame, she continued on at her farm for many years, until the winters became too hard to endure, and she finally moved into a small village nearby. Barry Cockcroft, *Hannah Hauxwell's Winter Tales - Too Long a Winter / A Winter Too Many* (Simply Media, 2006).

development of working class identity developed in the context of industrial change – isolating artisans and forcing them to turn to traditional forms of group identity and expression to resist the capitalist infringement of industrial modernity:

Isolated from other classes, radical mechanics, artisans, and laborers had perforce to nourish traditions and forms of organization of their own. So that, while the years 1791-5 provided the democratic impulse, it was in the repression years that we can speak of a distinct “working class consciousness” maturing.¹⁰⁵

The isolation of mechanics, artisans, and laborers did not end with the Industrial Revolution. It has continued today in a place where the pace of industrializing change has been slower, and where manual labor has held on longer: in the countryside. While Thompson chronicled the development of collective action and class consciousness as a response to this occupational isolation, in the Old Boys, we see the opposite. The countryside and its rural occupations have become places of increasing isolation as the mechanization and industrialization of farming have depleted the countryside of labor and dense social networks. The isolation of the manual laborer in the countryside often precludes the kind of organized resistance Thompson documented. The Old Boys, rather than being an asocial role where solidarity or revolution can be realized, are instead seen as backward, eccentric, left behind. What they do have though, is knowledge, knowledge of the manual labor and rural crafts that others have abandoned.

Literary portrayals of rural isolation in the Marches and West Country have drawn critical and popular praise from the late nineteenth century through the twentieth century and point to the continuing resonance of these poetic themes as markers of rural identity that express themselves in the cider poetic as well as in broader expressions of rural identity. Thomas Hardy’s portrayals of rural hardship in the West Country are well known from his novels *Jude the Obscure*, *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, and *The Woodlanders*. Mary Webb’s gothic novels of

¹⁰⁵ E Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1964), 181.

rural life in the Shropshire Hills, *Gone to Earth* and *Precious Bane*, paint a melodramatic picture of rural isolation in the West Midlands region. Bruce Chatwin's novel, *On the Black Hill*, published in 1982 and adapted to film, theater, and radio, continues the literary trope of rural isolation, eccentricity, and self-sufficiency. It follows the fictional lives of twin brothers born on the border of Hereford and Radnorshire, adjacent counties of England and Wales.¹⁰⁶ Although the location is fictionalized, the Black Hill of the novel is based on the landscape and history of the region just an hour's drive from Broome Farm, where the real Black Mountains loom over the Welsh-English border.

The aforementioned brothers in the novel live on a remote farm in the hill country, and the novel depicts them caught in the friction of time moving past them as the events of the First and Second World Wars hasten the modernization of the region and people around them. The brothers slowly ossify, their farm unchanging, their personalities becoming more remote and eccentric. Their rural isolation is depicted in an environment basic and raw, where the forces of nature and time erode against a material and social life that is otherwise resolutely simple, repetitive, and anachronistic:

One of the windows looked out over the green fields of England: the other looked back into Wales, past a clump of larches, at the Black Hill. [...]
Both of the brothers' hair was even whiter than the pillowcases. [...]
Every morning their alarm went off at six. They listened to the farmers' broadcast as they shaved and dressed. Downstairs, they tapped the barometer, lit the fire and boiled a kettle for tea. Then they did the milking and foddering before coming back for breakfast. The house had roughcast walls and a roof of mossy stone tiles and stood at the far end of the farmyard in the shade of an old Scots pine. Below the cowshed there was an orchard of wind-stunted apple trees, and then the fields slanted down to the dingle, and there were birches and alders along the stream.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ Bruce Chatwin, *On the Black Hill* (New York, N.Y: Penguin Books, 1984).

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

This passage above, taken from the beginning of the book, describes the brothers' house and the outlines of the physical landscape in which they lived their daily lives. Chatwin's portrayal of these fictional brothers parallels living conditions of isolated rural individuals I encountered during my research, and his portrayal of two Old Boys and their environment is worth quoting here as evidence of how the lives of rural isolated farmers have generated enough interest to take center stage in a best-selling novel and its cinematic and broadcast spin-offs at the end of the twentieth century.

The remarkable thing about this portrait, caught in the crumbling material remains of agricultural life along the border of England and Wales, is that its fictional characters and settings are loosely based on real people and places scattered throughout the landscape of the southern Marches. Bruce Chatwin was known to have spent considerable time living in and researching the region during the writing of the book, and characters in the novel sometimes bear an extraordinary resemblance to known local people.

Old Boys are not simply a literary fiction. Individuals living in rural Britain exist in circumstances of isolation and deprivation that trap them in the midst of dwellings, worldviews, and landscapes that time seems to have left behind. Throughout my research, I encountered men and women whose circumstances and life stories paralleled fictional literary depictions. These Old Boys were always a little peculiar, just out of step with the world around them. To equate these real individuals with fictional characters would be incorrect, but it is likewise important to recognize that the literary portrayals draw upon lived experiences. In turn, they provide a script for the recognition of a type of social role that is often difficult to interpret in real life, but whose presence demands some sort of meaning. These literary examples display the cultural process of interpreting and creating social roles at the level of mass media. But the process itself, as well as

specific understandings of Old Boys as a social role, has its roots in vernacular social interactions in rural Britain, and it influences the production of historical narratives and the infrastructure of local heritage.

Old Boy Narratives in the Museum and the Archives

“He used to travel from farm to farm with them in those days” – William Edward Jones

Stepping from literature towards vernacular forms of heritage production, I turn to heritage narratives created by the Hereford Cider Museum and one of its founding supporters, Gillian Bulmer. Literary narratives like those above are important indicators of cultural ideas circulating at the level of mass market publication. Institutions of heritage, such as museum and archives, also produce public narratives at an intermediary level between the mass media and personal interactions. Here, curatorial choices interrupt direct community dialogue, making authoritative choices about which kinds of narratives to collect and preserve for the larger community.

Commerce and heritage are intertwined in the Hereford Cider Museum, an institution officially independent of the cider industry, but practically enmeshed with the people, resources,



and interests at the heart of one of the biggest commercial enterprises in Herefordshire. The image of the old-fashioned farmer as cider drinker, existing outside of contemporary standards of capitalist productivity, is a central part of the cider poetic and heavily influences the historical narrative created at institutional levels of commerce and heritage. Here, the idea of the Old Boy as a distinctively important figure in rural heritage is

front and center.

Consider the image to the left, of a man holding aloft a pint glass. The man wears a smock, an outer garment typically worn by farm workers up until the late nineteenth century. The Cider Museum displays this very photo behind a smock from their collection in the museum's permanent exhibit. The photo also appears in a Google search of the phrase "cider drinker" on the National Association of Cider Makers website.¹⁰⁸ It is an iconic image of the cider drinking man of a bygone agricultural economy.



The text of the Cider Museum's exhibit label gives context for this agricultural era, describing the purpose of the smock, which:

...protected the wearer's under-garments and offered unrestricted movement. Working smocks were made from a coarse twill fabric and the color and design varied from county to county. The garments were often impregnated with linseed oil, which made them weatherproof. [...] The popularity of smocks declined at the end of the 19th century when they were considered no longer fashionable."¹⁰⁹

The presence of this image and its contextualizing narrative explains the receding importance of the kind of agricultural labor that it represents. The image appears again in the Cider Museum in a larger label, where it is directly associated with "truck", a form of payment where agricultural laborers were paid in kind, rather than in wages. The label says, "Agricultural workers were given a daily allowance of cider – about a half a gallon (2-3 litres)– which formed a part of their weekly wage. During the 19th century, the value of the cider amounted to about one third of their

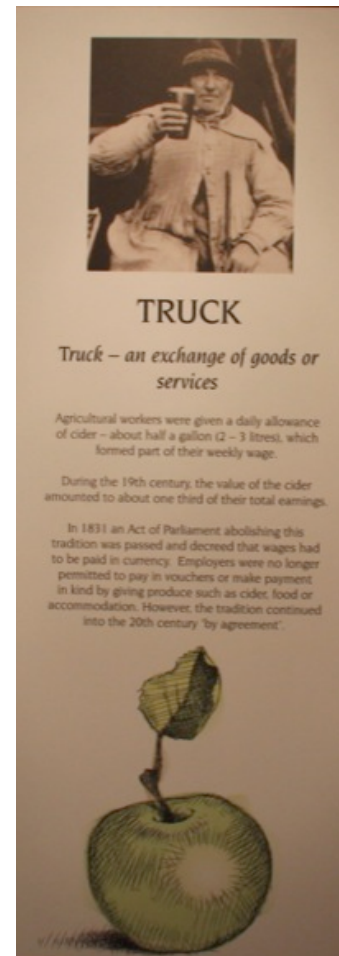
¹⁰⁸ This photograph was for a time located on the National Association of Cider Makers website, but it also appears in an exhibit in the Hereford Cider Museum alongside old scratters, mills, presses, smocks, and images of horse-powered machinery.

¹⁰⁹ Exhibit label text from the Hereford Cider Museum. Photograph by Maria Kennedy 8/31/2011.

total earnings.”¹¹⁰ Truck was prohibited by law in 1831, but continued to be practiced well into the twentieth century, with a fine imposed on a Herefordshire farmer as late as 1935 for the offence.¹¹¹ Truck, along with other amenities such as tied cottages (housing provided by an employer), provided things necessary for daily life in the countryside, but deprived laborers of wages.

In an increasingly global, cash-oriented economy, where traditional ties between landowners and workers were eroding, the continuance of truck systems left agricultural laborers even more dependent on and disadvantaged by their employers. In his book *Roses Round the Door? Rural images, realities, and responses: Herefordshire 1830s – 1930s*, Tim Ward examines the implications of this economic transition on rural workers, emphasizing the particular hardships experienced during this time of transition between working relationships based partly on exchange, and those based entirely on cash wages. Where, did social responsibility lie? Ward draws attention to the rise of unions, not only in the industrialized cities, but in the countryside as well, as evidence of this social and economic transition:

All times and places have their own forms of suffering and their own needs for improvement, but theirs [the workers of one hundred years ago] were particularly hard times: squeezed between the stability of the past and the comforts of the future, it was a difficult life, and it is not hard to see why early trade unionists found ready supporters for their demands for improved conditions in every aspect of life.”¹¹²



¹¹⁰ Exhibit label text from the Hereford Cider Museum. Photograph by Maria Kennedy 8/31/2011.

¹¹¹ Ward, Tim. *Roses Round the Door? Rural Images, realities, and responses: Herefordshire 1830s – 1930s*. Little Logasont, Herefordshire: Logaston Press, 2009, 108.

¹¹² Ward, Tim, *Roses Round the Door?*, ix.

Images like the cider drinker in his smock reinforce the traditional association of cider and agricultural labor within a system of co-dependent social obligation, sometimes to the point of romanticizing it. The Cider Museum's exhibits discuss the issue, as these exhibit panels display, but the image of the agricultural laborer as cider drinker continues to loom larger than agricultural laborer as striking unionist.

Examining several of the narratives chosen for inclusion in the Hereford Cider Museum's oral history collection can give some insight into the nature of the Old Boys as a social role intimately related to the activity of cider making, and its importance to the creation of rural heritage narratives at the institutional level. Looking behind the exhibit narratives to the collections of oral history interviews reveals some of the sources and perspectives behind the museum's heritage narratives. These interviews reflect both the stories of those who are the subjects of the interviews, but they also reflect the categories of people and the kinds of stories that the interviewers and curators chose as important representatives of cider heritage.

The *Apples and Pears Past* project collected oral histories of cider and orchard practices in Herefordshire from 2006 to 2008. Rebecca Roseff, the director of the Archive of Cider Pomology, which is housed at the museum, ran the project; it was supported by Heritage Lottery Funding in partnership with the Marcher Apple Network and the Three Counties Cider and Perry Association. The *Apples and Pears Past* project yielded sixty interviews with people from a variety of connections to the cider industry, including craft and farm producers, owners and workers in large cider businesses such as Bulmers, factory workers, workers in allied nursery or haulier businesses, and publicans.¹¹³ The scope was quite broad, and the resulting narratives reflected vastly different experiences relating to cider, including a notable emphasis on the industrial and business heritage of the larger commercial cider firms and their role in turning a

¹¹³ Haulier is an English term for logistics that transport or "haul" goods.

relatively small-scale home-production industry into a national industrialized business. It is possible, however, to group the interviews into a few distinctive categories:

- 1) Bulmers Cider Company family, business people, and factory workers.
- 2) Craft cider producers and conservationists.
- 3) Old local farmers – either cider producers or contract orchardists for Bulmers
- 4) Owners of allied businesses such as pubs and hauliers
- 5) Old farmers and cider producers interviewed by Gillian Bulmer.

This last group, interviewed by Gillian Bulmer in the 1970s and 1980s and incorporated into the later oral history project, provides a valuable window into the testimony of a generation who influenced many current cider makers, but who are no longer living; even so, their experiences remain iconic representations of English rural life. Gillian Bulmer, descendent of the founder of Bulmers Cider, Britain's largest commercial cider company, conducted these oral histories with local cider makers in Herefordshire out of her own interest in preserving local history surrounding cider making, as well as an interest collecting and preserving local dialects. She wrote a short piece describing her own memories of cider making to preserve the memory of these times.¹¹⁴ She was also active in the proceedings of the Society for Folk Life Studies and published an article on cider apples in their journal.¹¹⁵

Gillian's recordings collected in the *Apples and Pears Past* project reflect several ideas about the construction of rural heritage during the 1970s and 1980s. She was interested in the vanishing local dialects spoken by people in once-isolated rural communities. She was also interested in the technicalities of cider making on a small farm scale. But most of all, she was fascinated by the social context within which this rural practice once flourished. Gillian's

¹¹⁴ Gillian Bulmer, *Cider Apples: From Tree to Factory* (Herefordshire: Self-Published, 2008).

¹¹⁵ Gillian Bulmer, "Apple Picking: The Bitter Sweet," *Folk Life* 41, no. 1 (January 1, 2002): 113–19.

account of her initial interest in recording oral histories is useful, for it reflects the concerns of her academic contemporaries in that period and demonstrates the application of these principles in the creation of heritage narratives at the level of both local interactions and local institutions, particularly the Cider Museum, in which she was personally involved. Gillian describes her initial interest in recording as related to research on local dialect:

Gillian Bulmer: I was looking for people – farmers, who were in - well, let's go back.

I met in Leeds a man who started compiling the dialectic dictionary for England in the 1940s or before. And threw a net across the whole of the country in kilometer squares and he sent people out to record people in these areas.

And these people had got to have been resident for three generations in that particular place in order that the language would have stayed the same. And there was a talk that was given about this at the Folk Life conference.

And the thing that really stuck out was this map they gave us, with the different sections all over it. And it gave us an example of how many different names were found in different parts of England for the same thing. And the example that they gave was – “what is the name of the smallest pig in the litter?” Now would you know the answer to that one?

Maria Kennedy: Well I would say runt.

Gillian Bulmer: Well there are thirteen different names given to the smallest pig in the litter. And the one which really caught my ear was niscal. Now the only two places that it was found was in Rutland and in Herefordshire.

Now as a child, my father always called it the niscal. A laborer, a man who worked for my dad for many years, he always called it the niscal. And he was of a family who always worked in Hereford. Of course Dad had been in Hereford for a couple of generations. So that's the sort of thing that happens.

And you get other words like that, which have disappeared to a large extent. But the object of this dictionary was to find these words.¹¹⁶

Gillian's reference to the “man from Leeds” is most likely Harold Orton, dialectologist and professor of English language and medieval literature at the University of Leeds from 1946 to

¹¹⁶ Gillian Bulmer and John Teiser, interview by Maria Kennedy, August 20, 2012.

1964, who led a project *The Survey of English Dialects*, between 1950 and 1961.¹¹⁷ Her thoughts show that the academic principles guiding research at the university level were applicable to her own personal life experiences. Her father's speech, and the speech of their hired man, reflected the dialectic distinctiveness of their region, and the effects of generational stability within the locality on language and culture. Gillian's research, spurred on by academic studies of dialect, however, began to focus on the issue at the root of her own family's agricultural and commercial interests – on cider making. She described how she met old farmers in the countryside like Mr. William Edward Jones, a retired blacksmith from Herefordshire, who was born in 1896, and worked with his father as an itinerant cider maker.

Gillian Bulmer: And I then started going to find farmers who had made cider, and also I'd first met this chap who was an itinerant cider maker. And that was just by talking to him over a wall in his garden. And I met a number of people that way you know, just getting into conversation by accident waiting for them to say something to you. And that was how it began. And I went on doing that for some little while.¹¹⁸

Gillian related this memory of the interview to me in my own oral history interview with her. Returning to the archives, though, the transcripts of her recording reveal the full extent of her conversation with William Edward Jones, a discussion of his father's mobile cider making business:

Gillian Bulmer: When did you start making cider?

William Edward Jones: Oh, Miss Bulmer, now my father, 'e 'ad a cider mill before I was born but that was a cider mill as they turned by 'and like you turn a pulper. [...] He bought a steam engine then to drive this mill.

He used to travel from farm to farm with them in those days – to be honest – before you people [Bulmers] started I expect, I don't know. I was getting on then an' we had three mills working at one time – yes we did – only through the winter mind. We used to start in September, you know, and 'e knowed the routes we

¹¹⁷ Orton, Harold, and Eugen Dieth. *Survey of English Dialects*. Leeds, Published for the University of Leeds by E. J. Arnold, 1962-, 1962.

¹¹⁸ Bulmer and Teiser, interview.

used to go right out' the Bell at Tillington making out there...all these pubs we used to make – Kites Nest – Travelers Rest – The Lion at Madley, the Comet and all round 'ere at Kingston and right out to the Callow we used to make for the farmers. I can remember fruit 30 shillings a ton, people couldn't see it in years gone by – the markers used to make it [...]

There was an old man named Davis – Preston Court it was, and I think that cider house is there now and I bet he's.....as my garden, and you couldn't see the barrels the far end without 'aving a light in there – it was so dark. We've made as much as 70 and 80 hogshutts there. What they done with it was this, give it to their men or give it to callers...¹¹⁹

While the bulk of the narrative gives details of the mobile nature of the cider-making business, the last sentence emphasizes the place that cider had as a means of economic and social exchange on the farm. The farmer either gives it to the hired men, which was both for refreshment or as part of their payment in lieu of wages (Cider Truck, as described earlier) or he gives it to “callers,” to family, and guests. Cider, in all these ways, is a form of currency that used to circulate between farmers and workers and between families and friends, or callers, as well as at the pub.

In an increasingly industrialized and monetized marketplace, cider circulated otherwise unusable wealth in the form of excess apples as a method of increasing social wealth and exchange. As the men with the equipment and the manpower, the mobile cider makers managed to monetize their technological expertise in making the cider. Jones reported their payment as a deal for his customers:

An what we used to charge – mind I'm going back many years – my father used to charge a half crown (two shillings and sixpence) a hogshutt. When we'd filled one hogshutt we'd earned half a crown. That was pretty good for the people who were having the cider.¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ William Edward Jones, interview by Gillian Bulmer, 1974, Apples and Pears Past Project, Archive of Cider Pomology. (note: rendering of dialect reflects the transcription of the recording produced by the Apples and Pears Past Project at the Archive of Cider Pomology. I have copied their transcription directly).

¹²⁰ Ibid

These aspects of cider, as a product of limited commercialism, contribute to the romanticization of labor, where the perceived forms of wealth it generated strengthened social bonds based around particular forms of masculine labor and sociability.

It is not insignificant that Gillian Bulmer, daughter of the largest commercial cider business in the United Kingdom, turned in her own research to dwell on the reminiscences of those who could remember the social context of cider making before it became dominated by large commercial enterprises like her family's. Gillian's thoughts on the significance of the people of this generation, those who worked on the land, come into stark contrast with the changing economic and educational norms of the mid-twentieth century, which changed the scope of opportunity for rural people, particularly the kind of people who work in agriculture:

Gillian Bulmer: I think actually the interesting thing is, when you look at the generations - the people who were in agriculture at the beginning of the 1900s were all people whose families had all been in agriculture all their lives, and families before them and so forth.

And the schools come along [...] you get someone like the man who worked for us here and all his colleagues who at school would have learnt the three Rs and they would have learnt how to tell the weight of an animal and this and that - things of that ilk. And there was no - there were no colleges and things like that for them to go to because there was no secondary school. So they went onto the land.

And then you had the disappearance of the need for people on the land but at the same time you had people getting better educated and getting and wanting better jobs and for whatever you mean by 'better.' And you then had nobody of the right caliber to work on the land [...] the people who like our Mr. Savage, had really got his head screwed on. And he was a really intelligent bloke. And if he had been - had the opportunity, he would have been to university. [...]

Now we've ended up with - instead of having people who've got the right skills or the right this or the right that from this country on the land, we've got to import people from elsewhere. A lot of whom have got university degrees, and who are willing to do this sort of thing. I mean I've got somebody living quite near to here who's got a university degree in horticulture, but he is working on the land budding fruit trees.

But we've got nobody in this country who's doing that sort of thing because they think it's not the right thing to do.¹²¹

Gillian's observations show the drastic changes in demographics that have worked in agricultural labor. Whereas she saw the laborers who worked for her father as intelligent, but lacking in opportunity to move outside their circles of geography and class, now, with global movements of labor and the expansion of educational opportunities, those who work on the land are either migrant laborers – often highly educated Eastern Europeans taking advantage of the strength of the English pound – or English workers whom she views as under-qualified and under-motivated. Agricultural work has become, according to Gillian, under-valued within England to the point that intelligent local agricultural labor is difficult to find. The links between language, locality, craft, skill, and work which so characterized the people she set out to record, are now, according to her, largely gone. The social responsibility that idealistically characterized the era of Cider Truck, with long-standing relationships between landowners and laborers, and limited access for laborers to other opportunities, has given way to global migrations of labor, talent, and cash.

The reminiscences of William Edward Jones that were recorded by Gillian Bulmer describe cider making as a business, a local industry, where in fact, the point was to make money. But as the terms of capitalism have widened the circulation of wealth and goods to global dimensions, the narratives of locally interdependent economies like that of the travelling cider makers and their farm customers have become more noteworthy to contemporary audiences for the non-monetary aspects of their exchange. The social ties, the sensory pleasures, and the relief of physical and psychological pain that cider contributed to local life often seem to carry a greater residual meaning than the amount of money that it generated. The cider maker and the

¹²¹ Bulmer, Gillian, and John Teiser. Interview by Maria Kennedy, August 20, 2012.

cider drinker are icons of a vanished economy that, from the perspective of today's global economy, become configured nostalgically as parts of a rustic and "authentic" lost set of social relations and values.

The production of historical narratives about the place and influence of Old Boys on the impact of cider making demonstrates how this social role is understood as a product of economic relationships. Whereas the literary construction of Old Boys emphasized the eccentricity of individual characters through a focus on the personal ramifications of social change, heritage narratives from the Cider Museum construct the role of Old Boys in a way that emphasizes their economic anachronism. In the interviews with Gillian Bulmer, Old Boys often appear as the last representatives of vanished farm economies run on skilled local manual laborers rather than machines or global markets. In this economy, apples and cider served as a form of real currency in the countryside, where values and social relationships could be materially quantified in the production of cider. They come to represent the embodiments of vanished bonds that were dependent on now-defunct rural economic relationships.

The memories of Old Boys like William Edward Jones reframed the heritage of cider making as an antithesis to the large commercial enterprise dominated by Gillian Bulmer's own family. The Hereford Cider Museum itself is housed in the former corporate buildings of Bulmers and was created by Gillian's father



Bertram Bulmer after his retirement as head of the business. I don't suggest that the museum or Ms. Bulmer's research were created to obfuscate the impact of commercialization. Rather, the

more interesting interpretation reads her interest in the interdependent farm economies as an outcome of the unresolved tensions of the industrialization of agriculture and the impacts it has wrought on rural life. Gillian Bulmer's interest in recording the Old Boys is a microcosm of social roles in the industrializing countryside, where those who have moved forward into capitalism turn around to look back at the Old Boys as resources for meaning and heritage.

Encountering Old Boys: Ken Pady

The interrelationship between fictional characters, heritage narratives, and real people is complex. The creation of social roles, and the casting of individual characters in these roles, is a cultural process that allows people to categorize and dramatize social experiences. The fact that these characters appear with such regularity in fiction and in heritage suggests that the Old Boys are a social role of particular importance in rural Britain, which resonates across cultural genres and social interactions. It is an important part of the cider poetic. I was still surprised, however, when I encountered Old Boys in person. While volunteering at Goren Farm in the Blackdown Hills in Devon in 2004, I met Ken Pady, and drank the cider his cousin Julian made on the ancient press in their stone barn. Ken Pady was not a commercial cider maker himself, but like many men of his generation, he was not far removed from the presence of cider in a fading rural economy. He



was, like many Old Boys, involved in a way of life where cider had existed. The large press in his barn survived, like him, perhaps through neglect and disconnection with the progress of the modern world. His younger cousin Julian had begun to make cider again, and it was in the Pady's shed that I drank farm cider for the first time, sitting in a rotting armchair amidst a jumble of the kind of detritus that ends up in a neglected barn: old tools, tattered catalogues, odds and ends of a farming life left to decay.

Ken Pady had once owned Goren farm, but when it fell into such disrepair that it was about to be condemned, his younger cousin Julian decided to return home from his career abroad in the oil industry to purchase and repair it. Julian began to rebuild the farm, removing decades of manure from the farmyard, slowly repairing and updating the buildings, laying the overgrown hedges, replanting the orchard, and putting the ancient screw press in the cider shed back to work.

Amidst all the neglect and ruin of a once carefully maintained farmstead, though, were hay meadows rich with wildflowers, birds, and butterflies that thrived in the unimproved environment. Ken Pady had



continued to keep a few cows, but did little else to the property. It was rumored that he'd had a romantic disappointment that had affected his mind. When I met him, he occupied a bedroom and a kitchen in the old portion of the Georgian farmhouse. His radio sat on the table where he fed his many cats. He only bathed several times a year, but surprisingly, his presence never offended with an unpleasant odor. His grey jumper hung together across his shoulders by a few threads. He spent his days cutting wood to sell to neighbors for their woodstoves, and he rarely

spoke, though if you got him to start telling stories about the old days, he could go on for long periods in his quiet Devon vernacular.

Ken Pady remained mysterious to me, as he probably would for most people living their lives in the flow of the contemporary world. Our conversation was always limited, and opportunities to improve it never arose. Whether the product of self-imposed isolation, mental illness, poverty, or a combination of the three, the remoteness and strangeness of men like Ken Pady is intriguing to the outsider. But such characters are also vulnerable to the projected nostalgias or fantasies the outsider reads into them. It is often hard or impossible to communicate with men and women so far out of step with their communities—whether by their own choice or as the result of imposed circumstances.

Facing Ken Pady across the gulf of our divergent contexts, I drew upon my understanding of the Old Boy that I had learned from literature, conversation, and anecdote, to try to understand him in some limited way. This cultural mechanism is imperfect, though. Ken Pady remained largely invisible to me as an individual, and with such a limited outline of his personality, it is easy to cast him in a nostalgic, romanticized light. The literary character becomes a model against which to compare these individuals, problematic as that may be. If people like myself have little other context for interpreting people like Ken Pady, literary and historical narratives remain a significant cultural resource for both expressing and interpreting the increasing distance between urban and rural life in Britain, and even further, between the modernizing rural world and the receding rural world of the older generation.

Other people, however, have greater access to the life and experiences of Old Boys like Ken Pady, by virtue of their age, gender, and familiarity with rural life. The transmission of cultural traditions and crafts as real resources of cultural identity depend on people's ability to

access the knowledge and experience of older generations. As a young, urban, foreign, female researcher, my resources to connect with Ken Pady as an individual were limited, and the barriers great. The limitations of access between researcher and research community, between folklorist and folk, are better acknowledged now than in the past. Folklorists are now more careful to individualize, rather than essentialize, the people with whom they study. This does not, however, mean it is always possible for researchers to gain access to those whose traditions interest them. While the experiences of men like Ken Pady remained difficult for me to engage, they are accessible to people who have something more in common with them. These people became my teachers. Through their retellings of their encounters with Old Boys, I was able to know more about rural life in the past and begin to understand how the transmission of this information occurs. Alongside the transmission of knowledge, however, some individuals also find that they experience a transition into the role of Old Boy themselves.

Promoting the Old Boy – Roger Wilkins

If Ken Pady was an isolated Old Boy, there are some men who *emphasize* their social role, who cultivate their individual characters as Old Boys as a means of social interaction, especially in the service of cider. One such person is Roger Wilkins, of Wilkins Cider in Somerset. Renowned as a place of cider pilgrimage, his farm in Mudgely, Somerset, clinging to the side of a hill above the Somerset Levels, retains its rough atmosphere, with ragged couches sitting in corners of the cider cellar, where two enormous barrels loom with “dry” and “medium” cider for visitors to try. Many had suggested that I should visit Roger Wilkins’s cider farm, as an example of a very traditional place. When I pulled up to Roger Wilkins's farm just as the thin winter sun was setting across the valley below in mid December, there were a few people



hanging around the cider shed. A big silent guy named Dave in army fatigues and a warm coat handed me a glass of dry cider, and I chatted with a strawberry farmer visiting with some guests from Belarus. I met Roger himself only briefly. Wrapped in a heavy coat and waterproofs, his thick, almost indecipherable Somerset dialect described to me how farm workers in his youth consumed up to fifteen gallons of cider a day or more. Times had changed, he explained. Cider drinking isn't what it used to be.

My encounter with Roger Wilkins was cursory, but in a way, this is representative of the kinds of encounters that one can have in these circumstances. Not a resident of his neighborhood, not his contemporary in age or gender, I was, like many people who visit his farm, a tourist to his stubborn but welcoming outpost of traditional farm life. In his profile of Roger Wilkins in *Ciderland*, author James Crowden describes him this way:

Roger is plain-speaking and very likeable. Many people respect his opinions. He is a very good example of an unreformed cider maker. Not for him single variety cider or fancy bottles or bottle fermentation. This is cider just straight as it comes out of the pipe – dry, medium, or sweet. Tasters are usually half a pint, so by the time you have tried all three you have had your legal limit.¹²²

Roger is an example of an Old Boy who understands his role and embraces it as a way of communicating his values and his lifestyle to others. Crowden's adjective is apt: Roger is an "unreformed cider maker" who knows that the craft, the industry, and the countryside itself have evolved, but he sticks to his old ways.

Roger's website reflects his Old Boy persona, emphasizing his long-standing relationship with the farm and his ineptitude with modern technology. It's clear from his website, which features the picture of him above, that he (or perhaps his webmaster) self-consciously foregrounds the markers of his Old Boy role as cider maker, and that a visit to his farm is a visit

¹²² Crowden, *Ciderland*, 78.

to a kind of country life that may have disappeared from other corners of the landscape. The text on the front page of his website elaborates:

I'm Roger Wilkins and my family have been producing proper traditional cider from our farm in Mudgley Somerset for nigh on 1,000 years... well all right, not quite that long, it just seems that way [...] If you come 'ere be careful, mind, as it's a working farm and we don't have any of that fancy modern shop layout here, just barrels in my cider barn. Got lots of fresh local vegetables, eggs, pickles and the like for sale, too [...] Here, me webmaster (he looks after this site and gets rid of yay spider buggers in me shed.....) tells me that 14,000 people have looked at this site in the last six months. An' I reckon most of 'em have been 'ere too. Proper busy we've been.¹²³

Roger Wilkins himself seems from accounts, impressions, and asides from other people I encountered, to be an authentic, self-possessed man who loves the traditions of country life he grew up with, and continues to embody these values in his farm. But the self-conscious portrayal of his colloquial speech, mannerisms and habits on his website demonstrate his embrace of the Old Boy role, both as a way of life, and as a way of promoting his commercial venture. Indeed, capitalizing on his role in this sort of self-reflexive way may be one of the few ways that his manner of life can be maintained, in an agricultural environment where dairy farming, the primary occupation of his parents' generation, is very difficult to make a living at. The website reflects not only an embrace of the Old Boy role but also competence with contemporary technologies and communications and an interest and knowhow in commerce that goes beyond just "traditional" ways of farming. This displays a profound understanding of the social role of the Old Boy and the power it has in this environment. Roger's ability to recognize and inhabit this role in the creation of his own personal Old Boy character demonstrates a willingness to capitalize - even to the point of reinforcing stereotypes - on his own positionality as an Old Boy. Roger Wilkins's strategy to make use of the social role in the service of his commercial

¹²³ "Wilkins Cider - the Home of Somerset Cider," accessed December 9, 2015, <http://wilkinscider.com/>.

enterprise reflects an understanding of the workings of authenticity discourse that is very different from Ken Pady.

However, the appeal to authenticity is not through discourse alone, but also through a commitment to maintaining the material realities of that discourse. James Crowden's profile describes how Roger's farm is a holdout for a disappearing country life:

At one time there were seven dairy farms down this lane at Mudgley and that meant seven cider farms as well. Times have changed and many of the farmhouses have been converted and the land sold off or rented out. Roger's farm, unlike most cider farms these days, is also a cider house and the village parliament. Everybody gathers here on a Sunday morning and in fact every weekday morning as the 'hard core' come down, lend a hand, and help serve.¹²⁴

This image of Wilkins's cider farm as a bustling center of community life, as a hold-out for the lifestyle and camaraderie of a receding era where Old Boys were plain spoken, kept good company, and drank lots of cider, demonstrates the more social side of the Old Boy role. For locals and personal friends, it may indeed be a reality. For visitors to the farm, it provides a model for joining in, at least for the duration of the visit.

But how does the maintenance of a tradition that Roger represents transcend the immediate and intimate ties of local relationships or the cursory impressions afforded to a visitor or tourist? How does one bridge the gap of knowledge and social identity that stands between Old Boys like Ken Pady and Roger Wilkins and someone who wishes to learn the tradition? While Ken Pady was nearly inaccessible to me, Roger Wilkins's embrace of the Old Boy role permits a limited touristic entry into his world for those who are interested to encounter it. But to understand his world, and learn the details of the knowledge and labor that manifest his world as a material, social reality, require a different kind of engagement. In the following section, I

¹²⁴ Crowden, *Ciderland*, 77.

will turn to men and women who were able to engage with the Old Boys. We will understand how they came to engage with them, and find out what they learned.

Rural Isolation

*“They will just sit in isolation listening to the radio and drinking alcohol, which costs them nothing.”*¹²⁵ – Kevin Minchew

Tom Oliver, intimately familiar with the Old Boys and material realities of their rural, agricultural lives, does not romanticize them, but from his agricultural background, and his personal familiarity with people who had lived in his neighborhood, he was able to connect with Old Boys who could introduce him to the topic he was interested in: traditional cider making. Just because they are old farmers who make cider does not mean that their cider is good, or that it is a representation of rural crafts or traditional knowledge worth perpetuating. Although Tom recognized the importance of learning the knowledge and skills they had, he also recognized that not all of their practices are desirable, and that the cider many of them made was repulsive. Tom describes his learning experience, and his initial interest in making cider at a time when the availability of good local cider was severely diminishing in the wake of the rise of commercial brands. Tom wanted to drink local cider, *well-made* local cider, and he went in search of local makers to learn from, but found few who could be good mentors:

Tom Oliver: At one stage I thought, it seems to me actually that without Mike and say, without Kevin Minchew, the opportunity to drink something that was the sort of ciders you wanted to drink - it was gone. And I thought, this is, this wrong. This is wrong, this is a crime. There is a gap here [...]

And what I'd learnt by going round all the cider makers - I did all the Old Boys - You learnt exactly what not to do. The ghastly, gut rotting, acetic, vile concoctions that they proudly kept in two-litre plastic bottles underneath the sink along with the Demostos and the cleaners and stuff - the cider fitted in perfectly.

¹²⁵ Kevin Minchew, interview by Maria Kennedy, January 27, 2013.

And I thought, this isn't right. At least Mike and Kevin are doing the job. There will be room.¹²⁶

Although Tom's interactions with these men didn't always bring him into contact with knowledge that he felt was good, he still found the learning experience valuable. Even those who were making bad cider still had something to teach him about what separated the good from the bad. And his ability to connect with another generation put him in touch with knowledge that, good or bad, would not always be accessible to people from backgrounds too dissimilar from the Old Boys. Tom was in some ways, in a privileged position, and he has been able to transmit what he has learned to others without ties to Old Boys like the ones he had met. Understanding the transmission of knowledge between generations of cider makers illuminates the ways in which access to such traditions can be limited, but also how new avenues between past and present can be forged.

One of the cider makers whom Mike Johnson and Tom Oliver had mentioned as keeping the tradition of traditional cider making alive is Kevin Minchew. Like Tom, Kevin actively sought out knowledge that the Old Boys continued to carry with them. When I went to meet Kevin, I had directions to drive to the military base near Tewksbury, where I would find him at his property across the road. When I parked on the side of the road he emerged, cigarette in hand, to welcome me into a yard full of various pieces of machinery, equipment, and barrels. Outside a shed where the old screw press with the stone trough was housed, sat a hunk of metal which Kevin explained admiringly was an old diesel generator, versions of which were being adapted for use in the third world today. His easy conversation on the details of its simple construction and usefulness eluded me in technicalities but impressed upon me that farmers of an earlier generation were ingenious mechanics.

¹²⁶ Tom Oliver, interview by Maria Kennedy, August 1, 2012.

Kevin worked as an engineer on the adjacent military base and was knowledgeable about things mechanical old and new. Weaving in between barrels full of cider and dusty boxes full of bottles packed into various barns and sheds, he would emerge with material flotsam of the past to show me, along with bottles he opened with abandon to let me taste. He described his connection to the heritage of cider through his relationship to the lifestyle of his father's generation living in the countryside. He also told me about his affinity for seeking out the Old Boys in his neighborhood. Today, though, he sees few young people interested in the physical, manual tasks and lifestyle surrounding the making of traditional cider and perry. He explained:

Kevin Minchew: The older generation... Kids my age they don't want to know, or people younger than me, they are not gonna work, they don't want to work. They want to press buttons or get someone to do it for them, whereas I actually enjoy, um, being out there and being part of it.

It's real life isn't it? You know, you are a part of the landscape for a short period of time. You are making it work. You are using its resources, you're turning it into something else.

And I think it is a privilege to be able to do that in this day and age. It's an honor. And it's a determined thing as well - it just feels part and parcel of my lineage if you like, to carry on.¹²⁷

Kevin's interest in cider and perry making grew out of the agricultural and rural landscape in which he grew up, and his passion and inspiration are drawn from the physical nature of the work that brings him into contact with the season, the landscape, and the mechanical tools of the trade.

His love of this work demonstrates the key poetic theme of the romanticization of labor in a visceral, lived reality. This is not a thin or shallow romanticizing of a condition of life, but rather an attachment to the work itself. Kevin, Tom, and Mike are passionate about their craft. Kevin is aware that his love of labor as an aspect of rural life may no longer resonate with

¹²⁷ Minchew, interview.

younger people. His description of the lives of the older generation of rural cider makers references the conditions of life in the vanishing economic system that employed rural laborers in interdependent relationships that included housing compensation in the form of a “tied cottage” - a cottage on the farm property that was specifically set aside for hired laborers. With the tied cottage, pay could often be low, and the isolation of country life, especially for a man without a family, could be lonely. Drinking homemade cider often eased financial and social difficulty. Kevin described the role that homemade cider played in this rural lifestyle, and how it defined a kind of masculine rural role of the Old Boys:

Kevin Minchew: A lot of farmers, farm hands, farm laborers, with what they called a tied cottage you know, with next to nothing in wages, but you could drink as much as you like, and you might have a chicken at the weekends, or take some bacon [....]

The older generation - they lived in tied cottages. The pub's there - are they going to walk all the way to the pub, every night, or frequently, or take their horse or bicycle? No. They will just sit in isolation listening to the radio and drinking alcohol, which costs them nothing, and eating fat bacon and potatoes. I met a few people like that.

Maria Kennedy: Is that what you'd call, like, 'Old Boys'?

Kevin Minchew: Old Boys - yeah. Old Boys now, they are sort of well into their 70s and 80s. I was with them when they were perhaps in their late 60s and 70s trying to learn as much as I can from them. How do you process Rock [a variety of pear]? What is it? It's difficult. You can't just read about it in literature and apply it physically to the material you are dealing with. It doesn't tie up, you know, word for word. You've got to use your own imagination to a certain extent.¹²⁸

Kevin's remembrances of the Old Boys from whom he learned the skills and tradition of cider making reveals a rural lifestyle that was bare, raw, lonely, and full of privation. While stories like this evoke isolation and hardship, they also evoke independence and self-sufficiency. Kevin also emphasizes the importance of learning knowledge that these Old Boys possess in working,

¹²⁸ Ibid.

living form. While one might be able to read about some of these topics, like processing the Rock pear, in a book, the Old Boys know about it, and have done it, and can discuss it. Kevin is aware that next to reading, one must also apply imagination. But talking to the Old Boys in person alleviates a lot of trial and error that learning from books inevitably requires. The Old Boys might make bad cider, as Tom Oliver found, and they might be lonely, poor, and isolated, as Kevin Minchew knew, but to these two cider makers their knowledge was still worth learning in person.



**Kevin Minchew and his Cider Shed
including:
Diesel Engine attached to Scratter and
The large press**

Transition and Transmission

*"They're pretty much all gone. Hell, I'm an old man now."*¹²⁹ – Nick Bull

Old Boys are the ones who keep traditions going, who have one hand in the past, who are the engineers of heritage in the sense that they have both preserved its material existence in the form of objects, skills, and knowledge, but also in that they have actively chosen to preserve such skills and knowledge. An Old Boy, I observed, though he might be isolated, and in poor circumstances, often drew the attention of others in the community with interest in his skills or knowledge. Old Boys tended to collect followers, especially if they chose to embrace and inhabit the role, like Roger Wilkins. Even those who were notable in part for their isolation or eccentricity were subjects of stories and anecdotes in the larger community. Even Kevin's less-than-rosy description of Old Boys as men whose isolated cider drinking resulted from the poverty of their agricultural employment, still paints them as keepers of particular kinds of knowledge worth seeking out – the knowledge of manual work that cannot be communicated in books but must be experienced, and experimented with, in order to be passed on intact.

The rural community needs Old Boys in order to transmit certain aspects of its history, and if someone does not assume the Old Boy role himself, he may find it assigned to him, should his habits and background conform to the social role. Old Boys embody the persona and processes of tradition in sociable form – to interact with them is to be drawn into the experience and creation of history through real persons, grounding the production of heritage in particular kinds of activities and forms of sociability. What does it mean that certain kinds of rural identity and heritage are tied up with the Old Boys? How long will Old Boys continue to exist in a world of changing gender roles, and will changing forms of sociability affect the objects of heritage themselves? Cider maker Nick Bull's experience demonstrates that in some ways, yes, Old Boys

¹²⁹ Nick Bull et al., interview by Maria Kennedy, January 17, 2013.

represent a world almost gone. But perhaps this social obsolescence is ongoing process? As one generation's knowledge passes out of everyday use, another generation rises up in search of it.

Nick and May Bull, with their son Tom, own and run Severn Cider, a growing cider business based at their property in the village of Awre, a small peninsula jutting out from the north bank of the Severn Estuary in Gloucestershire. Nick's parents moved to their small farm after the Second World War when his father, a former airline pilot, decided to move to the country. Living in a damp, draughty farmhouse, and lacking knowledge of farming or the local area, they employed a hired man to help with the property.

This region of Gloucestershire, south of the Forest of Dean, is fairly remote today, though some of the slightly crumbling towns along the banks of the river tell of past wealth from a time when the river was a more active area of transportation, manufacturing, and shipping. It is also a region rich in orchard history. Driving down the main road from Gloucester, you can see old standard orchards in the fields along the road. Turning off towards Awre, the lone sentinels of ancient perry pear trees loom in pastures or in front of houses. These trees, which can survive for three centuries, are local landmarks of an era when perry was a common drink in the region, when farmers cultivated trees of local origin to make a quality drink for their own tables. Perry pear varieties such as the Blakeney Red and the Arlingham Squash bear the names of local villages along the Severn. When Nick's family came, though, there was little money to be made from the orchards, and many were being grubbed out. Nick ascribes the situation to the economic impact of the large cider companies at that time:

Nick Bull: Bulmers particularly has depressed the price of fruit. It wasn't economic to maintain the orchards, let alone plant new stock. So actually cider factories have a lot to answer for. They didn't maintain a viable economic base for the old orchards to be continued [...]

I can remember Dereck Nash blowing trees up. There was no money in the fruit. If a cow ingested it and got stuck in the throat, then you've got a dead cow. So there was no incentive to invest in it.¹³⁰

Later in his life, though, Nick Bull had developed a passion for identifying and saving old perry pear and cider apple varieties. Much of the knowledge he acquired on cider and perry making, on the identity of specific trees and varieties in the area, and on the nature of rural crafts and occupations, was gleaned from old men in the village. First and foremost among his teachers was the hired man his father employed to help on the farm, and for whom they first began to make cider. Though it was not technically a form of payment in this case, the situation echoes the long tradition of farm laborers being paid partially in cider. Nick tells how this hired man, Sid Knight, introduced his family to cider making:

Nick Bull: My father started in 1956. He employed an old man called Sid Knight, who had fought in the First World War. He knew all his fruits. And he wanted to have cider.

So, my father was an airline pilot who knew nothing about it. Came out to the country. And um, said, "Ok we'll make a barrel of cider." So we always made a barrel of cider for Sid Knight, and for ourselves as well. Sid would talk about various trees he knew, particularly the perry pears, the huffcaps [a type of pear] and so on and so forth... So that was really the start of interest. Because, at lunchtime and end of the day, we'd go down to the cellar to have a tot –

May Bull: That's what he wanted your dad to make the cider for, so he could have his tot. Lunchtime. End of day. He didn't function without that - that was the oil in his working wheels

Maria Kennedy: So he was just employed as a worker on the farm?

Nick Bull: Yeah. And he was a stretcher-bearer in Ypres. Anyway, so that was the start of it. And we've always made cider since.

May Bull: Since your dad died when you were young, twenty, Sid kept working for us, so you then had to be making the cider for Sid. And all during your boyhood, and into your twenties or thirties while he was still around, he was one of the people who would talk to you about the things you are describing. And from that your interest grew and talked to other people.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

Nick Bull: So I started at a very tender age.

Nick elaborated on the other people he talked to about cider, perry, and old trees later in the interview, when he was telling me about his research into old varieties, and his discovery of a previously lost variety called the Blakeny Green perry pear:

Maria Kennedy: How did you find it? How did you realize what it was?

Nick Bull: Just talking to old men. You know.

Maria Kennedy: Here in the village?

Nick Bull: Go to the pub and talk to old - No good going in the evening, go at lunchtime - talk to the old men. And, actually, they are pretty much all gone. Hell I'm an old man now. (laughter)

Maria Kennedy: And what do they tell you?

Nick Bull: "Oh Yeah, there was a Blakeny Green" and they find someone else "Oh there was another one down by the church" and you know, there it is.

Maria Kennedy: I always find it amazing that these kernels of knowledge are just tucked away in someone's mind –

Nick Bull: Tucked away, and unless you've got some line of sympathy – that's probably the wrong word - with the person you are talking to, you are never going to get that information.

Maria Kennedy: I think that often when I am going round talking to people. It's easy to talk to folks such as you or Charles Martell. But if I had gone into the pub, and talked to those Old Boys, I never would have gotten a thing.

Nick Bull: No, you wouldn't because you haven't actually got - and very few people have - the touchstones, to use a phrase.

Maria Kennedy: What would those touchstones be?

Nick Bull: A common interest, a recognition of things, which enables them to give you information. Probably have been locked up in their minds for decades, and that little touchstone releases the information. But you actually have got to have that, you have to have quite a deep base yourself. I was talking to a guy about salmon fishing today –

Maria Kennedy: What, say that again?

Nick Bull: Salmon fishing, in the Severn.

Maria Kennedy: You were salmon fishing?

Nick Bull: I've done it. This old guy, we were yacking away for about an hour probably. And just those few touchstones – how the river's changed its course, and how that affects the fishing but unless you know about it, you can't plug into that man's memories. [...] That's probably intuitive for me, because I'm probably part of the land. I am part of the land.

Maria Kennedy: So those Old Boys are gone, mostly?

Nick Bull: Pretty much.

Maria Kennedy: And do you think that kind of person is sort of extinct now?

Nick Bull: The trouble is the economic base. Fundamentally nineteenth century economics are gone. Talk about salmon fishing. Ok, from the middle of the last century it's been in decline. In such decline now that it hardly pays to buy a license to do it. There's very few people who can kind of devote the time to it or make a living at it. That was the same with cider making and the old varieties, the rest of it.¹³¹

Nick's narrative of the transmission of traditional knowledge conveys several interesting ideas about the Old Boys who are the bearers of this knowledge: First they are almost all gone. Second, their knowledge and occupations are left over from an economic era that is now largely irrelevant. Third, their knowledge is only accessible by those who are at least partially able to share their experience, that is to say, usually another man with some knowledge of manual trades and local landscapes. One has to be, as Nick puts it, "part of the land." And as I suggest, one has to share at least some of those attributes of these old men. Nick's joke, "Hell, I'm an old man now" is apt. In a way, he has carried on this knowledge and has become the next generation of the Old Boys, and I am now seeking him out.

¹³¹ Ibid.



Scenes from the Village of Awre, home of Severn Cider. Below, a large orchard can be seen in front of the Severn Estuary in the distance. To the left, a large Perry tree stands at the crossroads in the village. The Blakeney Perry Pear is named for the village nearby.



The Tradition of Excellence: The Master Cider Maker and His Milieu

The Old Boys are seen to guard a certain kind of authenticity that is tied to the labor of the countryside, but there are other roles that the cider maker may inhabit. The role I examine from here onwards represents a level of remove from the archetypal Old Boy and his mythical, sometimes idiosyncratic attachment to the countryside. One can imagine these roles as a set of concentric circles, through which individuals can move as their identities shift through time, community relationships, and age. The processes of transition described as men like Nick Bull become Old Boys suggest the question: what were they before they became Old Boys?

Here I examine a social role that precedes, and sometimes leads into that of the Old Boy: the master cider maker. The master cider maker is someone who has gained the respect of his peers, who is looked to as an exemplar of the craft of cider making, and whom others approach for insight and advice. Rather than being a term like “Old Boy” that is used and applied by people within their own context, I have coined the term “master cider maker” to describe a role that is implicit but usually unnamed. I use the term to describe ways of relating to communities of practice and to communities of commerce. The master is recognized by his peers, informally through habits of interaction, and formally through the many competitions that cider makers enter to distinguish their products and mastery of their craft. Henry Glassie’s discussion of mastery in *The Potter’s Art* is a useful jumping-off point for considerations of culturally specific assignments of value in the performance of art and craft:

The masters are artists. They create. But they also manage a workshop, and as part of their managerial duties they teach, standing in a parental role to their workers, guiding them to correctness in art and life, and running the business on which their livelihoods depend. One can claim to be an artist, but only society grants the higher title of master. The artist is talented. The master is talented and socially responsible.¹³²

¹³² Henry Glassie *The Potter’s Art*, Material Culture 1 (Philadelphia : Bloomington: Material Culture ; Indiana University Press, 1999).

Glassie's description of the difference between a master and an artist is applicable to cider making. Even though the term master cider maker is rarely used, it is a category that is socially understood. Having one's cider awarded a prize, even winning a champion status, does not entirely qualify one as a Master cidemaker. Something more is required.

Enlightenment Masters: Evelyn, Beale, Scudamore, and the Elevation of the Craft

Before exploring contemporary masters, it is important to refer back to the origins of a discourse of mastery in cider making and orchard management. While ideologies of mastery in relation to art forms and crafts can be developed in many differing cultures and circumstances, the specific historical roots of the recognition of masters and mastery are unique to each art form and are judged and amended over time. They influence contemporary practice, and indeed the ways that contemporary standards of mastery reinforce themselves through references to historical precedents show the process of heritage-making at work.

The recognition of cider making as an undertaking that could be more than merely functional, that could in fact be marked by excellence and distinguished by master practitioners, can be traced back to the era of the late Renaissance and early Enlightenment in England. During that period several aristocratic, scientifically-minded authors introduced cider making as an endeavor worthy of attention to the landowner interested in improving his estates. As I briefly introduced in chapter one, John Evelyn was a founder of the Royal Society and author-editor of the work *Pomona*, an appendix to his larger work on the management of timber woodland, *Silva*. *Pomona* appealed to landowners to consider planting and managing orchards on their own

estates, and to engage in cider making as informed by emerging methods of scientific thought.¹³³

In his historical chronicle of cider in England, *Golden Fire, the Story of Cider*, Ted Bruning characterizes the relationships of enthusiastic writers, practitioners, and politicians of cider making as an interconnected coterie that:

embraced both Puritan divines and Royalist landowners, who had these things in common: the benefit of generations of experience in every aspect of cider making from orchard husbandry to fermentation; a spirit of rational enquiry tied to a dedication to constant experiment and improvement; a huge pride in – and enjoyment of – their cider; and a zealous belief that it deserved to be, and could become, England’s national drink.¹³⁴

Urging on this coterie, according to Bruning, was Samuel Hartlib, “a German scholar and polymath” who “advocated paying close attention to the selection and propagation of the most productive plant varieties, including cider apples, which he claimed were badly neglected in England.”¹³⁵ Hartlib corresponded with other cider making enthusiasts such as Ralph Austen, who published *Treatise on Fruit Trees* and a pamphlet called *The Spiritual Uses of an Orchard*,¹³⁶ and John Beale, who contributed to Evelyn’s *Pomona* and published his own work with Hartlib, *Herefordshire Orchards* in 1657.¹³⁷

Amongst a flurry of writing on the topics of orchard management and cider making in this period, Evelyn’s *Pomona*, a collection of essays and aphorisms, was perhaps the most singularly authoritative in its impact, as a manual of practice, as a political statement, and as a

¹³³ Evelyn, *Sylva; or, A Discourse of Forest-Trees, and the Propagation of Timber in His Majesties Dominions. As It Was Deliver’d in the Royal Society, the XVth of October, CI)I)CLXII ... To Which Is Annexed, Pomona; or, An Appendix Concerning Fruit-Trees in Relation to Cider, the Making and Several Ways of Ordering It*.

¹³⁴ Bruning, *Golden Fire*, 56–57.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 57.

¹³⁶ Ralph Austen, *The Spirituall Use of an Orchard, or Garden of Fruit-Trees. Set Forth in Divers Similitudes Betweene Naturall and Spirituall Fruit-Trees, in Their Natures, and Ordering, According to Scripture and Experience. The Second Impression; with the Addition of Many Similitudes. By Ra: Austen, Author of the First Part* (Oxford: printed by Hen: Hall, printer to the University, for Tho: Robinson, 1657), http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_val_fmt=&rft_id=xri:eebo:image:168464.

¹³⁷ John Beale and Samuel Hartlib, *Herefordshire Orchards, a Pattern for All England: Written in an Epistolary Address to Samuel Hartlib, Esq* (London: Printed by Roger Daniel, 1657).

literary manifestation of the network of interacting minds contributing to the larger discourse.

The literary call to excellence in the management of orchards and the methods of production created an environment where masters of these arts could be recognized and lauded. While most practitioners have probably been lost to history, a few stand out who remain icons of mastery in the art of cider making, and whose memories are resurrected with each new wave of enthusiasm for the craft.

One of the great cider makers of this early period was Lord John Scudamore (1601-1671), a landowner in Holme Lacy, Herefordshire, who had served as ambassador to France under Charles I. Scudamore did not leave any treatises himself, so it is noteworthy that he is mentioned often. He was obviously well known amongst the coterie of cider makers, and was a cousin of writer John Beale. Returning to a quote from John Evelyn that I referenced in Chapter One, we see that Evelyn singles Scudamore out, along with the enterprising fruitier of Henry VIII, as introducing well-managed orchards to England:

It was by plan industry of one Harris (a fruitier to King Henry the Eighth), that the Field and Environs of about thirty Towns, in Kent onely, were planted with Fruit; to the universal benefit, and general Improvement of that County to this day; as by the noble example of my Lord Scudamore, and of other publick spirited Gentlemen in those parts, all Hereford-shire is become, in a manner, but one entire Orchard.¹³⁸

Scudamore is credited with introducing the cultivation of a particularly excellent variety of cider apple, the Herefordshire Redstreak, which was viewed as one of the most influential cider varieties for centuries afterwards. Other advances in the craft included methods of bottling and achieving a sparkling cider introduced in various methods by Sir Paul Neil and Captain Taylor in Evelyn's *Pomona*.

¹³⁸ Evelyn, *Sylva; or, A Discourse of Forest-Trees, and the Propagation of Timber in His Majesties Dominions. As It Was Deliver'd in the Royal Society, the XVth of October, CI)I)CLXII ... To Which Is Annexed, Pomona; or, An Appendix Concerning Fruit-Trees in Relation to Cider, the Making and Several Ways of Ordering It*, 2.

The influence of these early writers can be traced through contemporary writers such as James Crowden, author of *Cider the Forgotten Miracle*¹³⁹ and *Ciderland*.¹⁴⁰ The latter work is a compilation of profiles of contemporary cider makers that could be viewed as an ode to Master cider makers of our own day. The need to recognize masters, to lift the level of the craft, transcends these distant generations. The qualities that first recommended recognition amongst Evelyn's coterie are important historical precedents for the recognition of masters today: the establishment of orchards, model stewardship of land, innovative approaches to production in a "publik-spirited" mode, all of which look beyond individual gain and encourage the sharing of ideas.

Contemporary Masters: Mentorship and Community

According to Mike Johnson and Tom Oliver, two cider makers considered by many to be masters of the craft, the most important quality of a good cider maker is not necessarily a rural background or an immersion in an agricultural lifestyle reminiscent of the Old Boys, or even an abiding interest in developing a rural business. Rather, it is the ability to enjoy and discuss cider, to create a sphere of social hospitality and personal connection.

Mike and Tom have been recognized as masters of their craft in a way few others are formally recognized. In 2009 Mike was recognized with the Pomona Award from CAMRA (The Campaign for Real Ale) for his many contributions to the art of cider making. CAMRA describes the significance of the Pomona Award, which is, "presented by CAMRA to the person, people, place or thing who has done the most to promote real cider or perry over the previous 12 months or for ongoing work to promote cider and perry." The award can go to a person or to an

¹³⁹ Crowden, *Cider - the Forgotten Miracle*.

¹⁴⁰ Crowden, *Ciderland*.

organization, and is not necessarily awarded every year. Tom Oliver was honored with the award in 2013. Other recent winners of the award include Dr. Andrew Lea, former pomologist at the Long Ashton Research Station and author of one of the most widely-read recent home manuals, *Craft Cider Making*.¹⁴¹ Recent organizational winners include *The Cider Workshop*, an online forum for cider makers that has facilitated networks of information and community for cider makers beyond the neighborhood or nation, and the National Collection of Cider and Perry at Middle Farm in Sussex. The award signals not only technical excellence in the craft by a cider maker, if awarded to an individual, but larger contribution to the culture, heritage, and viability of the craft in the contemporary world.

Mike and Tom, formally recognized as masters, reflect on the difference between cider makers who are really interested in the craft, as opposed to those who are only interested in making money. Mike and Tom are often asked to taste ciders made by aspiring cider makers, and as they were sitting and talking in the cellar, they commented on why they think some of these cider makers fail at making a good product:

Mike Johnson: My personal opinion is that they don't actually drink it.

Tom Oliver: They don't actually love cider.

Mike Johnson: No. That's... Most of the bad ones come from people who are looking to make a business, not want to drink it.¹⁴²

Tom, born into agriculture and deeply passionate about its place in modern life also leads a very cosmopolitan life away from the farm as a tour director for music groups around the world. He was able to recognize, sift out, and reframe the aspects of agricultural life and craft in ways that were more relevant to changing cultural norms. Central to this reframing is a reorganization of

¹⁴¹ Andrew Lea, *Craft Cider Making* (Good Life Press, 2011).

¹⁴² Oliver and Johnson, interview.

expectations regarding the ability to taste and discuss the merits of the craft and products of cider and perry production.

John Edwards works with Mike Johnson making the cider for Ross on Wye Cider Perry, the brand name for the products made at Broome Farm. John also produces small quantities of his own cider for sale. He supports Tom and Mike's estimation of excellence as an ability to taste and discuss cider. In a discussion with fellow Broome Farm employee Phil Long in the cellar, they elaborated the importance of being able to differentiate taste. In addition, they noted that Mike made this skill accessible by making single variety ciders and offering them for tasting and sale in his cellar, a unique practice among cider makers, because it is not necessarily a profitable endeavor:

John Edwards: I think it is the most important thing for a cider maker is to develop a palate as you say, an appreciation of the different flavors within ciders.

I think the more you drink it, and the more you are aware of what you are drinking, certainly from a varietal point of view - going back to variety again - is definitely to know and appreciate the flavors, and the only way to do that is actually to drink it.

There are one or two cider makers locally who don't drink their own product, who don't drink enough of it. Shall we name names?

Phil Long: No, it's getting on...

Maria Kennedy: And we already know who they are anyway...

Phil Long: And the other thing you are lucky here is that Mike makes quite a lot of single variety, or blends with only a touch of something in. And a lot of cider makers don't.

So the range of things you can sample with Mike is huge. I don't know any other cider maker who does that...it's the only way you can learn to appreciate that apple.

It's like - we are just about to bottle Bulmer's Norman. It's the first time we've done a single variety of it. Most people don't know what to do with it, or just throw it into whatever they are making in small quantities.

[....]

Phil Long: The other thing is the way Mike makes it, because we do play, and try things, you actually learn where the apple fits in every year.

[....]

John Edwards: You get the opportunity to actually find out what it tastes like, and you've got enough there to work with –

Phil Long: - To mix and play

Mike's role as a mentor whose practice extends beyond the making of excellent cider, but making cider in a manner that educates himself, his workers, his customers, and his fellow cider makers on the taste qualities of the fruit, mark him as a master. His willingness to experiment could be attributable to any artist, but his commitment to extending the fruits of his experimentation to a broader education about the elements of the craft, access to methods of appreciation, and extension of its artistic possibilities in new directions, are recognized by others as evidence of his role as a mentor and master in the field.

Contemporary Masters – Competitions, Cider Trials, and Champions

Individuals alone, however, cannot necessarily spur on the preservation and development of the craft. While Mike Johnson's mentorship is often applied informally through his conversations in the cellar, through work with apprentices and peers in the fields, he also participates in more public venues for the promotion of cider, such as the Three Counties Cider and Perry Association. Masters can pass on their knowledge through a private lines of transmission and communication, but the creation of public, institutional modes for the circulation of knowledge is critical. In an era when the knowledge from older generations was sparse, fragmented, and often bad, the creation of a social network to revive and promote cider as

a form of heritage in contemporary practice was essential to the recognition of mastery as a social role. One figure through whom the importance of organizations to the revival of cider making becomes apparent is Jean Nowell.

Mike Johnson and Jean Nowell, retired cider maker of Lyne Down farm near Much Marcle, Herefordshire, sat down together to discuss the importance of the cider-making community that formed in the Three Counties area of Herefordshire, Worcestershire, and Gloucestershire. Mike, as we have seen, has been recognized by individuals and institutions as a master of the craft. But Jean too, as one of the older contemporary cider makers in the area, is sought after as a mentor. Like Mike, Jean grew up in Herefordshire, and she remembers her father making cider. I asked her how she began, and like Tom and Mike, she had looked to her own past, and had learned from a local mentor, Lynn Ballard, an eccentric inventor and repository of knowledge of old fruit varieties:

Jean Nowell: I think I got started partly because in my early childhood, near where Mike lives, on a farm there, my father made it. I think he made perry and cider. I only remember the cider.

It was available in the barrel for the people on the farm, and me and my brother were allowed to just drink it if we fancied it. So that left me with a liking for it. I think if you drink it when you are a kid, you've always got a kind of a taste for it.[...]

I started because my husband and I returned together. We sold our business [boarding kennels]....We sold it and I wanted to come back to Ross really. We found this little place next door and bought it right away and it had the kit there.

It was the equipment that intrigued me really. I didn't buy anything new...I liked the tradition of it. [...] It was fun doing old equipment up. I got my friend who was a sculptor up the road to dress the stone rollers...it all came together. It's fun to see the wear and tear on the stuff and what someone years ago has done to remedy the... [indecipherable]

I like the feeling of it being a tradition really. It was fun to do.... I didn't know anything about anything.

Lynn Ballard helped me the first year I had anything to sell.... He'd got that tradition behind him. His uncle was a famous perry maker - it was another Ballard. He was an inventor and a real eccentric and was always dressed in sacks and very well known in Colwall and invented a way of pressing apples with a motorbike.... They're famous inventors. He came and helped me rack and all the time he was talking to me about fruit.¹⁴³

When Jean started making cider in 1984, there were few others in the area who were making craft cider. Apart from her early mentor in Lynn Ballard, and her memories of her father, memories of tastings and competitions at the Long Ashton Research Station, and some courses at the local college, there were few resources.¹⁴⁴

Jean, in addition to being a personal mentor to several local cider makers, was instrumental in helping nurture the development of the Big Apple and the Three Counties Cider and Perry Association, organizations that seek to bring local cider makers together. The Big Apple¹⁴⁵ promotes the orchard and cider businesses of the parishes of Much Marcle, and The Three Counties Cider and Perry Association,¹⁴⁶ growing out of the Big Apple, promotes the interests of cider makers throughout the three counties region.¹⁴⁷

Another local of Much Marcle, Jackie Denman, helped Jean start an enthusiast day at Jean's farm, where she introduced people to the craft of cider making, many of whom went on to make cider themselves. Jean's nurturing of these organizations, events, and individuals contributed to the rebirth of cider making as an activity of local cultural significance beyond her own personal interests. In helping to create a dynamic social network within which the practice of cider making could be developed, she helped create the framework within which the very idea

¹⁴³ Nowell and Johnson, interview.

¹⁴⁴ The Long Ashton Research Station was a horticultural research institute in operation from 1903-2003 where major research on horticultural, agricultural, and food science issues, including pomology, fermentation, and cider making, was conducted.

¹⁴⁵ "Welcome to Big Apple!," *The Big Apple Association*, accessed December 23, 2015, <http://www.bigapple.org.uk/>.

¹⁴⁶ "Three Counties Cider & Perry Association."

¹⁴⁷ Fiona Mac, *Ciderlore: Cider in the Three Counties* (Logaston Press, 2003).

of mastery could be conceptualized. Jean was certainly not alone in these endeavors, but her participation in the early growth of the cider revival in the Three Counties, and the ongoing admiration she inspires demonstrates the ways in which a community of practice is formed. Though Jean may not have been a master in the beginning, her organizational work helped create the social space within which the role of master cider maker could be recognized, and she is certainly acknowledged as a Master now.

One of the great legacies of the formation of the the Big Apple, is the creation of a venue where the skill and artistry in the craft can be measured, and relationships between mentors and students could be formed. The Cider Trials at Putley, held during the Big Apple's Blossom Festival, helped catalyze a growing sense of community and identity around cider making. This competition is a peer-judged, blind-tasting event, where all the entrants themselves evaluate the entries. Once the organizers have arranged all the entries and set up the identical bottles with numbers, the cider makers are allowed into the small parish hall. Each cider maker can taste and judge all the ciders or perrys in the competition class that they themselves have entered.

As Jean explains, this method of competition is possibly most important for the way in which it encourages both aspiring and expert cider makers to taste the ciders and perries of other makers. Commenting on this aspect of the competition, Jean emphasized how this approach improves not only the individual palate, and the ability to discern good ciders and bad, but also the general quality of the whole community.

Jean cites cider maker Peter Mitchell, known for his scientific technique and now for his courses on cider making in both the UK and the United States, as raising the bar for quality:

Jean Nowell: Peter's success at the Big Apple competition.... It kept a better quality product [...] Tasting everybody's ciders and realizing you could do so

much better. And that is still an influence today I think. Because unless you try other people's and look around, how do you ever know how you are doing?¹⁴⁸

In addition to these personal connections to cider within family and community, however, Jean also recognized the resurgence of cider making as part of a general back-to-the-land movement that has continued from the 1980s into the present moment:

When people started buying John Seymour's book¹⁴⁹ about practical self-sufficiency and everyone thought they could keep a pig andThere was a general feeling that people wanted food properly reared or they'd grown it themselves.¹⁵⁰

As part of this larger resurgence of interest in countryside heritage, life, and its crafts, cider-making required new masters who would be willing to engage in the revival of old techniques, equipment, and knowledge from remaining Old Boys.

Rather than being the preserve of Old Boys hidden away in their remote farms, or of farm families making cider for themselves and their workers, the resurgence of cider making began to reach a wider audience of people in the 1980s onwards, like Mike, Tom, Kevin, Nick, and Jean, who were interested in engaging with the heritage of the craft. These cider makers had ties to the craft in their own pasts, ties which were often remote, and the access to knowledge and traditions themselves broken, incomplete, and imperfect.

But this revival also required adaptation of new methods and the creation of social mechanisms for circulating that knowledge, such as the Big Apple, and the Three Counties Cider and Perry Association. This social organizing is necessary in any era, and we have seen the evidence of it in the publications left by John Evelyn and his contemporaries in the Enlightenment period. Today, intimate spaces like Mike Johnson's cellar and more public ones

¹⁴⁸ Nowell and Johnson, interview.

¹⁴⁹ John Seymour wrote many books on small-holding, self-sufficiency, and English country life. His book, *The Complete Book of Self-Sufficiency* was published in 1976.

¹⁵⁰ Nowell, Jean, and Mike Johnson. Interview by Maria Kennedy, January 21, 2012.

facilitated by the Big Apple and the Three Counties Cider and Perry Association have made the cider revival possible.

Master cider makers have elevated the heritage and pleasure of cider making and cider drinking by redirecting social energy surrounding these activities towards an appreciation of taste and craft, rather than the traditional rural social identity of the Old Boys. Master cider makers have opened up the possibility for a more diverse range of people, including women and people from non-agricultural backgrounds, to participate in the culture of cider and become cider makers themselves. Reframed in this way, the master cider maker need not be an Old Boy, or even have a connection to the Old Boys. A master cider maker is an artist, someone who appreciates and studies the process of cider making itself, and is able to take the good from tradition. Most importantly, the master cider maker is a social catalyst, a mentor for others, and a person who actively seeks to preserve and develop a tradition in his or her contemporary moment.



Putley Cider Trials May 5, 2012



Conclusion

The social roles of Old Boys and master cider makers offer the possibility of engagement with rural heritage from a variety of experiences and perspectives. Whether imposed by outsiders or adopted by the individual, these social roles allow people to interact with stories about rural life and rural identity so that they can shape their connections to the past and the future, to their ideas of rural tradition and innovation. While the characteristics of the Old Boys sometimes exclude rather than invite interaction from others, the role itself provides a way to categorize and understand people who may be otherwise socially inaccessible. The role of the master cider maker provides for the possibility of mentorship and the exploration of the deeper heritage of the craft as well as the new possibilities of the art form.

Because of their historical associations with agricultural life, cider production and the people associated with it have strong resonances with rural heritage. Further, because it was not only a part of working life, but also a part of the sociability and interdependent relationships of workers, employers, friends, and families in rural life of the past, cider inspires opportunities for creating relationships in the present as well. Sitting in Mike's cellar with fellow workers and cider makers, it seems natural to connect not only with each other, but also with what came before us in this place.

Mike Johnson's comment on the importance of the cellar rings even more true when we consider cider as a salient symbol of social connection, not just between people in the present, but as an invitation to connect with the past: "Don't you think we have a lot of interesting discussions down here? [...] Maybe the alcohol releases people a little bit more, I don't know....".¹⁵¹ Perhaps this is why it is such a powerful vehicle for rural heritage: because its inherently social dimensions suggest modes of interacting with ideas and people across time and

¹⁵¹ Oliver and Johnson, interview.

space. To grow apples, to make cider, and to drink cider in the present escalates opportunities to muse on the relationships composed in rural life in the past and imagine how they might inflect the evolution of rural life in the present.

Ray Cashman's study of character anecdotes demonstrates the ways in which people discuss identity, and reveals points of tension, places where identity is unsure and must be negotiated.¹⁵² The social roles discussed here illuminate the contact zones between the borders of rural and urban, between the past and the present. In an increasingly urban, technologized world, people continue to negotiate the values that underpin the maintenance of the countryside, of agricultural practices that compose it, and the social relationships upon which its economies and ecologies depend.

What can we take away from this examination of social roles? First, their semiotic structures draw from a range of prior examples, but are stable and consistent enough to be recognizable over time, across broad geographic regions, and across cultural genres. However, they are malleable enough to be applied to unique individuals, adapted to the particular situations of place and time. The discovery of tale types, archetypes, and story structures has been the bedrock of folklore scholarship from the beginning, but the continuing importance of these theoretical principles can be seen in the social identities people construct to interact with each other as they negotiate ideas of heritage within their own lived experiences. But whereas narrative structures imply a fixed outcome, as in folk tales, the semiotic structure of social roles is one of assemblage and association. Social roles suggest the larger cultural narrative within which they exist, but the narrative is fluid and changeable. The cider makers profiled here chose from their memories, from their encounters with elders, from their own pasts, to arrive at a *raison*

¹⁵² Cashman, *Storytelling on the Northern Irish Border*, 13.

d'être to engage in the craft of cider making in an environment where it was no longer practiced, where its story had fallen almost silent.

In fact, as we have seen in these situations of revival of the craft, the old narratives of cider making existed in a context of economic relationships of unequal but co-dependent labor and patronage which are no longer relevant. In this economic narrative, both the agricultural laborer and the aristocratic gentleman farmer had roles, either as consumers of cider through the truck system or producers of it as industrious landlords. What semiotic features have persisted, and what have fallen away? The Old Boys represent a social role of persistence. In them, characteristics of eccentricity, anachronism, masculinity, and deprivation co-exist with the memories and skills of agricultural life as it was practiced a generation or more ago. The master cider makers represent the spirit of innovation, of discerning good qualities of cider making and discarding aspects of it that are not. They draw on the skills and memories of the Old Boys and make this knowledge available for new generations, but they also permit and even encourage changes in the applications of that knowledge.

The question at hand for these cider makers was not how to translate fixed narratives of cider making into a new era, but how to transfer the social roles and manual skills of the cider drinkers and cider producers into a scenario of new economic and social relations. How should they adapt the outmoded social roles so that a new story of rural life could be developed? From the laborer and the landlord, we have now moved to the Old Boys (laborers in decline) and master cider makers (landlord and laborer combined). In addition to these two primary social roles examined here, there are many more social roles to be considered in context of cider as it continues to play a part in the rural and urban cultures of Britain and other parts of the world. As

we are able to identify and name these roles, the personas of cider culture may signal the next evolution of the social structures upon which Britain's agriculture, and its countryside, are built.

Chapter Three

Discourses of Orchard Conservation: Ecology, the Built Environment, and Economic Sustainability

Laying the Hedges at Broome Farm

On my second visit to Broome Farm in March of 2012, I put on my wellies and wool work jumper and walked down to the wetland across the road with owner Mike Johnson, his business partner Phil Long, and friend Max Fleming. We were carrying saws and loppers, and spent that day and the next laying the hedge. Hedge-laying is a craft that shapes trees and shrubs into a stock-proof fence around fields and pastures. Cutting through the young trees, some about the size of my arm in girth, we laid them over on a sideways diagonal, leaving one side of the living bark intact, so that the trees would continue to grow. Laying a hedge is a traditional form of farm maintenance, creating stock-proof living fencing, and in years past, ensuring a supply of timber for fuel and fruit and berries for foraging. It is also a fine habitat for wildlife and may have an incredible variety of plant and animal species within its living, and continually growing, form.

In a country with relatively few wild spaces, the hedgerow is a functional and symbolic structure sheltering wildlife in an extremely cultivated land. It is a managed wilderness with a long aesthetic and occupational history in the British countryside. The freshly laid hedge, before new bushy spring growth hides the underlying structure, looks like a living form of basketry. Helping lay the hedge was my first act of conservation at Broome Farm and set the stage for understanding the orchards, and their potential for conservation, later.



**Laying a Hedge
at Broome Farm
with Mike Johnson
and Max Fleming
March 18, 2012**



Broome Farm is mostly covered in orchards, around fifty-six acres of them, which is not very large in the scale of modern farming. There are a few new perry trees in the meadow below the steep embankment leading up to the farmhouse from the road. A field of semi-dwarfing Michelins and Dabinetts stands across the road from the farm. Fields full of Browns, an acidic red apple, Chisel Jersey, Harry Masters Jersey, Ashton Bitter, and many others cover the rolling hills of the farm, just above the town of Ross on Wye. In the oldest orchard, where the 200-year-old Holmer pear tree towers over the other standard trees of many varieties, campers set up their tents and park their caravans for the weekend. Mike Johnson and his employees and partners know exactly what apples are in each row. They have harvested and pruned these trees year after year. Some trees ripen early in August, while others still have fruit clinging to the branches late in December. In the midst of a sea of leafy green in midsummer, when the fruit is still too small to distinguish, it can be difficult for anyone to identify what the variety of any given tree is. But an experienced orchardist like Mike knows, because he has harvested them all. He knows their growth habits, and when the last heavy crop was, and whether the trees are stressed from lack of rain, or soggy from too much.

The familiarity of a farmer with his property, his fields, and their deficiencies and potentials is something that is often poorly understood by those who do not know the rhythms of rural life. Ethnobotanists David Reedy and Will McClatchey have demonstrated that the kind of situated knowledge older, traditional cider makers have is not necessarily based on knowing the names of the varieties in their orchards, but on the characters of the trees and the fruit produced in very localized conditions:

Cider makers who have a sense of rootedness to their land often know intricate details about trees in their orchards. They may know the rate at which they

bloom, which trees do better in which conditions, or what the sugar levels of fruit will be on a given year. With all this knowledge, why would names have significance?¹⁵³

Names of course, are important for the abstract kind of knowledge that accompanies classification and rational scientific discourse. But the kind of intimate knowledge a farmer has of his land is something that can only be gained through long experience and years of commitment to a property. Mike Johnson knows his orchard this way, but he also knows and studies the many names and varieties of the fruit he uses for cider. And he is interested in the kinds of wildlife that inhabit his farmed fields. The occupational knowledge he has gained from years of experience is vital to being able to apply conservation and heritage practices on his property that will benefit the general public.

The previous chapter examined the development of particular aspects of the cider poetic in the context of social roles in the countryside and their function in producing ideas of heritage. The social roles of heritage provide archetypes that can both direct and constrain social interaction according to pre-conceived social boundaries, but they can also enable improvisation and experimentation as social identities evolve and historical moments change. We have seen that cider production contributes to social roles of heritage as a living symbol of vanished farm economies. It also, however, acts as an index for the material realities of rural life involved in its making. By studying the social roles of the Old Boys and the master cider makers, it becomes clear that accessing information about the material realities of cider, its manufacture, and its agricultural components, is a crucial part of the process of incorporating cider into rural heritage discourse.

But we have also seen that the social role of the master cider maker has the capacity to innovate and adapt the practice of cider making and thus the meaning of cider in rural society.

¹⁵³ Reedy et al., “A Mouthful of Diversity.”

Through the work of contemporary cider makers like Mike Johnson, we move from encountering cider as a symbol of vanished rural livelihoods to an actual product of current production and consumption. Understanding cider as a real material presence, rather than simply as a signifier of rural heritage, necessitates a move into the places of its production, into the orchards and farms where it is created. While examination of the social roles enabling the transfer of this material knowledge has opened up a significant part of the heritage process, it is now important to understand in further detail how cider's material presence as a product of agricultural landscapes is framed within conservation and heritage discourse centered on orchards.

This chapter examines cider specifically through its material presence on the landscape in trees and orchards and how they are maintained within discourses of conservation and heritage. And we will also look at how individual farmers like Mike Johnson interpret and implement this discourse in practical management of agricultural property within the context of their own experience and understanding.

Mike's interests in conserving his property are motivated by personal feelings, but they are also shaped by and respond to the conservation and heritage discourses constructed within larger arenas of power controlled by state institutions, charities, and industry. In order to understand how orchards—the birthplaces of cider—have become sites of conservation and heritage, we need to examine how these different institutional forces construct not only ideas, but material realities of the orchard through authoritative discourses. I turn to Laurajane Smith's concept of "authorized heritage discourse" to understand how the material space of the orchard is conceptualized as a space where heritage work can happen. Laurajane Smith describes authorized heritage discourse as "reliant on the power / knowledge claims of technical and

aesthetic experts, and institutionalized in state cultural agencies and amenity societies.”¹⁵⁴

Authorized heritage discourse uses these positions of authority to construct ideas which actively shape the material world.

This chapter seeks to understand how orchards are constructed as sites of conservation and heritage through specific authorized heritage discourses of ecology, the built environment, and economic sustainability, and will investigate the institutional origins of these discourses. Each strain of authorized heritage discourse creates different modes of conservation, but the multiple avenues of discourse increase the number of opportunities for orchards to be included as spaces of conservation and heritage. In addition, the accumulation of various conservation and heritage discourses exponentially increases the cultural resonance of orchards. And in bridging these different discourses, orchards and cider call into question the separate constructions of conservation and heritage, manifesting as a particularly powerful site for the cultivation of rural identity in Britain.

Often the discourse of conservation envisioned at the policy level may seem quite different from the practice of heritage articulated within the endpoint projects and programs putting orchard conservation into practice. The dissonance between the authorized heritage discourse and the practice of conservation at the local and individual level presents opportunities to critique heritage or conservation discourse, either to better structure it for effective implementation or to correct it to be more representative of its intended audience. The focus of this chapter will be on understanding the authorized heritage discourses applied to orchard sites, while the next chapter will explore in more detail how conservation and heritage discourses are engaged in practice.

¹⁵⁴ Laurajane Smith, *Uses of Heritage* (London ; New York: Routledge, 2006), 11.

Discourses of Ecology: Agri-Environment Schemes and Orchards as Wildlife and Biodiversity Refuges

As the craft of cider making has undergone a revival, so too has emerged an interest in conserving orchards and preserving old varieties of fruit. Orchards are now considered sites worthy of conservation status, and individual trees and fruit varieties are considered objects of heritage to be collected, catalogued, and propagated. Ideas of cultural heritage and environmental conservation are not necessarily aligned, and their discourses sometimes arise from differing principles and have separate goals. Heritage discourse is primarily concerned with the interpretation and maintenance of cultural and social history. Environmental conservation discourse, by contrast, is concerned with discourses of ecology and biodiversity.

Orchards are not the only form of agricultural landscape to be afforded conservation status under the England's environmental policy body, Natural England, but they are certainly one of the most popular in terms of their recognition in heritage projects that reach beyond the immediate context of agricultural land management implemented by farmers and into conservation projects that engage the wider community.

Orchard conservation arose as a form of agricultural land management in the context of wide ranging efforts to identify and protect biodiverse ecological habitats in a countryside that had been managed for intensive agriculture in the post World War II era. Until World War II, farming practices had continued in a largely traditional manner, with periodic advancements in science and technology. Mechanization of farm labor made inroads, but in many corners of Britain, horse power was still a major part of farm life until the war. After World War II however, the Green Revolution, which influenced the development of intensive agriculture worldwide, changed the course of land use and farming practice in Britain as well, leading into an era known as productivism.

Agricultural policies encouraged the expansion of fields, and the removal of hedges. The use of fertilizers, pesticides, and other chemical inputs increased, while human labor on the land decreased dramatically. These changes were fostered directly by government agricultural policy, which directed farming practice through economic policy that curtailed or expanded production through direct subsidies to farmers and control of markets. Michael Winter, scholar of British rural policy, identifies three primary periods in the development of agricultural policy in the post-war period leading up to 1972. The first period from 1945 to the early 1950s was, “marked by expansion of output regardless of cost in order to provide food in conditions of shortage, a deteriorating trade deficit, and in the context of continuing government controls over both wholesaling and retailing.”¹⁵⁵ From the early 1950s to the early 1960s, the government ended systems of fixed prices and transitioned to a system of minimum support prices to “limit exchequer expenditure by encouraging efficient home production.”¹⁵⁶ In the third phase from the early 1960s to 1970s, Winter identifies, “a period of agricultural protection in the face of growing world food surpluses.”¹⁵⁷ From 1973 onwards Britain entered the European Economic Community and was governed by the Common Agricultural Policy. Until the 1980s, the post-war period was focused on food production and economic stabilization, according to Winter, and “non-agricultural interest groups, representing food consumer or environmental interests, remained largely marginal to the policy process.”¹⁵⁸

Within a generation, however, the economic, social, and environmental consequences of intensive agriculture caused a reaction in the opposite direction. Termed “post-productivism,” the subsequent era has seen government interests turn towards subsidizing conservation efforts

¹⁵⁵ Michael Winter, *Rural Politics: Policies for Agriculture, Forestry and the Environment* (Routledge, 1996), 106.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 111.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 113.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 127.

and recognizing rural places as sites of social and economic benefit beyond their agricultural output in the spheres of tourism, leisure, and ecology.¹⁵⁹ It is in this context that agri-environment schemes developed in Britain, with orchard conservation emerging as a particular case. In 1981, The Wildlife and Countryside Bill was passed, protecting native species of birds and enhancing rules concerning public rights of way in the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. As Michael Winter has said in his analysis of this change in agriculture, “By the early 1990s the environment had become, at least in terms of policy rhetoric, one of the main policy planks on which the agriculture departments in the UK took their stance.”¹⁶⁰

In assessing the impact of agri-environment schemes as a catalyst for orchard conservation, several questions emerge. What are the rhetorical frameworks for recognizing a landscape as having biodiversity value? Why has wildlife conservation become the dominant discourse in agri-environment schemes, as opposed to a discourse of genetic heritage, which is often the concern of fruit growers, cider makers, and local enthusiasts who are interested in old varieties? How does conservation impact traditional forms of land management and the skills and customs associated with them? Conservation and heritage can mean many things to many people. Let’s consider first its meaning in government agri-environment conservation policy.

Acquiring Conservation Status: What Makes an Orchard Traditional

Orchards and fruit trees were first included for conservation on agricultural land under the category “Historic Landscapes” and “Old Meadow and Pasture” with the introduction of the

¹⁵⁹ Geoff Wilson, “From Productivism to Post-Productivism... and Back Again? Exploring the (Un)Changed Natural and Mental Landscapes of European Agriculture,” *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 26, no. 1 (2001): 77.

¹⁶⁰ Winter, *Rural Politics*, 225.

Countryside Stewardship Scheme in 1991.¹⁶¹ According to the archived web content on Natural England's website, "Countryside Stewardship was the Government's main scheme for the wider countryside, aiming to improve the natural beauty and diversity of the countryside, enhance, restore and re-create targeted landscapes, their wildlife habitats and historical features, and to improve opportunities for public access."¹⁶² Through a series of changes to the name and structure of this agri-environment scheme, conservation of traditional orchards was integrated into Natural England's Environmental Stewardship under the Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) agri-environment scheme during their overhaul of the system from the former Countryside Stewardship and Environmentally Sensitive Area schemes in 2005.¹⁶³ In the most recent overhaul, the name returns to the name Countryside Stewardship, with orchards designated under the Higher Tier scheme.¹⁶⁴

Not all orchards are created equal, though, and the kinds of orchards which are supported as "traditional orchards" in the agri-environment scheme represent specific kinds of historical agricultural land management using large standard trees, often intended to serve partially as pasture for livestock. This low-intensity, mixed-use farming system is rarely economically viable for farms that must rely on their agricultural production for financial security today. But the inclusion of orchards in an agri-environment scheme significantly recognizes orchards as a

¹⁶¹ Simon Barker et al., "Conserving the Wildlife of Traditional Orchards," *British Wildlife* 23, no. 1 (October 2011): 8–16.

¹⁶² Natural England <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/contact>, "Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS)," accessed July 19, 2016, <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/content/20140523111208/http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/farming/funding/closedchemes/css/default.aspx>.

¹⁶³ Natural England <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/contact>, "Higher Level Stewardship," accessed July 18, 2016, <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/content/20140605090108/http://naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/farming/funding/es/hls/default.aspx>.

¹⁶⁴ "BE4: Management of Traditional Orchards Countryside Stewardship Grant - GOV.UK," accessed July 18, 2016, <https://www.gov.uk/countryside-stewardship-grants/management-of-traditional-orchards-be4>.

part of a low-input, traditionally managed, and therefore environmentally desirable, landscape for conservation.

Beyond the specific application of orchards, agri-environment schemes in Britain have sought to address changing attitudes towards uses of rural land by providing government subsidies for a variety of practices of low-input traditional agricultural land management, thus hoping to offset the financial losses farmers might incur by managing their land in less productive but more environmentally friendly ways. The schemes for orchards mentioned here are only a few of the programs and designations available, and specific designations and programs are constantly changing. Other designations of importance have included Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESA) and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). In addition, it should be noted that the specific designations of conservation subsidies for “traditional orchards,” though limited, do not preclude conservation subsidies for orchards that do not meet the standards for traditional orchards. Conservation subsidies could be applied for other aspects of an orchard’s landscape, such as maintenance of the land as a hay meadow, which also happens to have apple trees.

But regardless of the particular designation or formulation of policy, the construction of this discourse of conservation is intended to have generally the same outcome. According to Michael Winter’s assessment of the motivations of such programs, one of the primary issues the government was at pains to resolve was agricultural over-production. The problem was thus only partly environmental, and the solution was in many ways to maintain or revert to traditional, less-productive, forms of land management, justified through a discourse of ecology. Winter discussed this in the specific context of the Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) scheme:

ESAs have been heralded as an integral element in the new-look agricultural policy, reflecting the need to cut surplus production while still maintaining farm

income. At the same time they reflect a widely held view that neither designations of special sites nor conservation advice alone can prompt whole-farm management required to preserve an environmentally beneficial style of farming [...] The take-up of the scheme has, in most cases, been high, for although the payments are not great the scheme is flexible and in many cases farmers are happy to receive payments for continuing to farm in a traditional manner.¹⁶⁵

Despite their genesis, at least in part, in economic control and their common implementation through traditional practices, agri-environment schemes depend on underlying discourse of ecological conservation. Agri-environment schemes thus represent active incentivizing programs in which conservation ideologies developed and within which these bureaucratic institutions can be implemented. In order to understand how traditional orchards came to be recognized as sites of conservation, we must dig into the research reports and policy documents outlining the rhetoric of environmental conservation that justifies the designation of “traditional orchards” as conservation sites. We will look specifically at the designation of traditional orchards under the Higher Level Stewardship Scheme, which was active from 2012-2016.

Information on the Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) scheme advises farmers that they may have multiple options for conservation on their land:

Depending on the features on your farm, there are a variety of HLS management options and capital items which may be suitable to deliver the best environmental outcomes. But, unlike ELS [Entry Level Stewardship – a lower level program], the level of payments you receive depends on the number of options you are able to deliver. As mentioned, HLS is a targeted and competitive scheme that is only available to farmers and land managers in particular areas of the country (see **Natural England website** for details) or with particular high priority features on their holding.¹⁶⁶

The guidelines for Higher Level Stewardship Scheme, which was being written during and then implemented at the end of my fieldwork research period, describes traditional orchards as particular agricultural landscapes with the potential for environmental management in the

¹⁶⁵ Winter 229 – 232.

¹⁶⁶ <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/contact>, “Higher Level Stewardship.”

following terms, which emphasize their habitat potential for wildlife, as well as their role in historic landscapes and traditional land management:

Traditional orchards are characterized by widely spaced standard or half-standard fruit trees, of old and often scarce varieties, grown on vigorous rootstocks and planted at low densities, usually less than 150 trees per ha in permanent grassland. Where they occur, they are a record of historic land use and a distinctive feature in the local landscape, often containing rare fruit varieties and providing valuable habitats for birds, mammals and insects. Dead wood on old orchard trees can support many species of insect, including the rare noble chafer beetle [...]

Traditional orchards generally consist of apple (for fruit or cider), pear (for fruit or perry), cherry, plum or damson trees or cobnut plantations. Extant orchards that are over 30 years old may be eligible for options HC18, HC19 or HC20. Remnant and recently planted orchards may be eligible for option HC21. Preference will be given to sites that can provide public amenity – particularly public access.¹⁶⁷

The criteria for participation in the specific options available for Higher Level Stewardship depend on the specific features of the landscape to be conserved and the management actions to be taken. Traditional orchards could be eligible for conservation on a number of different grounds, and this guidance gives suggestions for specific subsidy options to apply for. The guidelines mention the historic nature of the sites, but they are primarily based on the concept that orchards provide habitat for insects and birds.

This very brief snapshot of some of the criteria and guidance for the traditional orchard conservation under Higher Level Stewardship should indicate the intensity of proscription on the definition of landscapes eligible for conservation, as well as the dense web of categorizations and cross-references within the bureaucracy. Though it is highly organized and rational, it requires a lot of savvy and experience to navigate this system of subsidies, and it changes every few years. To say that it is onerous for participating farmers is a vast understatement, and thus it is unsurprising in my conversations on the ground with farmer Mike Johnson at Broome Farm, that

¹⁶⁷ “NE350 Higher Level Stewardship: Environmental Stewardship Handbook, Fourth Edition, January 2013” (Natural England, January 2013).

he had little understanding or interest in the details of the schemes. He engaged his land agent to manage the paperwork for subsidy programs the farm was involved in, and he undertook the practical work demanded by the scheme's contract.

Though the details of agri-environment schemes may be beyond the interest or understanding of many people concerned with and even engaged in orchard conservation, this conservation discourse sets up the rulebook by which most other orchard conservation and heritage projects must operate. Another conservation discourse at the governmental level, the Biodiversity Action Plan, is also extremely influential and helps move the zone of conservation out of the realm of the individual property owner towards the recognition of orchards as part of broader regional landscapes and habitat zones.

Traditional Orchards in the Discourse of Landscape Scale Conservation

The notion that conservation can occur in human-created, rather than wild, environments, is still relatively underrepresented in the United States, but in Britain and Europe, the idea has more traction and is related to the emergence of landscape-scale approaches to conservation. The landscape scale view of conservation emphasizes networks of corridors for wildlife to move and interact, rather than focusing on the conservation of individual ecologically significant pockets of land or endangered species.

Separately from their designation within agri-environment schemes, traditional orchards were recognized as a habitat worthy of conservation through the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) during its review of habitats in 2005-2007. Whereas the agri-environment schemes are concrete policy measures, the UK BAP plan, first published in 1994, was a response to the

signing of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro. The UK BAP:

...described the biological resources of the UK and provided detailed plans for conservation of these resources. Action plans for the most threatened species and habitats were set out to aid recovery, and national reports, produced every three-to five-years, showed how the UK BAP was contributing to the UK's progress towards the significant reduction of biodiversity loss called for by the CBD.¹⁶⁸

The "Report on Species and Habitat Review" from June 2007 outlined the criteria used to review existing species and habitats in the UK BAP and add new species and habitats. Traditional orchards were added as a BAP Habitat at this time. The report states that, "Potential new habitats were assessed against the following criteria: International obligations; Risk (broadly similar to the Terrestrial & Freshwater species decline criteria); Importance for key species."¹⁶⁹ Traditional Orchards were included as a new habitat under the broad habitat category, "Broadleaved, mixed, and yew woodland" under the criteria: "Decline, Key Species."¹⁷⁰

This discourse of ecological conservation has characterized the traditional orchard as an oasis amidst the sea of ecologically barren, intensively managed farmland, and has created conditions for policy that sought to extend the conservation impact from the individual farm to the region at large. The UK BAP set the stage for considering orchards within the larger discourse of biodiversity as an ecological premise, setting orchards within a larger habitat context. In section 3.28 "Site series and relative value" of the 2009 Natural England Research Report, *Biodiversity studies of six traditional orchards in England*, we see this justification of value clearly spelled out:

The study sites demonstrated the richness and variety of biodiversity that orchards can harbour, with individual sites each having particular highlights in terms of diversity or rarity of species present. This finding points to the need to conserve

¹⁶⁸ "UK BAP," accessed July 18, 2016, <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-5155>.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 8.

series of orchards in order to ensure that the fullest possible range of species is safeguarded. A process of picking on certain groups to evaluate orchard (generally those groups where evaluation criteria have been developed to assess conservation value), runs the risk of underplaying the contribution of wide orchard biodiversity. This diversity has been shown by the orchard surveys to be considerable, especially when set against to the low levels of biodiversity in agriculturally intensive landscapes which make up the bulk of the English countryside (Vickery and others 2001, Robinson and Sutherland 2002).¹⁷¹

The authors caution against measuring biodiversity value solely by certain groups of organisms that have clear evaluation criteria.¹⁷² They stress that such individualized measures miss the larger value of traditional orchards as sites of relatively low human impact compared to intensively managed agricultural land. In this context, we see orchards valued not because particular trees or individual sites are intrinsically interesting or threatened, but because traditional orchards represent areas of rural land that have escaped intensification and thus may harbor remnant ecologies and species that were more extensive on the landscape prior to intensive farming. Traditional orchards are in this respect, life-rafts of biodiversity amidst a sea of fields sprayed with pesticides, fungicides, planted with monoculture crops, and spread with artificial fertilizers.

The wildlife conservation and biodiversity discourse emphasizes the capacity of traditional orchards to provide safe shelter for otherwise imperiled species, as well as serving as bio-bridges to or outposts of other richly biodiverse landscapes. This view of orchards highlights not only their importance as unique individual sites, but as part of larger configurations of habitat that support biodiversity at the landscape scale, and is presented as one of the key conclusions of the Natural England Research Report:

¹⁷¹ Natural England et al., "Biodiversity Studies of Six Traditional Orchards in England - NERR025," *Natural England - Access to Evidence*, April 23, 2009, <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/31028>.

¹⁷² Two such endangered species, which are often used as measures of biodiversity in orchards, are the mistletoe moth and the noble chafer beetle. See: Natural England et al., "Biodiversity Studies of Six Traditional Orchards in England - NERR025," *Natural England - Access to Evidence*, April 23, 2009, <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/31028>.

Orchards appear to be a significant part of a spatial series or network of habitats at a landscape scale, which are able to sustain scarce lichens and beetles, and perhaps other organisms, that require continuity of habitat through time. This habitat network is made up of orchards, hedgerow trees, wood pasture and ancient woodland.¹⁷³

Orchards, therefore, are not alone or unique in their contribution to ecological conservation in Britain's countryside. "Hedgerow trees, wood pasture, and ancient woodland" are all noted as significant and related forms of traditionally managed rural landscapes that serve as reservoirs of biodiversity. Traditional land management clearly has an important place in the landscape-scale conservation approach, but the implications of incorporating the preservation of the cultural heritage that is required to maintain traditional landscapes continues to evolve.

Freelance ecological consultant Keith Alexander points out the significance of traditional orchards at the landscape scale in his contribution to the *Orchards and Groves* conference and publication, while also challenging the common distinction in wildlife discourse between "natural", "semi-natural", or "non-natural landscapes."¹⁷⁴ He challenges assertions that orchards, as man-made cultivated landscapes, are not "wild" enough to warrant conservation. Instead, he emphasizes their capacity to host wildlife not only within the orchard itself, but throughout the larger habitat networks of various types of woodland and grassland with which orchards are co-extensive.

Alexander shows how the many surviving traditional orchards in the West Midlands of England also exist in proximity to the medieval forests of Dean, Wyre, and Malvern Chase. These "forests" are not wild, but represent areas of land set aside for hunting by the medieval monarchy, and include managed landscapes like the wood pasture, mentioned earlier in the Natural England Research Report. Alexander notes:

¹⁷³ England et al., "Biodiversity Studies of Six Traditional Orchards in England - NERR025," vi.

¹⁷⁴ Ian D. Rotherham, *Orchards and Groves: Their History, Ecology, Culture and Archaeology* (Wildtrack Publishing Limited, 2008).

Thus for a period of time, orchard-type wood pastures linked the historic wood pastures of our historic forests, providing habitat for relict old growth invertebrates at landscape scale. This was also the case in other key orchard-growing areas such as Kent with its old deer parks and wood-pasture commons [...] So although orchards might be viewed as cultural artifacts, or not somehow 'semi-natural' and therefore not a conservation priority, this is very much an academic plant ecology viewpoint. It has no basis in fact. Our traditional orchards have preserved a 'woodland ecosystem distinct from any younger age class' – part of the definition of old growth used by the Convention on Biological Diversity.¹⁷⁵

Thinking about orchards this way forces the observer of orchards to take a new perspective. Rather than looking at the orchard immediately before one's eyes, one is encouraged to pan outwards, towards a map-like picture of the landscape that connects orchard habitats to each other and to the other woodland, pasture, and forest habitats nearby.

Conservation in this sense is not about the individual orchard, but about the larger extension of landscapes that can support rich biodiversity of wildlife. That traditional, low-intensity orchards happen to be a cultivated, partially man-made environment is immaterial to their capacity to support and contribute to the landscape scale wildlife habitat. In this light, the choice of orchards as a protected landscape equipped with its own BAP can be seen as a strategy of Natural England to widen the scope for the kinds of landscapes that can be brought into the fold of conservation policy, funding, and regulation. This discourse of conservation emphasizes certain kinds of landscape structures, rather than specific wildlife objects, as the site of conservation labor. Though vulnerable wildlife objects, such as the noble chafer beetle, are still used as benchmarks for the success of landscape habitat conservation, this discourse moves the focus of conservation away from the fetishization of particular plants and animals and towards an understanding of the larger issues of landscape management for preserving diverse species.

¹⁷⁵ Keith N.A. Alexander, "The Special Importance of Traditional Orchards for Invertebrate Conservation, with a Case Study of the BAP Priority Species the Noble Chafer *Gnorimus Nobilis*," in *Orchards and Groves: Their History, Ecology, Culture and Archaeology*, ed. Ian D. Rotherham, Landscape Archaeology and Ecology, v. 7 (Sheffield: Wildtrack, 2008).

Though it is a driving force in the governmental bureaucracy upholding agri-environment schemes that fund conservation measures on individual farms and guide the development of projects by charities and public agencies, popular understanding of orchards as conservation sites relies on—and is perhaps limited by—other explanatory and persuasive discourses of conservation. Even though the discourse of landscape-scale conservation underlying agri-environment schemes emphasizes ecological goals, it does rest on an intrinsic commitment to the maintenance of man-made landscapes crafted with heritage skills and embedded with deep cultural history. The subsidies granted through agri-environment schemes support traditional land management activities in practice, if obliquely.

The Traditional Orchard and Economic Viability

The designation of the traditional orchard as constructed in BAP Status and integrated into Higher Level Stewardship schemes, excludes the vast majority of commercial orchards in England, which are planted in either higher density bush orchards for cider or trellised orchards for table fruit (these landscapes may be conserved under other measures in other agri-environment schemes—though not as traditional orchards). These higher density monoculture crops may be subject to intensive regimes of pesticide sprays, fertilizers, field traffic, and do not usually include livestock grazing underneath the tree canopy. Traditional orchards are usually remnants of orchards planted near a farmhouse, or are older plantations which farmers have decided to maintain until the end of their productive lifespan. Planting of new orchards of this type for commercial production is relatively non-existent, due in part to the development not only of market pressure, but also of the contract system of orcharding, especially in the cider industry. This contract system involves management oversight from the contracting company,

which often provides direction and advice on how orchards planted under their contracts should be managed.

Contracts with large cider companies, notably Bulmers and Westons in the West Midlands region, usually involve a close partnership between the farmer and the company, where orchards are planted and maintained with the guidance of the company's orcharding department. Chris Fairs, head of Bulmer's orcharding department until his retirement in 2012, describes where he sees the traditional orchard of standard trees fitting into the agricultural economy of the countryside today:

Standard orchards will survive - but they will survive for people who want to maintain the look of the countryside - for people who've already got a standard orchard there and want to gap it up - fill in the gaps where trees have fallen down.

And also for those people who get government or local government assistance - financial assistance to plant up an orchard.

So I think they have got a place, but it is not a commercial place. And while there are lots of orchards that have been re-established - and a few have been planted from new - the bulk of the fruit these days for the cider making comes from modern bush orchards of a much higher density. And the tendency is for that density to increase.¹⁷⁶

According to Fairs, the agricultural economy, which is moving more and more towards intensification, cannot support traditional orchards, except by offering subsidies to conserve them where they already exist. Chris himself is aware of and sensitive to the importance of traditional orchards as wildlife habitats, but his statement here also highlights the importance of traditional orchards as a visual and material form of landscape heritage. They, "maintain the look of the countryside."

¹⁷⁶ Fairs, Chris. 2012 Interview by Maria Kennedy.

Maintaining the look of the countryside, while not the explicit motivation of Natural England's agri-environment schemes, does in fact go some way to accomplishing their goals for ecological biodiversity. The maintenance of old traditional orchards, of hedgerows, woodlands, ponds, hay meadows, verges, and other forms of agricultural land management covered under the stewardship schemes, aims to promote biodiversity by encouraging traditional, low-intensity forms of agricultural management. Whether the message of biodiversity and wildlife conservation appeals to or is understood by the public within the larger and perhaps more relevant forms of the discourse of rural heritage referenced by the "look of the countryside" remains to be seen.

Discourses of the Built Environment: "The Look of the Countryside"

Chris Fairs's comment about the look of the countryside is extremely important in understanding the resonance of orchards as landscapes for conservation. While the environmental and agricultural policy discussed in the previous section has been extremely influential in creating a framework for conservation within economic and scientific discourses, these discourses do little to explain why orchards matter to people in human terms.¹⁷⁷ The look of the countryside is a deeply important aspect of rural heritage in Britain, and it is rooted in an understanding of the countryside as a built environment, influenced by human habitation for hundreds and even thousands of years. In this section, I will briefly outline the work of W.G. Hoskins in popularizing explorations of the landscape as built environment, following with a consideration of two institutions within which orchards have been designated as sites of

¹⁷⁷ One can argue that the long term impact of environmentalism is to make environments matter to people on the same order as human history. That is an important avenue of inquiry, and orchard conservation may be an interesting case study.

landscape heritage and incorporated in conservation projects: the National Trust and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs).

The work of W.G. Hoskins in *The Making of the English Landscape*¹⁷⁸ popularized interest in the history of the English landscape in the mid twentieth century. Hoskins encouraged the participation of the general public in the study of the landscape through direct contact—walking the fields and hedgerows. His work also hints at the depth of affective presence the landscape could evoke:

For what a many-sided pleasure there is in looking at a wide view anywhere in England, not simply as a sun-drenched whole, fading into unknown blue distances, like the view of the West Midland plain from the top of the Malvern Hills [...] but in recognizing every one of its details name by name, in knowing how and when each came to be there, why it was just that shape, color, or size, and not otherwise, and in seeing how the various patterns and parts fit together to make the whole scene.¹⁷⁹

Hoskins primarily addresses the development of medieval farmsteads and field patterns, and the effect of the enclosures on these structures. The hedgerow, a living fence created to control livestock, was always a part of the farm structure, but became much more important after the enclosures, when medieval common fields were divided up.

The hedgerow is another form of agricultural landscape heritage that has received considerable popular support as a symbol of rural heritage and an object of conservation, and its treatment as a part of the built environment can serve as a model for considering the orchard. There are many similarities between the hedgerow and the orchard in terms of their structure and function. The hedgerow is somewhat more wild than the orchard is cultivated. In both conservation practice and rural tradition, the hedgerow effectively functions as wilderness in a country where undeveloped land is rare. It is a habitat for many forms of wildlife both conserved

¹⁷⁸ W Hoskins, *The Making of the English Landscape*. (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1955).

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 19.

and hunted, a site for both conservation officer and poacher. By contrast, its formal properties are perhaps even more controlled than those of the orchard, as can be seen by the number of regional styles of construction and ornamentation and in the enactment of numerous competitions for practitioners of the craft. The hedgerow is iconic of rural England's landscape and serves as a model for understanding the emergence of the orchard as another kind of living agricultural landscape heritage.¹⁸⁰

Traditional orchards, as defined by Natural England, however, have only really been a part of the English landscape for a few centuries. As we have seen in previous chapters, their planting was especially advocated by the writings of John Evelyn in the seventeenth century, and the spread of orchards was a result of the interest of gentlemen farmers improving their estates.¹⁸¹ The subsequent incorporation of orchards into more modest farms made small farm orchards ubiquitous throughout Britain. And the expansion of large-scale fruit production in a few suitable areas created regions where the orchard was a significant landscape feature. Most traditional orchards still in existence today were probably planted within the last century, so they are not very old by the standards of other forms of landscape heritage, including hedgerows, medieval field patterns, and iron age hill forts.

The structure of the orchard reminds us of a form of living architecture, but its culinary properties lend it different qualities than other built forms of agricultural landscapes. While the outlines of medieval common fields are just visible to perceptive eyes in faint furrows thrown into visual relief by long afternoon shadows or fallen snow, we are not left with the grains of wheat themselves, since these annual crops are planted, harvested, and plowed back into the ground every year. The great walled gardens of the 18th and 19th centuries may remain as

¹⁸⁰ Gerry Barnes and Tom Williamson, *Hedgerow History: Ecology, History and Landscape Character* (Windgather, 2006).

¹⁸¹ Di Palma, "Drinking Cider in Paradise: Science, Improvement, and the Politics of Fruit Trees."

architectural shells of their former selves, as only in some cases are the vegetables and fruits that once grew there still cultivated. While the preservation and reintroduction of heritage varieties of fruits, vegetables, grains, and even livestock is now becoming more and more common, it is rarely the case that these agricultural products have remained in continuous presence on the landscape in the forms they took in years past. This situation contrasts to that of the orchards. In orchards, because of the relatively long life span of the plant material, the trees can speak to us across decades and centuries as both edible and structural forms of past agricultural life. They have also remained in their space in the landscape in a constant way that other moveable agricultural products rarely do. We can interact with them as visual, sculptural, architectural, horticultural, and culinary evidence of the past. In these often ruinous and decrepit trees, we can see the living formal structures of agricultural landscapes and the vestiges of genetic and culinary heritage hanging on from times past.

However, the connection of orchards to the “look of the countryside” is specifically related to the recognition of the country estate as a form of landscape heritage. Laurajane Smith’s work on discourses of heritage examines how country houses occupy a particular place within the British landscape, symbolizing notions of British identity in the ways they organize space and create material manifestations of cultural values and social organization:

Integral to the traditional conceptualization of the country house are also the ordered rural landscapes or parks within which they sit, the art collections, natural history and/or antiquarian collections, statuary, botanic collections, furniture, wall and floor coverings, ceiling decorations, stables and other outbuildings, and, in some instances associated estate villages [...] the rural landscapes or parklands within which the houses are located are often by themselves seen as an emblem of the nation.¹⁸²

Although she does not list them explicitly, orchards are also part of this rural landscape attached to the country house. Orchards exist in country estates and are conserved as part of their

¹⁸² Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, 2006, 118.

landscape heritage, particularly within the National Trust, Britain's largest charity tasked with conserving the countryside and historic estates. However, unlike parkland, botanical collections, or even walled gardens, which are emblems of the leisure and ostentation of the upper classes, orchards are part of the more mundane, common, agricultural parts of the country estate, adopted widely by more humble farmers as a form of agricultural production.

The National Trust itself only recently within its history began to recognize orchards as a resource. In a paper from the collected volume *Orchards and Groves: Their History, Ecology, Culture, and Archaeology*, National Trust officers reported on the state of orchards within the National Trust:

In 30 years of biological survey of Trust properties, orchards were, until recently, neglected. This is, in part, because some are within gardens outside the usual biological survey search area and others in farmland were not considered as a nature conservation feature. Today our orchards are mapped, but to find out what they are like and how they are used we needed an audit [...] For two properties, where a revival of interest in orchards is taking place, we present case studies. These show how without taking into account economic and social values, the environmental significance of orchards will be hard to sustain.¹⁸³

The 2008 report examines the case studies of properties at Brockhampton in Herefordshire and Cotehele in Cornwall. Though the National Trust uses the definition of traditional orchards established by Natural England and defers to wildlife habitat management as the primary frame for conservation, they acknowledge that this frame is unsustainable without the additional frames of economic and social value. Understanding them within the context of the country estate, however, allows us to see them as part of the built environment that has a definitive history. Indeed, the description of the Brockhampton Estate bears this out:

The estate consists of parkland, woodland, mixed farmland and traditional orchards. Orchards are a long-established feature of the estate and the wider local landscape. Two extant ones are marked in the same position on an estate map of

¹⁸³ L. Cordrey et al., "Orchards in The National Trust: An Overview of Their History, Economics, Wildlife and People," *Orchards and Groves: Their History, Ecology, Culture and Archaeology* 7 (2008): 40.

1737; others appear on the Tithe map of 1829 and all the extant orchards were on the 1904 Ordnance Survey map of the area.¹⁸⁴

Orchards, though unrecognized as significant landscape features in the National Trust Properties until recently, have traceable histories.

The preservation of country estates as heritage sites is a model for the conservation of the rural landscape in general, and the recognition of orchards as significant landscape components of the country estate has influenced their conservation in the countryside at large. This can be seen in projects that attempt to recognize and preserve orchards on small private properties within Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, particularly in the Malvern Hills AONB.

Whereas the National Trust is a nationwide charity managing specific properties it owns, AONBs are areas throughout the Britain that have a designation similar to that of a National Park, but responsibility for management is conducted by local authorities:

Designation seeks to protect and enhance natural beauty whilst recognizing the needs of the local community and economy. This includes the protection of flora, fauna and geological as well as landscape features. The conservation of archaeological, architectural and vernacular features in the landscape is also important.¹⁸⁵

Orchard conservation projects are present within several AONBs, but the Malvern Hills AONB *Three Counties Traditional Orchard Project* is perhaps the most significant in scope and proximity to the primary fieldwork region. Their stated goals recognize the orchards as sites of ecological conservation, but also emphasize them as historical local features of the man-made environment:

Unlike woodlands, orchards are man made and need people to manage them if they are to survive. The *Three Counties Traditional Orchard Project* is aiming to restore some of these traditional orchards across the Three Counties –

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 45.

¹⁸⁵ “AONB Designation,” accessed February 27, 2017, <http://www.landscapesforlife.org.uk/aonb-designation.html>.

Gloucestershire, Worcestershire and Herefordshire – by training a pool of volunteers to help look after local orchards in their area.¹⁸⁶

Their appeal to potential volunteers emphasizes the relationship between orchards and people, and positions the notion of orchard heritage as something that is part of regional identity, beyond the character or history of an individual property:

Orchards need people! One of the most important things we are doing is teaching people how to care for traditional orchards. For most of the year the orchards look after themselves but their veteran trees need occasional lopping and pruning to help keep them in good health. [...] We aim to restore 12 orchards a year, usually for owners who, for whatever reason, can't manage them themselves. Each orchard restored is a cause for celebration since we're helping to save our orchard heritage. We'd love you to join us!¹⁸⁷

The format of the AONB as a regional conservation and heritage area allows for the recognition of historical and cultural significance across individual properties, regardless of the capacities or interests of individual landowners. The discourse of heritage thus bases itself in the context of man-made landscape feature that forms a common pattern across the region.

In creating a discourse of heritage that reaches beyond the narrow ecological discourse of Natural England's agri-environment schemes, The National Trust and projects managed by AONBs broaden the scope of orchard conservation as landscape heritage that is part of the man-made, built environment. Still, many of the orchards conserved through this appeal to landscape heritage are old and marginally productive. What discourses exist to position orchards that are managed for modern productive agriculture as sites of conservation and heritage? To answer this question, I turn to the National Association of Cider Makers and examine their discourse of sustainability.

¹⁸⁶ "Malvern Hills AONB | A Three Counties Traditional Orchard Project," accessed November 15, 2013, http://www.malvernhillsaonb.org.uk/orchard_project.html.

¹⁸⁷ "Practical Orchard Work & Training," *Three Counties Traditional Orchard Project*, accessed February 27, 2017, <http://tctop.org.uk/get-involved/practical-orchard-work/>.

Discourses for Economic Sustainability: The National Association of Cider Makers and Productive Orchards

One discourse of that runs parallel to environmental conservation, but which often deviates from it, is that of sustainability. The meaning of sustainability can encompass environmental issues, as well as social and economic ones. After considering the impact of agri-environment schemes on specific kinds of agricultural land management, and the limitations of these environmental schemes in productive agriculture, it is important to consider how this discourse of conservation is translated into arenas where productivity and profitability are paramount. The National Association of Cider Makers (NACM) is Britain's industry and lobbying group for the cider industry, particularly serving its companies with a national and international scope. Sustainability is one of its main concerns, listed as a primary page on the NACM website in 2014.¹⁸⁸

For the NACM, sustainability is a broad concept which addresses several issues, including but not limited to environmental stewardship in the agricultural practices of the farmers who supply the apples used in industrial cider production. The NACM defines sustainability in the following terms on its website, and details the specific goals it has in pursuing sustainability as a policy for its industry members: "Sustainable development can be defined as that which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."¹⁸⁹ Environmental stewardship is listed as the first amongst these other goals, which include health (through promotion of responsible drinking), social responsibility, economic viability, and quality products. Together, these individual goals are

¹⁸⁸ At the time of writing, this portion of the website had been taken down, but during the period of field research, up until my last documentation of the website in 2014, sustainability was a major buzzword and part of the NACM platform.

¹⁸⁹ See Appendix for full text of NACM sustainability objectives

oriented towards the larger definition of sustainability as a balancing of the needs of the present without compromising resources for the future.

While Natural England has limited the scope of orchard conservation in its policy to traditional orchards of standard trees, the NACM casts a much broader net and sees orchards in general as environmentally and socially beneficial agricultural landscapes. The website cites the environmental benefits of orchards in these terms:

Both Standard and Bush orchards are a haven for wildlife and are an attractive amenity for all that live in or visit the countryside [...]
Cider producers and growers are developing orchard practices to improve and enhance the environment. For example, many growers now leave wider margins around the orchard and encourage wild flowers and the beneficial bugs they attract as they are the natural predators of the pests that can blight the apple crop. This reduces the spraying of pesticides, which is typically lighter than is the case in orchards growing fruit for the supermarket shelf.¹⁹⁰

Much less specific than the Natural England standards, the focus on sustainability here is not solely on wildlife conservation, but wildlife conservation's benefits as a low-impact control measure for pests that effect the apple crop. In addition, cider apple agricultural practices are praised for the fact that they already represent a lower-impact use of agricultural land due to their lower use of sprays. Cider apples, unlike apples grown for table fruit and sold in the supermarket, do not have to look pretty. Crushed up and juiced, the consumer will never see the higher incidence of scab, blemishes, and deformities that result from lower-spray methods of apple agriculture. Thus, the NACM is able to portray the agricultural practices of its apple growers in a positive environmental light, one that emphasizes the harmony of contemporary environmental benefits in the context of a more traditional form of agricultural land use.

Interestingly, the NACM emphasizes social issues as part of its sustainability program. Alluding to social responsibility, appropriate labeling, and safe products, the NACM deftly

¹⁹⁰ "Cider Apples | National Association of Cider Makers." 2014. Accessed May 5
http://www.cideruk.com/cider_making/cider_apples.

dances around the issue of safe alcohol consumption, an issue that has been at the forefront of the alcohol beverage industry in recent years¹⁹¹, most notably in the recent attempt by parliament to create a minimum price for alcoholic beverages, a policy which would have inevitably raised retail prices of cider without adding any profit to the producer.¹⁹² The aim of this legislation, which was eventually defeated, was to address problems of binge drinking, which have become a topic of public concern.¹⁹³ While emphasizing their commitment to safe and responsible consumption and minimizing the negative health issues associated with inappropriate consumption, NACM also takes the opportunity to promote cider's health benefits, allying cider to the characterization of red wine as a healthful drink in moderation:

Apples have been shown to be high in natural anti-oxidants which can protect the body against 'free radicals'. Modern cider making methods can ensure that these anti-oxidants remain unchanged and available in the final product [...] The NACM commissioned independent research that identified the same health giving anti-oxidants that are present in red wine are also present in cider and in significant amounts. The consumption of cider leads to the absorption of these anti-oxidants. This suggests that enjoying cider in moderation could be good for your health.¹⁹⁴

The NACM's discourse of sustainability is able to incorporate ideas of personal health into larger concerns about public health and environmental health.

However, the larger and more enduring issue, the one which ties together health, society, and environment, is the issue of the sustainability of the industry as an economic entity.

Whereas Natural England's primary concern is environmental conservation, with controls on

¹⁹¹ "NACM Reaction to the Budget 2014 - Cider Makers Celebrate | National Association of Cider Makers." 2014. Accessed May 5.

http://cideruk.com/cider_news/view/nacm_reaction_to_the_budget_2014_cider_makers_celebrate/.

¹⁹² "Minimum Unit Pricing | National Association of Cider Makers." 2014. Accessed May 5.

http://cideruk.com/cider_news/view/minimum_unit_pricing/.

¹⁹³ "Alcohol: Minimum Pricing - Commons Library Standard Note - UK Parliament." 2014. Accessed May 5.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/research/briefing-papers/SN05021/alcohol-minimum-pricing>.

¹⁹⁴ "Cider Apples | National Association of Cider Makers." 2014. Accessed May 5.

http://www.cideruk.com/cider_making/cider_apples.

production an understated motivation, NACM's primary concern is the long-term viability, or sustainability, of the cider industry as a profitable business. NACM's discourse of sustainability is able to borrow and refashion aspects of environmental conservation rhetoric to highlight its overarching interest in the economic viability of its industry over the long term. By shifting the emphasis of sustainability away from the details of Natural England's conservation policy and towards a more general view of orchards as beneficial landscapes, of cider as a healthful drink, and companies which make it as socially responsible, NACM is able to appropriate the influential status of environmental conservation to the business aims of the industry while obscuring the details of the ecological benefits of orchards as constructed by Natural England.

What does this mean about the discourse of conservation? It is a discourse which seeks to balance the needs of the present with those of the future, while making use of the past as a measure of and resource for stability. The NACM positions itself as an agricultural industry group more sensitive and proactive in these areas than most, and its activities in the promoting environmental stewardship, health, and social responsibility are laudable. It has supported the Bulmers Foundation in the creation of a professional network for orchard growers called first HONE (Herefordshire Orchards Network of Excellence) and later changed to ONE (Cider and Perry Orchards Network of Excellence)¹⁹⁵ as it expanded its scope to a more national audience of participants. This network hosts professional workshops, meetings, and supports trials of environmentally friendly orchard management practices, including investigations into sheep grazing in orchards and the usefulness of wildflower plantations in orchards to increase pollinators. The ONE group represents a very material and pragmatic effort to engage not only businesses, but the growers themselves, in practical discussions and trials of new and more

¹⁹⁵ "ONE - About Us." 2014. Accessed May 5. <http://www.oneciderandperry.co.uk/about-us>.

environmentally friendly approaches to agricultural management, one that does not simply seek to push farmers into the environmental stewardship schemes of Natural England, which for most of these farmers with bush orchards that do not fit the Natural England policy for conservation of standard orchards, might not be useful anyway.

Conservation at Broome Farm

At Broome Farm, Mike Johnson's approach to conservation is as unique as his knowledge of the fields where he has lived and worked most of his life. His experience defies the strict categories of conservation I have outlined throughout the chapter, but incorporates aspects of all of them. Mike's farm was not originally an orchard farm. When he was small, it was a mixed dairy farm, with an orchard by the barns. He transitioned to sheep when cows were no longer economically viable, and his father was convinced by the young orcharding department advisor, Chris Fairs, to sign up as a contract grower for Bulmers Cider Company in the 1970s.

Mike is enrolled in an agri-environment scheme, though he is not clear in his interview on which one, and found the bureaucracy of the scheme too onerous to deal with. Instead, his land agent manages the paperwork. However, he has almost one hundred different varieties of apples and pears on the farm, and actively seeks out old varieties elsewhere. He allows a group of conservation volunteers to come every year and do work, such as hedge laying, on the property. His attitude towards pesticides and chemicals is skeptical, and he actively stewards a wetland. His own words show his appreciation for and involvement in the sensitive management of his farm, even though he recognizes that it might be considered bad management by the standards of high-production value agriculture:

Mike Johnson: I don't spray enough, I don't fertilize properly - all sorts of orcharding problems. In part it's because of my reluctance to have to use

chemicals in some of the situations. And that's come about because in the early days, they recommended we spray for every single thing and we ended up with an almost sterile environment, it felt like.

And we had huge problems with insects one year, because we'd stamped out all the predators that feed on them the year before. And I just stopped one year and I said, look this is ridiculous. I spray for this and it kills those people, and then we have a problem with that.

And I just thought I'm going to have it a couple of years without spraying anything and try and get some balance back in the orchards.

Maria Kennedy: And what happened when you didn't spray for a few years?

Mike Johnson: Well, when you don't spray, like I didn't spray last year, you do get more problems, more diseases. It's more the fungal diseases you get the problems with.

I don't find I have problems with insects, although possibly when I have a poor crop like last year, things like saw fly make a huge difference. So if I'd sprayed for saw fly, even if I didn't have a big crop, maybe I would have saved more of what I did have. Whereas on a big crop, the saw fly probably does you a favor because it reduces the overall crop. So those things are a bit more difficult to balance and judge. So I don't know.

There's - It just seems - I have this reluctance. Even up to a few years ago, I was being advised to spray for aphids all the time, which is a horrible spray, and I haven't bothered, and I don't have a problem with aphids. Haven't had for years now. And I get the odd bit of aphid here and there. But there are so many other insects that feed off them that they don't really get going.

So it seems to me a much better environment if you can keep everything natural. And as soon as you spray for something, you've upset the balance. I don't have anything to judge this against, because I'm the only person who does it.

Maria Kennedy: Why did you even have that idea in the first place about not wanting to spray? Where did that come from?

Michael Johnson: Just because it's so horrible, and you know you hear.... Well. I don't know. I saw people, lots of people in agriculture - I don't know whether it had to do with spraying - but there seemed to be too many people dying too young. That's what I thought. Especially people who were the ones who did the spraying. And of course twenty years ago there was all sorts of things we should never have been using. I think it's a bit better these days, but it does put you off.

Maria Kennedy: I remember you talking about keeping the wetland across the road, just to have it.

Michael Johnson: Yeah, just to have it, because someone had talked to me one day about the fact that that sort of wetland has disappeared in many many places in Herefordshire. And there are all sorts of plants, fungi, bacteria, and all sorts of things living in there which could one day turn out to be quite a useful thing for some reason.

Maria Kennedy: Who was it you were talking to?

Michael Johnson: I think it was something to do with - I don't know to be honest. When I was a kid, up to when I was twenty, we used to have a chap who came and every week or two or three looking for special fungi or stuff in that area. He said it was quite a unique place. He turned out to be one of the world's big best experts in that stuff. And it was like a hobby, but he was an important man in the same. So he would come down and search in the marsh for that specialist stuff.

I never saw his work or anything else to do with it. But I did note at that time that he obviously thinks it's quite a special environment, so why should I want to spoil it?

And then, I think it was the chap from the council - what happened was somebody came through and said, I've got an offer for you - we'll fell all the alder and everything in that marsh and replant it with poplars, and we'll give you this much money in return for doing it, and then you'll have the poplar plantation for coming on later.

And I thought about it. And I talked to my dad, and he said, no, we don't really want to spoil it. It's kind of like a unique environment. So we asked the council what to do. And they said, well if you were prepared to leave it alone, we would give you sixty pounds a year for the next ten years to leave it alone. So, that's what we did. So we signed up said we wouldn't touch it. So that gave us 600 pounds up front for ten years. So it was just as good as the chap giving us the money to clear it.¹⁹⁶

In this extended excerpt from the interview, we see Mike's knowledge of the conditions on his farm, and his willingness to both experiment and also take advice from scientists and bureaucrats who see environmental value in places where he might not recognize it at first. But it is not without economic practicality.

¹⁹⁶ Mike Johnson, interview by Maria Kennedy, January 22, 2013.

The same is true of his interest in searching for and using old varieties of apples from other properties. Even though it would be ideal to put such trees to use, sometimes the cost and effort cannot be justified. Describing an orchard he has picked in the past near Llangaron, for example, Mike says:

There were three brothers who own it, but none of them live there. But they have the house there and they come back for weekends and stuff. So I just go there and pick it up.

But the problem is that the chap who rents it for his cattle and sheep never get them off in time, and I had so much trouble waiting for them to be clear, and then they didn't get them out before the rains, and it's all trodden up under the tree, and I kind of lost interest in doing it really, although there were some really interesting varieties. They've got the knotted kernal over there... And quite a few perries.¹⁹⁷

Mike's effort to make use of old varieties and an otherwise unused but financially valuable rural resource undervalued by urban owners shows how even the most enthusiastic person can be thwarted by unreceptive conditions. In both of Mike's statements, he is carefully balancing his desire to steward his land, provide a healthy environment for himself and his employees, and make a decent living. His concerns about spraying show as much, if not more, concern about human health, and the impact of spraying or not spraying on his crop yield. Mike, like all farmers, is a businessman. More often than most, he makes decisions for his farm that put profit (or just staying viable) below other concerns, but it is never far from his mind.

As I began to wrap up writing for the dissertation, I was delighted to hear that Mike Johnson had been awarded recognition from the Wye Valley AONB as winner of the 2016 Farming Award. The AONB noted Mike's attention to conservation, but also the many other activities going on at the farm:

Broome Farm produces mainly fruit having been shaped by the planting of orchards over the last 30 years, from its beginnings as a dairy, and more recently

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

sheep farm. There are now over 100 varieties of apples and pears, from which Mike and his team make an extensive range of ciders and perries, sold in their cider shop, the Yew Tree Pub and further afield. The pub is a recent addition to the business and plans are in place to encourage the wider use of its facilities by local groups.

Conservation on the farm is important for Mike, with a policy of minimal spraying which encourages biodiversity. 100 bird boxes have also been installed in the orchards, which act to encourage pest predation in a natural way. The judges were impressed by the amount of community work taking place at the farm, including working with and fundraising for charities. Music and social events are also organised at the farm, the centrepiece of which is the Cider Festival which takes place at the end of the summer. Camping is available and facilities are currently being upgraded. Visitors from around the world are drawn to Broome Farm to speak with Mike about cider making and to taste the produce, always leaving with a good impression.¹⁹⁸

To see Mike's efforts at ecological conservation, landscape and cultural heritage, and economic sustainability on his farm recognized by the Wye Valley AONB demonstrates the significance of his contributions. It also shows, however, how important orchards have become as sites of agricultural conservation and heritage, recognized and lauded by local authorities.

Conclusion

The policy discourses of ecological conservation, landscape heritage and economic sustainability examined here represent arguments for certain ideologies of environment, rural heritage, and agriculture. They set the framework within which money flows through subsidies and company contracts. But they also influence ideas of why orchards are important to society, where cider comes from, and how farmers are supposed to contribute to the ongoing evolution of rural environments, rural economies, and rural heritage. These discourses shape the direction of the themes of the cider poetic in public usage today.

¹⁹⁸ See Appendix for full article: "Farming Awards Winner | News | Wye Valley AONB," accessed February 27, 2017, <http://www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk/index.php/news/farming-awards-winner>.

As Mary Hufford has demonstrated in the American context, the separation of the discourses of natural history, cultural heritage of the built environment, and intangible cultural heritage at the government policy level has material consequences. Her argument for cultural conservation work that integrates these discourses encourages scholars to interrogate the construction of heritage and conservation discourses, in order to rethink how they might be better integrated and implemented:

The language of the laws upheld distinctions between ‘nature’ and ‘culture’ and further divided cultural heritage into ‘tangible’ and ‘intangible’ aspects. Yet natural land forms and wildlife species could serve as touchstones to community life and values as readily as structures of the built environment could [...] Distinguishing between tangible and intangible resources obscured the complex interdependencies of culture and environment, made manifest in toponymy, narrative, ritual, and other stylized behaviors.¹⁹⁹

Agriculture, where natural history and cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible, interact, is an important arena in which to examine how conservation and heritage discourses are constructed, understood, and implemented. How does the contemporary project of orchard conservation illustrate changing values associated with the relationship between nature and culture? The British context of this study provides an opportunity to consider policies and practices that are, in contrast with the American context, considerably more integrative of cultural and environmental discourses.

In the following chapter, I will move from an examination of these discourses as ideological frames to an examination of the material and social consequences of conservation and heritage projects in action through various non-profit organizations and individuals. I will continue to look at the conservation of orchards within the context of the National Trust. I also will consider community conservation projects at the local level, as well as examine the case of

¹⁹⁹ Hufford, *Conserving Culture*, 2.

individual tree-hunters and associations who passionately pursue the preservation of heritage fruit varieties.

What we will find is that it is not just farmers alone who are engaged in orchard conservation. The changing nature of land ownership in the countryside has resulted in a landscape where many traditional orchards are now in the ownership of urban professionals with second homes, or are abandoned by owners who have no agricultural interest in their properties. Who takes an interest in these trees? And what do they do with them?

Moving from the authorized conservation and heritage discourses of powerful institutions to the most local and personal practices of conservation, I will show that conservation of orchards in the United Kingdom is a pervasive cultural value, practiced at all levels of society, but carried out according to varying practical projects that justify the activity as valuable to different audiences. These varying practices are not exclusive to each sphere of practice. Rather than seeing these practices as inconsistent or contradictory, though, it may be the case that the multiplicity of heritage and conservation discourses arguing for orchard conservation strengthens practical application of conservation projects overall, opening up multiple avenues according to the most locally expedient means. The end result is that orchard conservation is a varied, rich, pervasive conservation practice where British cultural values regarding the importance of landscape as a site of conservation can be observed at all levels of society.

Appendix A: NACM Sustainability



NACM

MEMBERS AREA

CIDER NEWS

INFORMATION FOR CIDER FRUIT GROWERS

MEDIA CENTRE

SUSTAINABILITY

CIDER MAKING

RECIPES & FOOD MATCHING

CIDER MARKET

PUBLICATIONS & PRESENTATIONS

MEMBERS

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

INTERESTING LINKS

WHAT'S NEW

» Fireblight

» NACM - The Cider Industry

» Invitation to contribute - independent review of Drinkaware

» Restoration Aroma

» NACM Apple & Pear Juice Preparation Table

CIDER FACTS

In the 14th Century children were baptised in cider, it was cleaner than the water!

more »

CIDER NEWS

Sustainability

The UK Cider Industry already plays a positive role in the rural economy. Nearly half of all of the apples grown in the UK are used by the industry and in the last decade more than 8,000 acres of new orchards have been planted following investment by some of the larger cider producers. This investment will continue whilst the industry is in growth and a stable and sensible duty regime exists.

Recognising that cider apple orchards are already a beneficial use of agricultural land, the NACM is determined to develop strategies to enhance the positive impact of the industry.

A key element of this is in the area of sustainability where the NACM has created a working group to consider the opportunities. The NACM wants to develop practices that will create sustainable opportunities that further enhance the industry or the areas and environment where it operates.

Sustainable development can be defined as that which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.



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SOME RECENT NEWS:

» Canada calling out for British cider

» Big Apple Trail dates announced

» Armagh cider scoops top award

» Rise in core profits for cider makers

The NACM understands that the long-term economic viability of the industry depends upon:

- Understanding and minimizing its members impacts on the environment
- Seeing natural resources as an asset to nurtured and not abused
- Promoting social responsibility amongst employees, communities and consumers
- Encouraging its members to play an important and responsible role in their respective local and regional communities and economies
- Providing safe, attractive products responsibly packaged and promoted in order to encourage responsible consumption

The NACM will:

- Support and encourage research into growing of apples and pears in a manner which minimizes use of agro-chemicals, energy and water, and which enhances the natural environment in terms of biodiversity and visual appearance, whilst delivering an economically viable crop
- Ensure that any lobbying position it adopts on behalf of the industry is consistent with its sustainable development aims and initiatives
- Promote best sustainable development practice amongst its members, through example whenever possible
- Provide support and education for its members on how to become more sustainable businesses

The NACM requires its members:

- To comply with relevant legislation and the NACM's Code of Practice for Cider and Perry (10th Edition) in both letter and spirit
- To market their products responsibly in accordance with the NACM's guidelines on commercial communications and marketing

Details of this work and key milestones will be reported.

print version

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Appendix B: Wye Valley Farming Award: Broome Farm

Farming Awards Winner

- Posted Friday 16 September 2016 by Andrew Blake



Councillor Phil Cutter, Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee Chairman, presented Mike with the first prize of £400, the Farming Award Trophy and the winner's certificate. The 55 acre farm in Peterstow, home of the Ross-on-Wye Cider and Perry Company, is well known for producing a wide range of award winning ciders and perries.

Broome Farm produces mainly fruit having been shaped by the planting of orchards over the last 30 years, from its beginnings as a dairy, and more recently sheep, farm. There are now over 100 varieties of apples and pears, from which Mike and his team make an extensive range of ciders and perries, sold in their cider shop, the Yew Tree Pub and further afield. The pub is a recent addition to the business and plans are in place to encourage the wider use of its facilities by local groups.

Conservation on the farm is important for Mike, with a policy of minimal spraying which encourages biodiversity. 100 bird boxes have also been installed in the orchards, which act to encourage pest predation in a natural way.

The judges were impressed by the amount of community work taking place at the farm, including working with and fundraising for charities. Music and social events are also organised at the farm, the centrepiece of which is the Cider Festival which takes place at the end of the summer. Camping is available and facilities are currently being upgraded. Visitors from around the world are drawn to Broome Farm to speak with Mike about cider making and to taste the produce, always leaving with a good impression.

Square Farm near Mitchel Troy, was selected for the Highly Commended Award and received a cheque for £200. Run by Rob and Ryan Whittall, they farm organically over 180 acres, focussing on traditional farming methods, as well as running a farm shop open 3 days a week selling home grown organically produced food as well as produce from other local suppliers. Square Farm operates as a traditional mixed farm incorporating cattle, sheep, pigs, chicken, ducks and geese. Cereal and root crops are grown for animal feed and an increasing number of vegetable crops are produced to stock the farm shop, as well as a market stall. The shop also sells beef, lamb, pork and free range eggs from the farm.

Square Farm is 100% organic and is in the Glastir sustainable land management scheme. Hedgerows and fruit trees have been planted under the scheme, as well as fencing to exclude livestock from woodland and the installation of bat and dormouse boxes. There are 15 acres of low input grassland, and plans to continue conservation work in the future.

The Wye Valley AONB Farming Awards are now in their 9th year. Shortlisted farms were visited and judged by an experienced panel including Andrew Blake Wye Valley AONB Manager, David Price NFU Wales and Caroline Hanks farming and conservation consultant.

Andrew Blake commented "The judges were really impressed by the quality of the entrants for the 2016 AONB Farming Awards. All the shortlisted farms are making an outstanding contribution to conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Wye Valley. But the judges were particularly impressed with the environmental and community work that Mike

carries out at Broome Farm.

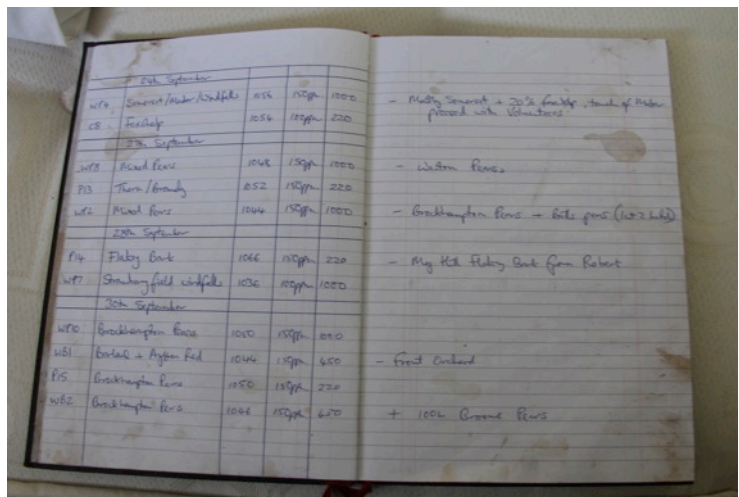
Chapter Four

Objective and Subjective Modes of Engagement in Craft Cider Making and Orchard Conservation

Broome Farm: Repository of Trees, Tastes, and Smells

On my first afternoon at Broome Farm on a windy day in February, I found myself in a large barn amidst rows of oak barrels and 1000-liter plastic beverage containers. They were tightly packed into the space, so that you had to squeeze between them and clamber around them to get to the barrel you wanted. Mike Johnson, the owner, was peering over a ledger filled with numbered lists describing the contents of each barrel. He held a kitchen baster, extracting juice from the barrels in one hand and pouring it into a glass. He handed the glass to me to taste, handed another to his friend John Teiser, who had invited me to the farm, and we all took sips, over and over again, from many different barrels, tasting the fermented essence of many different varieties of apples and pears. Each barrel, labeled with a black marker, had been catalogued in Mike's cider ledger as it was made, with information about the varieties of fruit, the sugar content at pressing, and the amount of sulfite added. With Mike, we were checking to see what had happened since the lids had been screwed closed and the yeasts had been left to transform the juice's sugars into alcohol. What tastes and smells had each batch yielded?

Mike generally knew what was in each barrel from memory, but would look in the book to be sure. The names



24th September			
W14	Sweet/Apple/Windfalls	1056	150ppm 1000
CS	Freehelp	1056	150ppm 220
25th September			
W13	Round Pears	1048	150ppm 1000
P3	Thorn/Bramley	852	150ppm 220
W12	Round Pears	1044	150ppm 1000
26th September			
P14	Flaky Oak	1046	150ppm 220
W17	Stammingfield windfalls	1026	100ppm 1000
28th September			
W10	Brookington Pears	1000	150ppm 850
W11	Burton & Hydon Pears	1044	150ppm 650
P15	Brookington Pears	1150	150ppm 220
W12	Brookington Pears	1044	150ppm 670

Notes on right page:
- Plastic covered + 20% freehelp + stand of Pears pressed with volunteers
- Western Pears
- Brookington Pears - both gone (W12 held)
- Big old Flaky Oak from Robert
- Good Oakland
+ 1000 Round Pears

of the apples and the pears, at that time, meant little to me: Gin Pear, Flaky Bark, Brandy, Taynton Squash, Holmer, Yarlington Mill, Harry Masters Jersey, Ashton Bitter. As we tried sips from the different barrels, subtly different tastes and smells passed across my senses. Brandy had a heavy flavor that made me think of Christmas. Yarlington Mill a



smooth buttery flavor. Gin Pear was lemony and had an aroma of elderflower.

To remember the contents of each barrel accurately on a busy farm would be almost impossible, but there was a certain kind of memory that would pry off the page as Mike navigated between barrels and into corners of the barn. Even as he read an individual entry off the list, he would sometimes remember the day, the batch, the character and quality of the apples that had come in from the orchard. Within his ledger of barrels were material memories of the cider making process, reawakened as we drew the cider out of the barrel and tasted the results of the fruit's transformation.

Before our hunt through the barn to match lists of barrels with the fruit that had been pressed and poured into them the previous autumn, we had spent the afternoon in Mike's orchards with other of trees and maps of plantations, looking for the correct trees from which to take cuttings of graft wood. John Teiser, the man collecting the graft wood, would read out the name of an apple variety from his list, and I would scan the orchard plan to find it: "Third row from the left, second tree down: Balls Bittersweet." We would walk over, and John and Mike

would find a bit of good new growth to cut. John immediately put the cuttings into slim plastic bags and labeled them. Handfuls of otherwise indistinguishable sticks of wood were ordered, named, and identified, so that accurate names could be given to the apples that future trees would bear. Chains of memory, documentation, and labeling like this allow people to name the tastes, smells, colors, shapes, and growing habits of organisms with whom people have had long intimate relationships in their landscapes and culinary worlds.

After our work in the orchard, the taste-testing in the barn, and several hearty sandwiches, we parted ways. John took the graft wood to post to some friends in Denmark who were trialing English cider and perry varieties in their climate. Apple varieties, paired with names to describe them and the cider they would eventually produce, would travel across the European continent to another home.

Mike, the cider maker and orchardist, and John, the fruit detective, are both passionate about not only finding and preserving old varieties of apples and pears, but also about bringing the produce of these trees into economic use through cider and perry production. Each variety, recognized by name, produces distinct qualities of flavor. Preserving and propagating these trees not only preserves a kind of biological organism, but also preserves a heritage of craft and taste, a relationship with the land that is more than scientific. Mike and John represent an approach to conservation that saves agricultural and ecological diversity by putting the landscape to work. Outside the remit of preserving traditional orchards for landscape character or wildlife ecology, this kind of conservation carries with it personal histories of individual farms, networks of friendship, an ethic of physical labor, a commitment to craft, and a preservation of tastes and smells.

As we saw in the previous chapter, the discourses of conservation, heritage, and sustainability employed by some powerful institutions with an interest in orchards – the UK government, the National Trust, and the National Association of Cider makers -- have very specific frames. In this chapter, I will explore how individuals and small groups interpret orchard conservation and apple heritage in practice, employing the discourses of conservation framed by larger institutions in the contexts of their own beliefs, values, and circumstances. Sometimes their motivations and outcomes are very different from those predicated on agri-environment schemes or business interests. In order to understand how forms of practice come into being, I examine the modes of engagement – subjective and objective – that organize conservation and heritage work. These modes of engagement are the filters through which institutional discourse becomes lived reality, where conservation and heritage move from rhetorical constructions into ways of encountering the world. They are interdependent and characterize actions framed within multiple discourses. By paying attention to the modes of engagement, we can see how people understand and interact with discourses of heritage.

A Conservationist in His Orchard – James Marsden at Gregg’s Pitt Orchard

The characterization of traditional orchards as conservation habitats has been extremely influential, integrating traditional orchards into the conservation policy of the nation. This discourse of ecology, generated at the government level and used similarly by charities, legitimates orchard conservation and affords orchards status within government bureaucracies. With this status, they become eligible for project funding, subsidies, and the vast mechanisms of manpower and financial support necessary to make orchard conservation a national—rather than just a local or personal—concern. However, even at the local level, orchard conservation has

been made possible either directly through the influence of national conservation bureaucracy in the form of grants or subsidies related to this policy, or indirectly, due to the elevated status orchards now enjoy from their enshrinement in policy as recognized wildlife habitats. The interrelation of various government policy bodies, non-profit or charity organizations, and local programs that facilitate orchard conservation can at times seem like a bewildering labyrinth. Founded on a discourse of ecology, orchard conservation projects operate in the context of the social and economic realities of rural agricultural communities whose own motivations and interests may be different than those framed by the ecological discourse.

We have seen in the previous chapters how orchards and cider already exist in the popular imagination of rural heritage. The cider poetic speaks to deeply held, historically dense meanings about rural life. How does this new discourse of ecology get translated into the cider poetic? Orchard conservation presents a case study of the complexity of the adaptations and translations of ecological consciousness into everyday life.

When I asked James Marsden, director of High Level Stewardship scheme at Natural England, why orchards have been such successful sites of conservation for popular audiences, he responded with this description of the ways orchard habitats—not simply the trees themselves, but the whole ecology they sustain—are able to illustrate our own human changes of consciousness throughout the year. They mirror, and even create our human, cultural, and historical calendars. They give us a way of measuring our own time against the time scales of nature. James's description of the orchard ecology's progression through the year, descriptive in its detail, is worth quoting at length, for it illustrates the discourse of the orchard as an ecological habitat shaped and often experienced according to human expectations, but possessing its own balance, its own natural processes and relationships:

James Marsden: Traditional orchards define our year. The seasonality of the traditional orchard provides all the markers and milestones in the year. I can give you some examples: the hoar frost on the perry trees in winter. That is visually compelling and it also tells us that you can't prune. Don't prune when you have a hard frost. So when it is not a hard frost we might be out pruning.

The first signs of spring are when the wild daffodils, that we have in the orchards here, begin to push up. And they always come earlier when they are under tree cover than when they are in the fields. There are fields with wild daffodils around us. And wild daffodils will always emerge faster under trees because of the difference in temperature, than they do in the open fields. And following the wild daffodils you get the cowslips, and then lady's smock. There is a progression. And with the lady's smock, you get the first of the butterflies, because the food plant of the orange tip butterfly in England is the lady's smock.

And all of these things define the year. They are markers. So if you know what you are looking for [...]

Then the next step will be blossom time. And of the course the pears are coming early. The pears came in late March this year, such a lousy year, then they got blasted in April with the weather. The apple blossom will start in late April early May and then will continue on to early June—we've got some very late varieties here. And the fruit set. We will walk around the orchards and begin to think about what the crop will look like and June drop.

And each and every month there is something happening. And I missed that the early nesting birds in the hedgerows and woodpeckers in the holes and such—last year we had a pair of tawny owls that nested in a big hole in the tree down in the orchard. This year we've had a pair of little owls nesting in a tree. And they brought up two young. They'd normally bring off about three to five. Why? Because of food availability, because of insect predators. You can make all these connections.

July and August we saw some of the butterflies out there[...] Normally there would be a lot more, not only here, but in the garden and in the orchard. And as autumn comes on and you've got fallen fruit [...] you will get red admiral, you'll get hornets and speckled wood. The whole thing then, suddenly, you are back into November, December, and the hoar frost.²⁰⁰

In this description, the orchard is described as an integrated ecosystem, one that responds to the vagaries of weather and the intervention of man. The fruit itself is but a small proportion of the interest found in the orchard habitat. James Marsden's view of his orchard represents the perfect

²⁰⁰ James Marsden, interview by Maria Kennedy, August 8, 2012.

James Marsden
at Gregg's Pit Orchard
Herefordshire
Big Apple Harvest Festival
October 14, 2012



implementation of the conservation discourse promoted by the agri-environment schemes of Natural England (which he helps manage) in the context of an orchard managed for cider production. His orchard is also the focus of limited community access during orchard celebrations organized by the Big Apple organization, a consortium of cider producers and orchardists around the village of Much Marcle, Herefordshire.

The approaches to conservation illustrated by James Marsden and Mike Johnson exemplify two kinds of imperatives in orchard conservation that permeate experiences on the ground respectively: 1) the conservation of orchards as biodiverse ecological landscapes which human intervention has helped shape over time, and 2) the preservation and perpetuation of fruit varieties that characterize agricultural, genetic, and culinary heritage. The first illustrates the discourse of ecology I discussed in the previous chapter, and the second exemplifies a discourse of cultural, landscape heritage. These imperatives are not mutually exclusive.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, Mike Johnson, in addition to preserving fruit varieties for cider, is also concerned with the environmental conservation of his land. James Marsden is very proud of the rare varieties of perry pear that survive in his old orchard, using them in his craft ciders, in addition to preserving the ecology of his orchard. In the practice of orchard conservation, however, one of these two imperatives sometimes takes the lead, and may shape the kind of project that individuals or communities create and execute. Besides these differences in conservation and heritage discourses, however, there are significant differences in the kinds of conceptual engagement with orchards that different projects make possible, and these forms of engagement allow people to understand orchards in fundamentally distinct ways.

Making Meaning: Forms of Engagement with Orchard Conservation

James's description of his orchard, replete with detailed observations of seasonal change and the appearance of specific flora and fauna, highlights both the detailed components of a biodiverse orchard and the overarching integrity of the orchard's ecological cycles over time. But his language also suggests human encounter and interaction—the orchard's seasons are meant to be personally experienced. Similarly, Mike Johnson and John Teiser's grafting and cider-making projects show the detailed and catalogued specificity of apple varieties cultivated in an orchard as well as the connection of these varieties to historical traditions, seasonal cycles, and personal experiences of cider making.

With these examples in mind, I argue that in orchard conservation projects of various types, objective and subjective forms of engagement with the orchard are key to how people conceptualize conservation and heritage; they provide two frames for understanding conservation and heritage projects that are distinct in theory, but often interconnected in practice. A model for this analytical framework is anthropologist Diana Taylor's concept of the *archive* and the *repertoire* as interconnected but ontologically distinct approaches to heritage. The archive, which Taylor characterizes as an objective accounting of resources, is often the mode within which heritage and conservation accrue value at the level of institutional discourse. But in order to be conserved at all—and especially to be conserved in a dynamic way that does not reduce the landscape to a lifeless and culturally unresponsive archive of apples—requires subjective engagement, or what Taylor describes as an attention to cultural repertoire. This, she explains, requires “presence”:

...people participate in the production and reproduction of knowledge by “being there,” being a part of the transmission. As opposed to the supposedly stable

objects in the archive, the actions that are the repertoire do not remain the same.²⁰¹

Objective forms of engagement, analogous to Taylor's archive, allow people to connect to those things that can be seen, observed, and collected from the landscape, and further, organized according to abstract categories. This form of engagement foregrounds the mastery of abstract knowledge about objects in the landscape, so that their significance in relationship to other sites can be better appreciated. In the case of orchards, objectifiable elements are apple varieties, rare beetles and moths, flora, and fauna. These "things" become symbolic, as well as actual, indicators of those processes which are unseen – the technologies of the soil and the economic patterns of global agricultural markets – that stand to threaten the very idea of the landscape as a site of heritage and conservation at all.

When they are categorized, catalogued, and documented, apple varieties can be appreciated as an art form, and they are bred and cultivated to enhance color, flavor, smell, seasonality, and productivity. Similarly, the documentation of an orchard's biodiversity catalogues the species of flora and fauna that constitute it. One can know about an orchard by knowing of what it consists of, by mastering its archive-able contents. Note that the process of categorization and archiving is applicable across discourses. It applies just as well to a discourse of landscape heritage as it does to a discourse of ecology.

In contrast (or complement), another form of engagement highlights not the specific components of an orchard, but its integrity as a whole. Subjective forms of engagement frame orchards as individual landscapes with particular histories in relationship to human activity. This form of engagement explores the deep history of orchards or individual trees in their unique context, and the interactions of people and communities with them. Embodied experiences of the

²⁰¹ Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire : Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).

landscape become increasingly important as ways in which people connect to conservation as a social and experiential activity. One can know about an orchard by being there, smelling the air, learning in what season the apples fall, how others have worked there previously, and what crafts are connected to its maintenance and use. The subjective forms of engagement are sometimes more obvious within the context of discourses of landscape heritage, but as James Marsden's statement above shows, it can equally be applied to discourses of ecology in encounters with ecological processes. James's narrative of the ecological cycles provides a repertoire within which encounters with the orchard's natural resources can be understood.

The repertoire of the orchard is enacted and passed on as people participate in the life of the orchard, performing its tasks, its seasons, and its traditions. As Henry Glassie has noted in his theory of repertoire, the meaning of repertoire is only fully realized in its entirety, where texts and performances speak to each other, and a fit into an understood system of genres. Texts can be enacted both in the moment to create a unique meaning appropriate to the immediate situation, and understood in reference to entire system of genres. The repertoire allows access into the larger structure of community values that can be referenced in specific moments of engagement. Mastery of the repertoire involves not only mastery of categories of knowledge, but an understanding of the way these categories of knowledge have lived and worked in the minds of a community over time.²⁰²

Both of these forms of engagement are present in many conservation projects and orchard activities, but they point to different frames of understanding and enactment of conservation or heritage discourse, such as focusing on saving heritage varieties, counting species of lichen, learning a craft, or preserving the distinctiveness of individual orchards as local places. These

²⁰² Henry Glassie, *Passing the Time in Ballymenone : Culture and History of an Ulster Community* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982), 33–34.

forms of engagement address achievable goals, whereas discourses of conservation and heritage can remain abstract and difficult to act upon. As conservation policy-makers consider how to connect broad goals like landscape-scale conservation with actionable projects, recognizing the distinctions and benefits of these modes of engagement may provide insight into how policy can be applied on the ground to achieve particular goals.

Objective Modes: Cider Making

Collecting cultural objects in the landscape is an integral part of heritage-making in England. The urge to objectify, collect, map, and catalogue has shaped the idea of both environmental and cultural heritage.²⁰³ The relationship between ordering the natural world, and ordering the cultural world comes together in examples like orchard conservation and craft cider making, where living organisms and landscapes become part of cultural life. In this section I consider the ways that objective modes of engagement help order the understanding of landscape heritage as it is directly related to craft cider making.

The appreciation of the heritage of fruit varieties appeals to a sense of heritage and conservation in the form of objects. Recovering knowledge of these varieties, rediscovering them in gardens, farms, and lost corners of the countryside that have escaped post-war agricultural improvement, and propagating and planting them for the future, is a significant part of rural heritage activities related to orchard conservation and craft cider making. This activity establishes an archive of fruit that is both an intellectual construction in the minds of practitioners, and a material presence on the landscape. It is based in knowledge accumulated in

²⁰³ Folkloristics, in particular, has long been focused on the objectification and documentation of cultural texts. I argue that the current trend in collecting and documenting apple varieties as a form of cultural heritage fits very well into a long line of cultural collection going back to the development of interest in popular antiquities. The folk song collecting of Cecil Sharp and Ralph Vaughn Williams is also a resonant practice, and directly related to orchard heritage through Morris dancing and wassail traditions (see chapter five).

agricultural and horticultural texts and fruit manuals written from the Enlightenment period through the twentieth century, which sought to identify and classify fruit for the benefit of the scientifically minded farmer. These texts represent successive moments of archive-creation that are dependent on both past texts and observed knowledge. But historical and literary texts are not the only artifacts of agriculture. The trees themselves can remain in the landscape for decades and sometimes centuries. In this contemporary moment of agricultural change, where repertoires of knowledge about types of fruit and their uses has eroded and rural communities have changed, the archive, its objects, and its texts are important tools for recognizing agricultural artifacts like old fruit trees that still inhabit the landscape.

In order to understand how this archive is established in both mind and landscape as an integral part of orchard conservation and the revival of craft cider, we first return to cider makers Mike Johnson and John Teiser in their work collecting and harvesting the apples and pears they use for their cider making. They, like many cider makers who are part of the revival of craft cider making, rely at least in part on the archive of intellectual knowledge about fruit collected and published in texts throughout the last few centuries. But this knowledge is not static; it is interdependent on relationships between texts, people, and places.

Social Networks and Old Texts: Pomonas, Fruit Books, and Documenting Varieties

Mike Johnson makes cider not only from the trees he grows on his own farm, but from fruit collected from many other locations and people throughout the Three Counties region of Herefordshire, Worcestershire, and Gloucestershire. The ways he came into contact with these orchards—usually old, unmanaged, and unused by their current owners—illustrates how old orchards, even though some may seem to have been abandoned, are actually enmeshed in the

changing social network of rural life. Even if owned by an absentee landlord, these orchards are owned by *someone*, and the status of that ownership reveals much about changes to rural communities.

Sometimes, the use of trees or orchards passes from one cider maker to another through word of mouth, contacting the owner to transfer use. And often, someone along the way has taken note of the kinds of trees growing or being planted on a property. Various forms of documentation, including fruit manuals, pomonas, or planting records kept by farmers or cider companies, can help identify the particular trees on a property if active knowledge of their history has been lost in the transfer between owners or generations. These textual resources continue to be important for cider makers like Mike Johnson and John Teiser, who are interested in using the diverse kinds of fruit that make up the agricultural heritage of the region. I asked Mike to tell me how he comes to find and use such orchards, and in the following conversation, he highlighted the relationships between people, trees, and even books in his reminiscence of finding a particular tree documented in the 1963 *Perry Pear*²⁰⁴ book researched by pomologist Ray Williams and B.T. Barker:

Maria Kennedy: I know you pick up a lot of other orchards? How did you find them and how did you get to know them?

Michael Johnson: They come up all the time [...] because we make cider and perry, people ring up and say, oh we've got an orchard, we were wondering if you'd be interested. These things come up. Sometimes you pick them, and actually you wish you hadn't and sometimes they are really good and sometimes, like with one more recent one, I've been picking it for years, but he is wanting more and more money and it just wasn't worth it. Because it costs you so much to hand-pick these things.

Maria Kennedy: So what are the good ones that you have picked over the years?

²⁰⁴ Luckwill, Barker, and Pollard. *Perry Pears. Produced as a Memorial to Professor B.T.P. Barker. Edited by L.C. Luckwill & A. Pollard. [By Various Authors. With a Portrait.]*.

Michael Johnson: Oh all sorts. But the other interesting thing about picking them is, you get to find new varieties that you don't know. So that makes it more interesting.

Maria Kennedy: So what have you found over your time?

Michael Johnson: I remember when Gabe was still a student, we went over and picked a Brown Bess orchard at Kilcott, which is a really old perry pear. And it was really nice because in the book, the Perry Book, there is a picture of the Brown Bess and that tree is still there, and we had this -

Maria Kennedy: This is the tree from the book?

Michael Johnson: [Tucked into] that book there was a picture of all of us there picking, the pickers, with Gabe as well. And then we had a picture of the perry pear tree now as it is now, fifty years later than the book. It lost a few couple of branches but it was still there. It was nice. The perry isn't anything special from Brown Bess, but it was interesting.

Maria Kennedy: Did you identify it from the book?

Michael Johnson: Bob Cook, cider maker Bob Cook from Cirencester told me about it, because he had picked it once before and didn't really want to go back there. And said, well if you ask the owner, who is a lady who lives miles—I think she lives in Weston Super Mare or somewhere—but she owned it, and he said, would you mind if I picked it, and she said no, that's fine.²⁰⁵

The process of coming into contact with this variety he had not encountered before, the Brown Bess perry pear, involved a combination of references from fellow cider makers, permission from the absent landlord, and reference to the Perry Pear book in which the tree had previously been documented. Even though the pear itself turned out to be not particularly interesting for making perry, it is clear that the excitement of encountering the tree itself was something worth documenting. Taking a picture of all the pickers under the old tree, and tucking it into the *Perry Pears* book, Mike marked their moment in the ongoing heritage of that tree in the landscape.

²⁰⁵ Johnson, interview.



**Cider Making
at Broome Farm
Peterstow, Herefordshire
2012**



The Long Ashton *Perry Pears* book itself was the result in large part of the studies of Ray Williams, who similarly toured around the countryside, usually on his bicycle, looking for trees, meeting farmers, and sorting out scientific classifications of fruit against the baffling confusion of local names given to the trees. Ray Williams's documentation of existing trees and orchards, as well as his analysis of the distribution of varieties is, without doubt, the most comprehensive picture of this unique and highly localized crop. Perry pears like those documented in the book are common only in the Three Counties area of Herefordshire, Worcestershire, and Gloucestershire. The trees can live more than three hundred years, and there are several places in Herefordshire where old veteran perry trees with documented heritage are known. The avenue of perry pears planted along the drive to the Restoration era estate in Much Marcle known as The Helens, were planted during the reign of Queen Anne (1702–1714). Far less is known about the cultivation of perry pears and the craft of making perry than about cider. These trees reach farther back into the history of the landscape, and of the rural community, than many cider trees, and clues to their origins and uses are of interest to local cider and perry makers. The *Perry Pears* book is a key reference in a process of rediscovery of these agricultural artifacts. This process includes actively picking the fruit and making the perry, but it is facilitated by the information and classifications offered in the book.

The book itself, in its original 1963 edition, is very rare, and those who own copies guard them closely. It is the most venerated textual source of authority and information regarding perry pears. These textual sources are important resources for contemporary tree hunters, providing the benchmarks against which trees and fruit of today can be compared and measured. *Perry Pears* is significant in that it documents not only varieties of fruit as abstracted from their locations, but it documents the trees themselves and where they stand in the landscape.

Searching for interesting varieties of apple and pear trees has an established history that has not always been linked to the idea of conservation as described in ecological discourses today, or even in landscape heritage discourses, but rather to scientific documentation and agricultural improvement.²⁰⁶ The production of books documenting the kinds of apples in existence in a particular region or nation reached a peak during the Enlightenment and Victorian eras, as the application of scientific methods of observation and experimentation were applied to the natural world and to agricultural practice. In Herefordshire alone, there was significant activity of this kind, with people documenting both old and new varieties of fruit trees. In 1678, John Worlidge wrote the *Vinetum Britannicum*, a manual of cider making and fruit.²⁰⁷ In 1811, The Agricultural Society of Herefordshire published the work of Thomas Andrew Knight, with the extensively descriptive title: *The Pomona Herefordiensis; Containing Coloured Engravings of the Old Cider and Perry Fruits of Herefordshire. With Such New Fruits as Have Been Found to Possess Superior Excellence. Accompanied with a Descriptive Account of Each Variety*.²⁰⁸ Knight was a noted agricultural experimenter and innovator.

The Woolhope Naturalist's Field Club was responsible for the production of the *Herefordshire Pomona*²⁰⁹, published in 1876, which documented the varieties of apple being

²⁰⁶ See Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England, 1500-1800* (Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 1983), 209. "The motives for aristocratic planting were thus a complex mixture of social assertiveness, aesthetic sense, patriotism and long term profit. Together, they combined to make planting as much of an aristocratic obsession as dogs and horses. Trees had ceased to be a symbol of barbarism or a mere economic commodity. They had become an indispensable part of the scenery of upper class life. The depredations wrought in the 1650s upon the estates of the Crown, Church and supporters of Charles I were exaggerated by Royalist propagandists after the Restoration in such a way as to create an association between the wanton felling of trees and republican politics. Evelyn and other contemporaries cleverly represented tree planting as a way of affirming a gentleman's loyalty to the restored monarchy; they also laid much emphasis upon its supposedly heroic nature."

²⁰⁷ John Worlidge, *Vinetum Britannicum: Ora Treatise of Cider and Other Wines and Drinks ... Fruits Growing in This Kingdom ... Propagating All Sorts of Vinous Fruit-Trees ... Making Metheglin and Birch-Wine. The Second Impression. To Which Is Added, a Discourse Teaching the Best Way of Improving Bees* (Dring, 1678).

²⁰⁸ Knight, *Pomona Herefordiensis*.

²⁰⁹ Robert Hogg and Henry Graves Bull, *The Herefordshire Pomona, Containing Original Figures and Descriptions of the Most Esteemed Kinds of Apples and Pears... Technical Editor : Robert Hogg,... General Editor : Henry Graves Bull...* (Jakeman and Carver, 1876).

grown in Herefordshire in the nineteenth century. In addition, its authors were also involved in “obtaining grafts from old varieties of merit, arranging for their propagation by local nurserymen, and distributing young trees to farmers throughout the country. Thus were a number of valuable vintage pears preserved for posterity,”²¹⁰ as the much later author of the 1963 book on Perry Pears states in his own volume, noting the importance of the work of his predecessors. The *Herefordshire Pomona* was the work of Robert Hogg and Henry Graves Bull, who were both prolific authors of other works on fruit in addition to this large and costly showpiece.

Perry Pears also notes the importance of Herbert Edward Durham, the Director of Research at Bulmers until 1935, who conducted a survey of the perry pears of Herefordshire and became, “a well known figure in the countryside, visiting on horseback most of the farms in the area.” His research led to the creation of a living reference collection of trees planted in the Bulmer’s nurseries at Broxwood, as well as photographs and notes of existing trees and their characteristics. Today, there are also new texts being created, including Charles Martell’s publication *Perry Pears of Gloucestershire*, which presents descriptive information of the currently extant perry pears in the county, and includes anecdotes collected from local residents.²¹¹ Available online, and published with the Harpur Heritage Trust and the Gloucester Orchard Trust, the book is a record of living trees, but also an intertextual reference, looking back to other authors who have previously described the varieties. Charles is another example of a man who has diligently studied the informational genealogies of botanical description in these texts and sought to find, catalogue, and propagate the existing specimens left in his county. Other

²¹⁰ Luckwill, Barker, and Pollard, *Perry Pears. Produced as a Memorial to Professor B.T.P. Barker. Edited by L.C. Luckwill & A. Pollard. [By Various Authors. With a Portrait.]*, 108.

²¹¹ “Gloucestershire Orchard Trust • Pears,” accessed July 23, 2016, <https://gloucestershireorchardtrust.org.uk/varieties/pears/>.

recent works of this kind include Liz Copas's *Somerset Pomona*²¹², and the Welsh Marches Pomona, published by the Marcher Apple Network.²¹³

As documentary repositories of information about apple varieties, pomonas and fruit manuals have been important tools for classifying, organizing, and preserving objective information about botanical, genetic, and culinary heritage within the literate and scientific social milieu of individuals interested in orchards and cider. As intimate knowledge of trees and properties has eroded due to shifts in rural populations, these written records become resources for those who are interested in reacquainting themselves with the components of their rural and agricultural landscapes. The objective knowledge they provide about trees in the landscape is a link across time when subjective experiences and traditional knowledge have ceased to provide insight into the heritage of the landscape, its components, and their uses. Books like these provide a window into seeing, naming, and understanding the orchard as a landscape of differentiation, richness, and organization that was known to prior generations. They make possible the encounters like Mike's with the Brown Bess perry tree: an encounter with a tree that also becomes an encounter with its place in human history.

Subjective Modes: Orchard Conservation Practices

In the previous section, I endeavored to demonstrate how objective modes of engagement shape the knowledge of apple varieties, and I shared ethnographic examples of how this knowledge has been accumulated and transmitted through both textual and human encounters. By showing this process at work in the activities of craft cider making rather than in conservation activities, where the discourse of ecology already invites an expectation of objective

²¹² Liz Copas, *Somerset Pomona: The Cider Apples of Somerset* (Dovecote Press, 2001).

²¹³ Michael Porter, *Welsh Marches Pomona* (Marcher Apple Network, 2010).

engagement, I hope to emphasize how ubiquitous this process is even in what are considered folk and traditional activities. I will continue the reversal of expectations, by beginning the discussion of subjective engagement with orchard conservation activities rooted in the discourse of ecology. This discourse of ecology, though easily connected with the objective intellectual work of categorizing habitats and documenting species, can be encountered subjectively, and no one has made this connection clearer than the conservation charity Common Ground. Their work has been extremely influential in re-orienting discourses of ecology towards conservation practices that emphasize subjective modes of engagement.

In Chapter One, I introduced Common Ground and their projects of orchard conservation through their campaign for local distinctiveness. Common Ground's approach to conservation is one that foregrounds a subjective modes of engagement, which centers conservation on human experience rather than the work of naming and categorizing. Common Ground's influence has shifted the understanding of conservation away from a discourse of heritage based solely on natural objects to one that links natural objects to people and emphasizes continuities of personal experience. This subjective mode can be unpacked with the concept of *dwelling*, a complement to the concept of *repertoire*, which I will return to later in the chapter. Finally, I will introduce the commentary of local community orchard group leaders from the Colwall Orchard Group, whose experiences demonstrate the importance of subjective modes of engagement, even when their initial goals were driven by a discourse of ecology.

Common Ground's Paradigm Shift in Conservation

The authors of the *Common Ground Book of Orchards* emphasize the importance of experiences beyond rational and scientific discourses in conservation work:

The knowledge of scientists is different from vernacular understanding. We need both. Particularly we need to value and keep wisdom practiced in its place. Indigenous knowledge, intangible benefits, subjective perceptions, emotional attachments and expressions of value need other languages and other champions.²¹⁴

Founders Angela King and Sue Clifford both had extensive backgrounds in environmental conservation. Angela King worked for Friends of the Earth and the Nature Conservancy Council before founding Common Ground, and Sue King was a lecturer in Environmental Planning at University College London. Their qualifications in science-based environmental ecology are unquestionable, but their emphasis on the subjective experience of place beyond objective, rationalized categorizations of species, habitat, and natural resources brought a new kind of life to conservation at a human scale. Common Ground's influence on the viability of locally-situated conservation projects cannot be overstated. Many individuals I encountered while during research for this project who were engaged in conservation work at local and national scales cited Common Ground as an inspiration for their own work.

The most well-known and widespread outcome of their work is the now broadly celebrated calendar custom called Apple Day, a festival Common Ground invented in 1990.

Common Ground describes the reason for inventing this calendar custom:

Apple Day, 21 October, was launched in 1990. From the start, it was intended to be both a celebration and a demonstration of the variety we are in danger of losing – not simply in apples, but richness and diversity of landscape, place, and culture too [...] Apple Day is now an integral part of the events calendar of many villages, local authorities, city markets and the National Trust. It is a focus of activities organized by the Women's Institute (WI), the Wildlife Trusts, museums, art galleries and many horticultural societies, as well as for schools, colleges and environmental study centers. The first Apple Day celebrations, in the old Apple Market in London's Covent Garden, brought fruit to the market after a 16 years' absence.²¹⁵

²¹⁴ Common Ground (Organization), *The Common Ground Book of Orchards*, 2000, 12–13.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 123.

What Common Ground realized was that conservation does not happen solely as the result of policy. Rather, it happens within the context of local groups and organizations: “the Women’s Institute (WI), the Wildlife Trusts, museums, art galleries and many horticultural societies.” In starting a festival tradition, Common Ground created a culturally recognizable vehicle through which these local groups and organizations could act; they could not only engage in practices of conservation, but also activate the social capital and subjective experiences of community within which these local organizations live.

In addition to Apple Day, Common Ground created a campaign to define and promote the subjective experiences that are the bedrock of their conservation ethos. Their “Campaign for Local Distinctiveness” was designed to spread their concept to other communities, other conservation projects, highlighting the idea that conservation is intrinsically local and essentially subjective, even when applying scientific methods or environmental policies. The passage below, which I referenced earlier in Chapter One, elaborates on what constitutes the subjective experiences that they seek to cultivate within the practice of conservation:

Importantly, [local distinctiveness] focuses on locality, not region or country or city. It is about accumulations not about one moment in history, about constant dynamism not preservation. It includes the invisible as well as the physical – symbols, festivals, legends may be as important as hedgerows, hills, and houses [...] The significance of a place lingers in the stories and resonances the place holds for those who knew it and loved it. Many of these will be personal, but many will be shared. Identity is bound up with affection for or alienation from everyday knowledge and the popular understanding of features of the ritual of festivals. The commonplace defines identity – locally abundant plants, specific building techniques, seasonal recipes. Traditional orchards can continue to provide an important bank of fruits and knowledge for a time when local produce and varieties may be valued in new contexts. They maintain identity and authenticity, and keep intricate local expertise and cultural connections alive.²¹⁶

Words like these are familiar to folklorists. We have been seeking out everyday knowledge, the commonplace, and complicating identity and authenticity since the inception of the discipline.

²¹⁶ Ibid., 14–15.

But the application of these qualities to environmental conservation is notable because it brings subjective encounters that are mainly seen as cultural into service of the concerns of environmentalism. In this passage, Common Ground refers to the importance of traditional orchards as sites of conservation, but not only because they harbor individual species of importance or contribute to landscape-scale conservation measures, but because they, “can continue to provide an important bank of fruits and knowledge for a time when local produce and varieties may be valued in new contexts.” It is neither the orchards themselves, nor their habitats, nor the varieties of fruit that are the center of this conservation ethic. Rather, these natural resources are vehicles for the transmission and transformation of subjective values that define community identity over time.

This approach towards orchard conservation with a foregrounding of community identity, shares characteristics with more general cultural attitudes towards tree conservation in England, and thus can be seen as a natural outgrowth of cultural attitudes towards nature. Keith Thomas has outlined some of the unique ways that the English feel and act towards trees as cultural symbols in his book *Man and the Natural World*:

England had no forests on the North American scale to act as a focus for such feelings. But she did have individual trees which played a crucial part in her social life. From Anglo-Saxon times they had been essential landmarks, demarcating local boundaries or indicating the meeting-place for assemblies[...] such trees were older than any of the inhabitants; and they symbolized the community's continued existence.²¹⁷

His reference to Anglo Saxon times suggests a very deep historical root in this English cultural reverence for trees. But he notes the contemporary manifestations of this attitude towards trees. Referencing attitudes towards trees during the twentieth century in general, not just orchards, Thomas says, “people also wanted trees preserved not just for the sake of their appearance, but

²¹⁷ Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, 216–17.

because of what they stood for. They cherished their associations, their antiquity, their link with the past.”²¹⁸ Within this context where trees in general are sites of memory and subjective experience, orchards have particular meanings and associations beyond their objectively classified agricultural varieties or habitats. Common Ground’s attention to orchards and trees, therefore, should be seen as part of this more general English cultural attitude that sees trees as having cultural and social significance, as sites that already have the potential for to harbor heritage.

From the viewpoint of conservation or heritage discourse, “local distinctiveness” is refreshing in its dynamism, resisting discourses that situate social values in a static past or by privileging authoritative institutions, especially scientific ones. As Common Ground said in its 1985 manifesto, “Holding Your Ground: An Action Guide to Conservation,” “experts have monopolized the discussions and decisions about our environment [...] Science has tended to devalue the spontaneous response of the senses to nature, landscape, and place.”²¹⁹ Subjective engagement, in this formulation, is a necessary practice for deciding how to create the kinds of communities that have meaning for individuals and groups that must act in the present. This cultural and environmental continuity requires continual conservation in the form of on-going care, adaptation, and socially motivated impetus to imagine pasts, presents, and futures through practical collaborative work.

Common Ground’s practical manifesto, and their work in general, although it intersects and engages with more academic arenas, has remained refreshingly and resolutely in the vernacular language that it espouses in its work. But it does have resonances with theoretical

²¹⁸ Ibid., 222–23.

²¹⁹ Angela King, *Holding Your Ground: An Action Guide to Local Conservation*, 1st ed edition (London: Maurice Temple Smith, 1985).

work in folklore and performance studies, and we can speculate whether it has influenced or been influenced by theoretical directions in British cultural geography.

One such point of intersection with academia provides a particularly fertile way of looking at the issues discussed in this section. Geographers Owain Jones and Paul Cloke develop the concept of *dwelling* and use it to address the use and meaning of an orchard in Somerset, assessing how notions of place emerge not just through the actions and meanings assigned by people but also through the necessarily interactive co-creative agencies of humans and the natural world. Clearly influenced by the work and ethos of Common Ground, they also apply theoretical critiques to the idea of local distinctiveness, challenging its possible reductive interpretations (though without implying that the idea itself is reductive).

Noting that local distinctiveness has reactive qualities, opposing perceived threats of disintegration and change, Cloke and Jones caution against notions of authenticity that close off, rather than open up, opportunities for interactive encounters. In their writing, dwelling, as a theory of subjective interactivity offers an antidote to ideas of authenticity confined to a limited temporal, spatial, or social definition of place-based heritage:

Dwelling is about the rich intimate ongoing togetherness of beings and things which make up landscapes and places, and which bind together nature and culture over time. It thus offers conceptual characteristics which blur the nature / culture divide, emphasise the temporal nature of landscape, and highlight performativity and nonrepresentation [...] Places are fluid, dynamic, multidimensional, yet somehow still have binding and sometimes haunting identities and familiarities running through them, as threads of imaginative and material narrative are woven with threads of 'having become' and 'becoming'.²²⁰

Informed by actor network theory, they apply this idea of dwelling to an analysis of an orchard in West Bradley, Somerset, in terms of its many actors and the interlocking networks they trace

²²⁰ Owain Jones and Paul J. Cloke, *Tree Cultures: The Place of Trees and Trees in Their Place* (Berg Publishers, 2002).

within and through the orchard. In their academic analysis, they recognize a sense of authenticity that seems to hinge more on the interconnectedness of actors and continuities of networks than on absolute spatial boundaries or temporal references.

Their critique of authentic place challenges notions of orchard conservation that define authenticity or traditionality too rigidly in terms of particular kinds of trees, environmental statistics, or varieties of apples, or that maintain an anachronistic landscape outside the frames of contemporary life and use. Their notion of dwelling is strongly grounded in subjective forms of engagement, and in repertoires of practice. Dwelling necessitates an appreciation of and interaction with the material and social components of the orchard over time, incorporating change through techniques of integration that maintain social and material continuity, rather than through boundary-defining or limitation:

The view of authenticity of being as some original (natural) form, some blessed state, can certainly be found in writings on orchards [...] Taken to their extreme, these arguments lead to a view of true nature, or authentic landscapes, or communities, as consisting of diminishing pockets of harmonious authentic dwelling in an ever-encroaching sea of alienation. This seems a deeply flawed view, and one which would make the deployment of dwelling as a view of landscape and nature redundant [...] At West Bradley we do not uncover a sterilised museum of past landscape and dwelling, somehow untouched by current technologies and practices. Instead, we see a series of practices which have evolved over time, and changes which are constantly informed by shifting economic, technical, and cultural formations; we see a place that is not conducive to fixed-point notions of authenticity.²²¹

This critique is grounded in Common Ground's idea of local distinctiveness, but warns against the ossification of criteria for authenticity according to objective categories that are not activated by subjective experience and interaction.

²²¹ Paul Cloke and Owain Jones, "Dwelling, Place, and Landscape: An Orchard in Somerset," *Environment and Planning A* 33, no. 4 (2001): 657.

This critical perspective is an important corrective to any notion that subjectivity is simply feelings or perspectives without context or history. Both Common Ground's theory of local distinctiveness and Cloke and Jones's theory of dwelling require subjectivity to be interactive, emerging from and reacting to the historical continuities of objects, actions, and people which have created a place over time.

Subjective Modes in Practice:

Community Orchard Conservation at Colwall Orchard Group

One particularly successful example of a community orchard acting in the spirit of Common Ground's campaign for local distinctiveness is the Colwall Orchard Group. Colwall is a village on the eastern edge of Herefordshire, sitting on the western slopes of the Malvern Hills within the Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding National Beauty. Colwall Orchard Group's approach to orchard conservation demonstrates the importance of highlighting multiple social and cultural approaches to conservation, rather than employing a narrow ecological focus for preserving unique species of flora and fauna, or a narrowing cultural or historical focus on objects, buildings, or performances. Helen Stace and Tim Dixon, founders of the Colwall Orchard Group, described their approach to me in an interview at their home in Colwall in November 2012:

We realized we were never going to gain much political currency in the village if all we said was we were managing these orchards for some vanishingly rare beetle. So we made a conscious decision we were going to try and celebrate all the aspects of orchards, not just that they were good for rare wildlife.

Orchards are wonderful, you can do anything in orchards. You can engage almost anyone in orchards. Because their history is interesting; there's the tradition, the food, the cider, the landscape, poetry, prose. They give you a vehicle.

And at the start I think, we were quite Trojan horse-like in that we thought we would deploy all these other things in order to burrow through our main hidden

objective, which is to keep these things standing, because we're interested in wildlife. And I think that is really how it started. Though it's not like that now [...] Because we've come to appreciate, truly appreciate, all these amazing things about orchards.²²²

Both Helen and Tim had extensive experience in professional conservation work with local and national conservation organizations and were very knowledgeable about the practicalities and politics of landscape conservation before beginning their project. What was surprising for them was their own transformation over time from having a primary focus on ecological conservation towards a much broader, community-based social mission to integrate local social interaction, cultural history, ecological sensitivity, and the preservation of landscape management skills amongst local people.

Colwall Orchard group's approach to orchard conservation redraws the local geography, highlighting the historically realistic landscapes of the orchards and the economies that supported them through their conservation, but also pushing these remnants forward towards a new and emergent local place that sees orchards in new social and economic contexts. Tim remarked during our interview that most of the old traditional orchards they identified in the area were owned by people who had little connection to their heritage:

What you have to understand is that most of the traditional orchards aren't owned by people who have a traditional family background in managing land and trees. They are owned by middle classes who have bought houses that have orchards attached to it.

So most orchard owners around here are middle-class professionals. They've got no artisan background at all. They don't know how to do the tree pruning. They also don't know how to use the fruit.

What's got lost along the way is what you do with the different varieties of fruit. How you store them, how you identify them.²²³

²²² Helen Stace and Tim Dixon, interview by Maria Kennedy, November 19, 2012.

²²³ Ibid.

The orchard landscape, for Helen and Tim, is one of great local distinctiveness. Even the orchards at Colwall are distinctive in character from many of the surrounding cider orchards, due to their history of mixed fruits, dessert, and cooking varieties which were sent by rail to the markets of Birmingham, Bristol, and London. However, this landscape is almost on the brink of extinction, not only in ecological or landscape terms, but also in terms of the repertoire of human knowledge connected to it. Helen and Tim recognized that these orchards cannot be restored to their previous economic use. They realized that saving them hinged on their ability to restore not only the trees themselves but also the skills and knowledge to care for them over a long period of time. That is, they fundamentally understood that orchards are not wild landscapes: The wildlife flourishing in them depends on conditions created by human intervention. They are intrinsically human and cultivated, and the heritage of cultivation must be kept alive if the orchards are to be conserved. Orchard management skills themselves, though, need a contemporary motivation, and if it is not an economic one, then another social or cultural one must be found.

Colwall Orchard Group's success, according to Helen and Tim, is based on their strategy of social and cultural inclusion, of appealing to multiple interests in orchards outside the purely ecological. This has given people the ability to imagine orchards as integral parts of their communities, the ability to see them as distinct components of a past geographical landscape that has potential to continue to shape the rural landscape they live in now, and the rural landscape they imagine for their community's future.

Tree Hunters in the Countryside: Objective and Subjective Modes in Action

Despite the importance of the written record as an archive of information about fruit varieties, there are points where the archive ceases to speak directly to lived knowledge.

Remaining individuals who maintain a repertoire of lived knowledge of trees in the landscape can help bridge the gap. Making connections between the scholarly archive and this lived repertoire is part of the strategy for tree hunter and cider maker John Teiser. John seeks out rare trees, tries to identify them, and put them back into use. Indeed, for John, rare trees, once found and identified, usually become a resource for graft material from which new trees can be propagated and planted, thus saving a variety for the future.

I was particularly fascinated by John's tree-hunting activities, because they were exploratory and open-ended. While Mike Johnson's business interests often constrained the ability to use old trees or orchards according to their efficiency, John's explorations seemed like ends in themselves. He referred to archival materials and endeavored to clarify varieties and names. But he also relied on the traditional knowledge of people on the ground, whose subjective experiences contributed experience and meaning to the understanding of the tree. One of John's tree-finding stories demonstrates the inter-relation of documentary texts, personal networks, traditional knowledge, and a willingness to jump the hedge to save a variety:

John Teiser: I think I've been successful in keeping some varieties going, which otherwise would be very much in danger of going extinct, because no one else seemed to be taking any notice of them.

There's an apple called Woodsell, which gets a passing mention in some of the old books. It's a Much Marcle apple, a very local apple. It was highly regarded in its day both as a cooking apple and as a cider apple.

And it was actually Charles Martell, when we were looking for the Late Treacle perry pear, he mentioned he had spoken to an old farmer who said he had it on the farm. He took his name, so I followed it up and found the old farmer had retired, but I managed to find out where he was living near Gloucester. And I went and scrumped a few apples and I took them over to get him to confirm the identification, which he did.

And then I got a friend, who is actually Rob Uren, to ask the owner if I could go in and collect some graft wood. And he was totally negative, he totally refused to let me in there.

So I then had to go scrump the graftwood in a thunderstorm, when I thought no one would be around their orchards, so I snuck in and got some graftwood. I couldn't see—I did think he owned the trees, but I didn't consider he owned the variety—and if it was going to become extinct through his stubbornness, I didn't think it was fair that I should pay any attention to the fact that he refused me entry to his orchard.

Normally I would respect the owner's wishes if they didn't want me in, fair enough. But as I knew this tree was there, I had to make an effort to save it. And I've got half a dozen of them growing and they are going to go in my orchard next year.²²⁴

John's conservation activities are informed by local social networks of knowledge and by personal connections with other enthusiasts, as well as a deep knowledge of literature and archival sources. In this case, his knowledge of the variety was framed by books, but, crucially, confirmed by the traditional knowledge of an old farmer. And his disregard for the wishes of the owner of the individual tree as someone's personal property in favor of the public intellectual property represented by the apple variety shows a fascinating personal ethic of conservation in practice.

This example also shows that identification of individual trees, though based on objective ideas of classification, is an inexact science in the absence of genetic testing. It relies on historical documentary descriptions, often paired with traditional knowledge. The conservation of a variety depends not only on a property owner's willingness to cultivate or manage a tree within the landscape, but on the human capacity to pass on the information that gives trees names, and gives meaning to those names. For John and Mike, these names and meanings are further intimately tied to the uses of different apples for cider and perry making.

²²⁴ John Teiser, interview by Maria Kennedy, March 19, 2012.



John Teiser
at his Cider Shed
with new orchard and
nursery
on Bull's Hill Road,
Herefordshire
Dec 1, 2012



Those who spend time driving through the countryside looking for lone old perry trees often use them as resources for their own cider and perry businesses. The conservation of orchards, in this case, is the conservation not only of trees, but also of the systems and networks of human knowledge connected to them.

In the jump from activities of collection and preservation that focus on the fruit as object to an activity like craft cider making, however, a leap must be made between archive and repertoire. The craft of cider making is not just about the preservation of varieties, but also about the understanding of how to use them: how to manipulate their fermentation, how to blend them, and ultimately how to produce a beverage that delights and challenges the senses with balanced tastes and pleasing aromas. Such an outcome is, in a sense, a skilled performance resulting from a masterful knowledge of apple and pear varieties and a deep understanding of their individual characteristics in processing and storage. One needs not only knowledge of an *archive* of apples, but a *repertoire* of making, tasting, and drinking.

Back at Broome Farm, the investment Mike Johnson continues to make in the conservation of orchards is realized in the very long-term investment he has made in propagating rare varieties of trees, planting them in fields which may not see full production for years to come, participation in agri-environment schemes, and the constant, ongoing work of making cider that reflects the diverse qualities of fruits that have fallen out of mainstream agricultural production. Unlike a social enterprise administered by a non-profit, Mike doesn't just *want* to make a profit, he *needs* to make a profit to survive, though agricultural subsidies mitigate some of the financial risk. Many times, late in the evening, as the usual crowd sat around the cellar in the evening, sipping cider, the furrows on Mike's face would reveal the stress of keeping the business together from day to day.

While hobbyists, community groups, and non-profit institutions have some luxury integrating the kinds of engagement and evolving the forms of labor that go into orchard conservation, farmer-cider makers like Mike are often embodying their passion for the landscape, their lived personal experiences, and their evolving objective evaluations of what orchards are into labor that both preserves some aspects of orchard heritage and conservation while moving it forward into the future. Mixed together with the love of cider and apple varieties that he has developed through the years are Mike's very real motivations to make his farm business work. It seems fitting to close this chapter with his pragmatic assessment of his cider business, which has become a catalyst and social hub for other people interested in preserving varieties, finding old trees in the landscape, and engaging in other kinds of conservation activities:

Mike Johnson: My motivation to get the cellar going was simply because... well it wasn't really motivation, we just had apples that Bulmers didn't suddenly want, and we opened to sell it. And it that's it really. We just needed to make use of the apples that we couldn't sell. [...]

It only influenced me because we had the orchards and I had to sell the apples, otherwise, I wouldn't even thought of it, because I had no interest in making beer or cider or anything else. It was simply because I had all these apples, and Bulmers didn't want them, what did we do with them?

Actually, probably the biggest influences was the fact that someone had advertised a cider press for hire in the Hereford Times. Simple. We hired it, made the cider. We hadn't even thought how we would sell it. At least the apples didn't go to waste. And then it turned out that people quite liked it. And so we actually set about then paying a bit more attention to it. And really that's how it came about.²²⁵

²²⁵ Oliver and Johnson, interview.

Conclusion

The takeaway from this exploration of individuals and community groups is that, rather than seeing these forms of engagement as confusing or conflicting, they should be understood as co-dependent in the production of heritage. Indeed, these different modes of engagement depend upon each other. The objective archive of knowledge about orchards and apples supports the subjective experiences that comprise repertoire. While different conservation projects or groups may focus their energies on one or another form of engagement, rather than creating a diffuse or disorganized approach to rural conservation, they create multiple, overlapping opportunities for engagement that cross-pollinate.

Together, these modes of engagement, within the context of various discourses of conservation and heritage, accumulate a sense of orchards and cider as symbols of English identity. Apples, orchards, and cider have the poetic capacity to suggest archives of knowledge, repertoires of history and experience, and the productive potential of local resources and communities. This poetic capacity has been built through the continual attention and maintenance of these forms of engagement at the local level. While conservation institutions may create discourses within which local projects connect with the resources of larger governmental infrastructures, these institutional discourses are only valuable insofar as they resonate with the modes of engagement that individuals recognize, communicate, and enact. Perhaps it is the very flexibility of the cider poetic, and participants' willingness to adapt it to changing social roles, discourses, modes of engagement, and methods of practice, that enables its continuing power as a form of rural heritage in Britain. Conservation in practice, even at the level of an organization as local as the Colwall Orchard Group, or as individual as Mike Johnson's farm business, or a personal as John Teiser's tree-hunting excursions, often begins from this pragmatic moment of

asking what to do with a disused, rejected, or irrelevant resource. Finding frames of meaning that give this resource objective meaning, and creating experiences of subjective engagement that make individuals part of a larger continuity, and make the practice of conservation and heritage possible.



Harvest at
Broome Farm
with Max Fleming
October /
November
2012



Chapter Five
Wassail, Blossomtime, and Apple Day:
Inventing and Reviving Rituals and Festivals in the Orchard

As we have seen throughout the previous chapters, cider and orchards are resonant signs for creating and transmitting heritage in England, manifesting in multiple cultural genres from literature to public policy and landscape management. Woven throughout this study of cider as a structure of feeling that emerges in these various cultural genres, I have also introduced examples of the way social identities are embodied and transformed through performances of values attached to rural life. Cider and orchards are material things, created through craft. But they are also poetic tools used to identify and redefine rural heritage even as social structures, labor, and rural economies change, and as gender and family relationships evolve.

In this last chapter, I consider rituals and festivals in orchard as folkloric cultural genres that express the cider poetic. I focus particularly on the revival of the Twelfth Night festival of Wassail. This festival draws directly from performances anchored in the past to activate and reframe social realities for their participants in the present. The revival and invention of rituals and festivals related to orchards and cider directs our attention to the reorganization of the social fabric of the countryside and suggests that orchard conservation and the revival of craft cider making represent accessible focal points for dramatizing contemporary social issues. The celebration of Wassail demonstrates the ongoing power that folklore genres have on the creation of rural heritage, and how important they continue to be in the reframing of rural life during times of economic and social change.

Wassail has historical precedents recorded by poets, journalists, correspondents, historians, and folklorists since the Medieval era. English Renaissance poet Robert Herrick's (1591-1634) poem, "Twelfth Night," references wassail, as do several of his other poems:

Next crown a bowl full
With gentle lamb's wool :
Add sugar, nutmeg, and ginger,
With store of ale too ;
And thus ye must do
To make the wassail a swinger.

Give then to the king
And queen wassailing :
And though with ale ye be whet here,
Yet part from hence
As free from offence
As when ye innocent met here.²²⁶

Robert Herrick's poems celebrate many of the folk customs and holidays that marked the lives of both peasants and kings. Both Cavalier poet of the English Renaissance and ordained clergyman living in the countryside of Devonshire, Herrick probably observed country customs and elevated them to the melodramatic style of his Cavalier contemporaries in London. In many ways, his melodramatic framing of the event, and his positionality as educated clergyman observing peasant customs sets the tone for antiquarians, folklorists, and revivalists to come.²²⁷

Today, Wassail is re-emerging as a folk festival that celebrates both the end of Christmas and the hope for a fertile agricultural year amongst the orchards. Still associated with Twelfth Night, wassail is now carried out in orchards and pubs, celebrating the craft of cider making. At the Leominster Morris Wassail of 2011, I waited outside the Tram Inn in the tiny village of Eardisley, Herefordshire, with a growing crowd of people. As the crowd swelled to around two hundred, torches made of sticks attached to used food tins, and filled with fire starters, were passed around the crowd and lit, one by one. The Leominster Morris dancers, in blacked faces, top hats festooned with pheasant feathers and flowers, and jackets made of floral curtains, led the crowd in a procession from the inn to the nearby orchard, carrying a wicker globe filled with

²²⁶ "Robert Herrick. Twelfth-Night : Or, King and Queen.,"
<http://www.luminarium.org/sevenlit/herrick/twelfthnight.htm>.

²²⁷ See Appendix A for the full text of two Robert Herrick Poems, "Twelfth Night" and "The Wassail"

mistletoe. Circled around the trees, torches burning, they lit a ring of twelve bonfires, symbolizing the twelve nights of the year, or the twelve apostles. A thirteenth fire was lit – the “Judas Fire” and stamped out. A chant went up, with all the voices around the orchard joining in: “Here’s to thee old apple tree!” The Butler, the leader of the festival and its rituals, poured cider around the roots of a tree. Toast was hung in the tree for birds. A shotgun, fired into the air, scared away the evil spirits, along with loud hollering from the crowd. The Leominster Morris danced and played music. Jugs of cider were passed around. Cups were filled and drained, and only as the bonfires burned down, did the crowd filter back to the pub, where a mummer’s play was performed, followed by music and drinking long into the night. The orchard blessed, cider drunk, songs sung, the Wassail was done for the year, with hope for a bountiful crop in the year to come, but even more, the great satisfaction of festival well done.

The Wassail at Eardisley was only one among many in a rising tide of similar events celebrating orchards and cider throughout the imagined geography of Ciderland from the West Country up through the Southern Marches. In previous chapters, we have seen how discourses of conservation and heritage related to orchards and cider draw from and add to the cider poetic in emergent practices that translate imagined countryside into material reality. In this chapter, I turn to the most folkloric of the cultural genres that contribute to the cider poetic, the festival of Wassail. I will introduce complex meanings of Wassail as both object and folk custom, discuss the historical sources for the festival, and explore the way it acts as a form of negotiation between interdependent networks of labor in the agriculture economies of the countryside - a function that it seems to still perform today even though the groups in question are different. The revival of Wassail signals important social change in rural Britain today, and self-conscious use of a folk genre to enact these changes suggests the continuing power of folk custom to



channel, express, and perhaps mediate moments of cultural change and conflict.

Wassail Today – Festivals of the Orchard

The current practice of Wassail, described above as an orchard festival, is very much a revival occurring alongside other invented traditions that focus on orchards and cider as sites of folk custom. The festival of Apple Day, a calendar custom self-consciously invented by conservation group Common Ground in 1990 promoted the conservation of old orchards and apple varieties.²²⁸ Launched with a procession and display of apples in Burrough Market, London, Apple Day is now widely celebrated throughout England on or near October 21 with community festivals in towns and villages, accompanied by cider pressing, Morris Dancing, and apple tasting. Similarly, cider festivals, apple festivals, and blossom festivals are not uncommon. The Big Apple organization in the village of Much Marcle, Herefordshire, hosts a Blossom festival in May, alongside the cider trials run by the Three Counties Cider and Perry Association, where local craft cider makers – both commercial and amateur – gather to judge each other's ciders. In fall, the Big Apple again hosts a Harvest Festival, during which local cider makers open their barns and presses to the public, with a fair hosted at The Hellens, a local stately home whose avenue is lined with three-hundred-year-old pear trees. The old stone mill at the Hellens is pressed into action, and apples of all varieties are available to taste at a display by the Marcher Apple Network.

Broome Farm itself hosts an annual Cider Festival on the first weekend in September that is the high point of the year at the farm. Up to five hundred people come, most of whom camp in the orchards for the weekend to enjoy cider provided by a barn full of local cider makers and

²²⁸ Common Ground (Organization), *The Common Ground Book of Orchards : Conservation, Culture and Community*. (London: Common Ground, 2000).

musical performances by local and regional musicians throughout the day and late into the night. The weeks leading up to the festival are busy, with cider cellar regulars and friends showing up early to set up tents, dig compost toilets, move thousands of gallons of cider, man the bar, and generally keep things running. Mike Johnson sells copious amounts of last year's cider, and other family members run catering tents to feed the hungry cider drinkers. Almost immediately after the clean-up from the festival, harvest and pressing begins in earnest. Begun as a small gathering in the car park of the local pub, the event has grown year on year, becoming a homecoming for friends of Broome Farm and a performance of things most valued by Mike Johnson: cider, fellowship, and music.

These festivals are new, invented to promote the emerging craft cider economies of the region, but they partake of elements familiar to the village fete to celebrate the heritage of apples and cider in a new frame. Within the festival of Wassail are embedded ritual components that activate embodied, transformative performances of song, dance, food, and drink that confer a blessing on the orchard. Wassail, with its deep historical roots, appeals to that urge to connect directly with the past, through the performative framework of ritual. Even though it is often keyed towards mischief, rowdiness, or humour rather than seriousness, the Wassail ritual is always earnest in its call for participation. While the previous chapter discussed objective and subjective forms of engagement with conservation activities - frames of cognitive understanding - the genres of ritual and festival demand forms of engagement that are embodied, visceral, and challenge the participant to act, rather than understand.



Singing to the Trees – Contemporary Discourses of Wassail

James Crowden's description of Wassail was the first I had ever read, and his description sums up much of what other current explanations draw upon. To understand Wassail as a festival, Crowden's text provides a good start, drawing as it does on numerous historical sources and suggesting many possible performances. I copied the quote below into my journal in July of 2004 while reading *Cider the Forgotten Miracle*, marking the moment my own interest in Wassail and all things cider was born:

Wassailing is when the old and not so old men of the village sing to the trees, put toast dipped in cider in the branches, shout, beat the trees and awaken the spirit, some with shot guns. In some places it was a male thing and traditionally the women stayed at home and locked the men out till they could guess what was roasting on the spit. It is an ancient libation to the Apple God, usually taking place on Twelfth Night, two weeks after the winter solstice, another dark pagan Celtic ritual which has survived against all the odds, a communion wine blest by silent oaths, and references to the black dog.²²⁹

I was reading this book while working on a small farm in Devon, the young owner of which was renewing the old orchard by the house. He had also re-animated the enormous oak cider press in the barn. Julian Pady, like many young people who were born to the country, had left, pursued another successful career, and returned. Now he was busy with the hard graft of reviving a latent agricultural landscape. It was his copy of James Crowden's book that I opened, and from which I first learned of Wassail.

Crowden's passion for cider and his vivid depiction of Wassail inspired in me a desire to learn more about this festival, which was also enjoying a renewal of performance not unlike the agricultural renewal happening on small farms like Julian Pady's. Though Julian Pady himself had never participated in a Wassail, I returned to Goren farm a few years later and participated in

²²⁹ Crowden, *Cider - the Forgotten Miracle*, 2.

a Wassail just a few miles away in Dunkeswell, Devon, in 2007 and over the course of subsequent fieldwork in 2011-2013, encountered many more events throughout the southern Marches and West Country counties in the region James Crowden called Ciderland.²³⁰

With a few notable exceptions of Wassail celebrations that claim to have survived unbroken into the present, such as the one at Carhampton, Somerset, the custom seems to have died out or disappeared most everywhere else, surviving as a noun, rather than a verb: a festive Christmas drink, or an obsolete word in a carol.²³¹ In the past few years, however, a notable revival has been taking place, and as several of my friends in England put it, everyone seems to want to have a wassail now.

Why did Wassailing almost die out in England, and why is it being revived now? These were some of the questions I set out to answer when I first trekked out to torchlit winter processions on the twelfth night of Christmas in Devon, Somerset, Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Shropshire, and Worcestershire. Contemporary descriptions of the custom often cast it as a remnant pagan custom, and it is easy to see why, when black-faced Morris men lead hundreds of urbanites carrying torches through old orchards to sing to the apple trees and scare off witches with gunfire. It's an enthusiastic performance of what are now considered primitive superstitions. But the overtones of pagan origins obscure other historically situated functions of the custom rooted in social obligations between farm owners and labourers, amongst neighbours within parish and village, and between traditionally segmented classes, which were enacted and performed in various kinds of visiting traditions during the Christmas season.²³²

²³⁰ Crowden, *Ciderland*.

²³¹ G. R. Willey, "The Wassail Tradition at Curry Rivel," *Folklore* 89, no. 1 (January 1, 1978): 60–65.

²³² Bob Bushaway, *By Rite : Custom, Ceremony and Community in England 1700-1880* (London: Junction Books, 1982).

The emphasis on pagan origins may have more to do with the British interest in New Age spirituality that has emerged and grown over the course of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, than with historical meanings of the festival.²³³ The whole tenor of Wassail is carnivalesque and disruptive, making the explanatory framework of pagan origins all the more understandable in a country whose official Christianity is practiced by fewer and fewer people every year.²³⁴ To those people searching for an alternative frame for Christmas holidays, Wassail-as-pagan-survival offers an engaging opportunity to disrupt the Christian ideological, moral, behavioural, and economic dominance of the midwinter season. Within this framework, Wassail is not Christian, not polite, and not commercial. In these dimensions of non-Christianity, it appeals both to those seeking an explicitly pagan seasonal festival, but also those seeking something merely secular, or at its most irreligious and anti-authoritarian, something that is altogether disruptive of everyday social norms.

Another description of Wassail, posted on the blog of Pete Brown, award-winning beer writer and author of *World's Best Ciders: Taste Tradition and Terroir*²³⁵, places the event squarely in its contemporary context, with a nod to its traditional format but an emphasis on its situational function. Comfortable with the anthropological vocabulary, he interprets Wassail as a liminal space, and shows the power of this festival to create an environment where ordinary becomes extraordinary. His description recognizes the ways in which the participants use

²³³ Ronald Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft*, New Ed edition (Oxford University Press, 2001).

²³⁴ According to the 2001 census, "Between 2001 and 2011 there has been a decrease in people who identify as Christian (from 71.7 per cent to 59.3 per cent) and an increase in those reporting no religion (from 14.8 per cent to 25.1 per cent)." "Religion in England and Wales 2011 - Office for National Statistics," <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/religion/articles/religioninenglandandwales/2011/2012-12-11>.

²³⁵ Pete Brown and Bill Bradshaw, *World's Best Ciders: Taste, Tradition, and Terroir* (New York: Sterling Epicure, 2013).

Wassail to these ends. They are not merely played upon by the power of ritual – it is rather something that we play with, to induce a state of belief and possibility:

The Queen's reward is a hearty drink from the cider pail, something she accomplishes so enthusiastically it earns her another cheer. She pours the remains around the base of the old apple tree, giving back the fruits of last year's harvest to its roots. And now the entire crowd is going batshit-crazy, banging sticks, cheering and ululating, scaring away the evil spirits from the tree. Five men in flat caps and neckerchiefs stride forward, raise shotguns and fire two volleys into the branches, the retorts so loud I feel it in my chest rather than hear it. Orange sparks fly, smoke fills the branches, and the air is thick with the smell of cordite.

And that's when it happens. Reality shifts [...]

And as the cordite fills the air and the thick smoke hazes the faerie-lit trees, for a few minutes I genuinely believe – I *know* – that we have succeeded in driving evil spirits from this realm, back through the liminal space to the dimension where they belong.

Everyone else knows it too. Tomorrow we'll completely accept that the apple harvest is down to weather patterns and soil, judicious stewarding and farming technology. But not tonight.

Or maybe it's all just a good excuse to get pissed. [...]

One of the nice things about this wassail is that it requires no crowd control. By midnight, the crowd is simply too wankered to carry on, and everyone makes their way home happily, haphazardly, with wide, warm grins on their faces.

But that's not the best thing about wassailing. The best thing is simply that it's here, it happens. Wassail simply sticks up two fingers to the most depressing time of the year. It says, yes, I know party season is over, but we're going to have a party anyway, a really big party, and we're going to hold it in a farmyard, in the middle of winter, and it's going to be really good.

And while I'll admit it might be the drink talking, I can think of no more laudable triumph of the human spirit.²³⁶

Brown's description of this event in Somerset is gritty and alcohol-soaked, and Crowden's intimates the same. This is the disruptive, transformative, bachanalian Wassail.

One of the most interesting things about Wassail as a festival form is its elasticity, its capacity to accommodate a wide variety of groups and take an even wider variety of forms. During my research, I endeavoured to attend as many wassails as I could fit into my calendar, spending most of the weekends of late December and January travelling to events within the

²³⁶ "Pete Brown: If You Aren't Spending This Weekend in a Muddy Field Shouting at a Tree, Why Not?," accessed April 1, 2014, <http://petebrown.blogspot.com/2014/01/if-you-arent-spending-this-weekend-in.html>.

locality of Herefordshire, Shropshire, Worcestershire, and Gloucestershire. Events were not all the same, however. One day-time event in a local orchard, attended largely by elderly churchgoers, was organized by a vicar from the Tenbury Wells Team Ministry. The very small but enthusiastic Wassail performed by the Foxwhelp Morris at Preston-on-Wye was dominated by the performance of English folk music by the members of the group. Other events were oriented towards families and children, such as the Colwall Wassail, organized by a community orchard group. The Mari Llwd and Wassail in Chepstow attracted many Morris Dance sides from around the country, featuring both celebrations of the Welsh tradition of the Mari Llwd on the Welsh side of the River Wye, and the English Wassail on the east side in Gloucestershire. Both contingents processed to meet in the middle of the bridge spanning the border of England and Wales, the Butler of the wassail greeting the ribboned horse skull leading the Mari Llwd.

The Leominster Morris Wassail, which I described above, was one of the largest and most rowdy events I visited, with the dancers pounding so hard on the floor of the pub that the whole timber frame building shook. Some Wassails occurred on “new” Twelfth Night (January 5), and some on “old” Twelfth Night (January 17), a discrepancy attributable to the change of calendar that occurred when England switched from the Julian Calendar to the Gregorian Calendar in 1752, an implementation of the Calendar Act passed in 1750. Some Wassails were held whenever they could be accommodated during the Christmas season and into January. Participants at smaller events were often people from the local community, but at larger events like the Leominster Wassail, visitors from larger regional cities like Hereford, Gloucester, or Bristol were present. Often organized and performed by gate-keepers of rural identity – farmers, cider makers, Morris Dance groups, vicars, the festival of Wassail attracts diverse audiences

from rural and urban backgrounds, all of whom are excited to revel in a performance that places orchards and cider at the center of a mythic rural past.

The custom's visceral tactile appeal stems from the sensory stimulations of frost, smoke, fire, alcohol, and physical activity, as people wake up their own lethargic bodies from the interior, domestic hibernations of winter with a brisk trek into wet muddy fields. The dimensions of affective and bodily presence that the event foregrounds are perhaps more important than the references to superstition or alternative forms of belief however. These references are often keyed to a register of hyperbole, rather than seriousness. Being outside after the endless indoor Christmas parties feels like a release, and the bonfires and torches light up the long midwinter nights of a land that is, despite its mild climate, on a more northerly latitude than much of Newfoundland or Mongolia. And the cider, liberally consumed by many participants, adds a feeling of euphoria, enhancing the already foregrounded physical senses. The torches seem brighter. The night seems blacker. Anything feels possible inside the huddle of bare apple trees that themselves almost come to life in the midst of the ritual that ostensibly intends to wake them, exorcise them, and bless them with fertility for the coming year.

When I arrived at Broome Farm, I found that they too had revived Wassail as an event on the farm, but recently had let it lapse again. With my friends there, we decided to restage the Wassail for friends and family. We would revive it again from a recent past, but the process of revival from more distant pasts was a key part of its function in contemporary rural communities. Before turning to Broome Farm's most recent revival, let me look further into that more distant past.



**Tenbury Team
Ministry Wassail
Little Hereford,
Herefordshire
January 29, 2012**





Foxwhelp Morris Wassail
 The Yew Tree Inn
 Preston-on-Wye
 January 17, 2012



Wassail in the Historical Texts

An understanding of the festival as a revival performance necessitates an investigation of historical sources documenting the festival, for it is from these sources that contemporary performances draw, perhaps indirectly and without attribution. But this form of reference suggests an enduring relationship between the scholarly conception and documentation of folklore in England and the performance of rural heritage and practice of folklore genres in contemporary times. In studying Wassail, and trying to define the performative components of the festival, one quickly finds that in both historical and contemporary practice, a variety of component parts are recombined in various ways to suit the context. But Wassail does have a generic unity that holds together, and the historical sources reveal the most consistent components of performance. In the literate, post-colonial, post-industrial context of contemporary rural England, the revival of a folk genre of performance must be accounted for through the intertextual excavation of documentary and historical sources from which the contemporary performance has been reconstructed. This is not to say that direct lines of memory and performance do not exist outside of the documentary sources. They do, but in many cases of revival, these are strained, minor, or broken. Tracing lines of entextualization, attribution, and re-performance in contemporary contexts not only reveals the history of this genre, but demonstrates how the process of revival reconnects selected texts to contemporary performances. As Richard Bauman has written, performances that mediate gaps in time, space, and authority demonstrate, “the core structure of processes that are constitutive of social life: traditionalization, the socialization of discourse, and authorization.”²³⁷ The desire of revivalist practitioners to reconnect with customs that they know were part of their personal, local, or occupational history,

²³⁷ Richard Bauman, *A World of Others' Words : Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Intertextuality* (Malden MA: Blackwell Pub., 2004), 158.

but to which they have no direct experience or access, results in a search for relevant sources that can be used to reconstruct a performance, or serve as an authoritative explanation for the meaning and origin of the festival. In the case of Wassail, the documentary sources are actually quite rich.

Researching Wassail as a historical phenomenon leads in several directions: history of the word itself as an Anglo-Saxon toast meaning ‘good health’; descriptions of a vessel or bowl and its contents with which the toast was drunk; reports of Christmas-tide begging or carolling customs; collections of songs and carols; blessings of crops, fields, or animals. Customs invoking Wassail could involve any combination of these components, making strict definition difficult. The most complete summary of all these iterations of Wassail with descriptions of historical performance and geographical specificity is offered by historian Ronald Hutton in his book, *Stations of the Sun, A History of the Ritual Year in Britain*, which traces the first recorded festival custom associated with Wassail to medieval writer Peter de Langtoft (died ca.1307).

Hutton paraphrases the text, putting in historical context, saying:

...the leader of a gathering cried ‘wassail’, Old English for ‘your health’. That person was answered ‘Drinkhail’. Drank from it, and passed it to the next of the company with a kiss. Each of them repeated these actions. The custom may not, in fact have been much older than Langtoft’s time.²³⁸

Hutton’s history traces the broad practice of Wassail associated specifically with Christmas customs across much of England, but notes the particular version of Wassail as a begging and carolling custom that prevailed in the West Country stretching area from Cornwall to Gloucestershire and around the Severn into Herefordshire and Wales. It consisted of groups of people, usually men, travelling around the village singing and offering a drinking bowl. Wassail as blessing of fruit trees also occurred throughout the same general area, as well as south and east

²³⁸ Ronald Hutton, *Stations of the Sun : A History of the Ritual Year in Britain* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

towards Surrey, Sussex, and Kent. In Herefordshire, the custom had a unique incarnation as a blessing of fields through the burning of twelve fires and the blessing of cattle.

Hutton notes the first mention of wassail as a blessing of fruit trees is in Kent in 1585, when a clergyman paid local youths to “howl” in his orchards, followed by further mentions in the poetry of Robert Herrick in the 1630s and in the 1660s in Sussex. He notes the decline of this custom, like many other begging customs, in the early twentieth century, but also a revival again in the 1970s, saying:

...the custom functions there neither principally as a fund-raising exercise, nor as an entertainment, but as a bonding exercise in communal solidarity. In such ways can a practice now firmly consigned to ‘folklore’ still contribute to the life of the modern West Country.

We will return to the phenomenon of revival throughout the chapter, but Hutton’s history also shows how intertwined the rise, decline, and revival of the custom in its various iterations has been with the collection and publication of folksong and dance, with notable contributions from Ralph Vaughn Williams, who collected and published the song most widely used today, “The Gloucestershire Wassail.”

As Hutton’s statement demonstrates, those things ‘consigned to folklore’ are, through the process of revival, part of the emerging consciousness of rural heritage that shapes rural identity today. This cycle of cultural documentation, selection, and performance in new contexts is an integral part of the way Wassail has been understood not just as a historical phenomenon, but also as a kind of cultural performance of particular interest to folklorists. Reports of wassail as Christmas customs and carols were among the customs documented by the earliest antiquarians and folklorists in England. It is from these early reports that many of the details contributing to contemporary revival practices are taken, filtered through a series of retellings and re-interpretations. The interpretive frameworks guiding those who documented and recorded

Wassail from the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries are just as important as the information itself. Their attitudes towards the meaning of Wassail, its supposed functions and origins, and its significance as either an active or waning tradition, contribute to the ways in which it is still reinterpreted and performed today.

Interest in popular antiquities, later called folklore, followed the emergence of the Enlightenment in England, and documenting the primitive or superstitious beliefs, practices, and voices the country people was an outgrowth of the impact of scientific rationalism and the religious revolution of Protestantism. Both intellectual movements encouraged inquiry into the nature of the world in either its natural or spiritual contexts. Scientific inquiry examined the natural world through observation and experimentation, and religious inquiry probed the divine world through personal study and reading of the Bible, rather than through dependence on priestly intervention, superstition, or erroneous rituals or holidays encouraged by the Catholic Church, many of which were thought to have been adopted from pagan origins and absorbed into Christian practice.

The various celebrations attached to Christmas were particularly suspect as Catholic-integrated pagan survivals, believing to be derived from various pagan sources including the Norse Yule and the Roman Saturnalia, in addition to numerous unknown local midwinter revels. The attitudes of folklorists and antiquarians towards the customs they documented varied between benign intellectual interest, enthusiasm, disdain, or more regularly, a complex combination of all three.

Wassail, attached to Christmas in various guises before, during, and after December 25th, but usually on the Twelfth Night, or Epiphany, was seen to be especially irreligious. Just over twenty years after John Evelyn (1620-1706) published his *Pomona* for the Royal Society, a

rationalist treatise advocating the planting of fruit trees and the production of cider as an agricultural improvement project for landowners, John Aubrey(1626-1697), also a member of the Royal Society, was writing *Remaines of Gentilisme and Judaisme*, in which some of the earliest known descriptions of Wassail as an agricultural folk custom were recorded. The writing of these two men on the place of orchards and cider in society is instructive, emerging from similar worldview.²³⁹ Evelyn looked forward to the contributions orchards and cider could make to an improved and progressive nation, and Aubrey looked back at their place in a superstitious and backwards rural past, still alive, but receding. Aubrey compiled this collection of customs, traditions, and beliefs over many years, writing it up between 1687 and 1689. Aubrey himself was from the west of England, growing up in Wiltshire and his family having property in Herefordshire.

Regarding the significance of the material he has collected, Aubrey is quite clear that it is to be understood as spiritual error, and interpreted within a larger frame of progress wherein both Protestant Christianity and scientific rationalism, developments of the Enlightenment, are the natural superior successors to superstition and custom:

Old customs and old wives fables are grosse things, but yet ought not to be {buried in oblivion / quite rejected}; there may some truth and usefulness be {picked /elicited} out of them, besides tis' a pleasure to consider the errors that enveloped former ages as also the present.²⁴⁰

²³⁹ Bauman and Briggs demonstrate the relationship between scientific and humanistic discourses emerging from a common cultural imperative, the one structuring the other: "On the one hand, science was deemed to be not a social product but to be derived from a sphere of nature that existed apart from humans; Enlightenment thinkers viewed society, on the other hand, as constructed by humans [...] The two realms were constantly linked through processes of mediation and the production of hybrids, forms that linked social characteristics to scientific and technological elements [...] While this hybridization process invests both social and scientific forms with political-economic and social power, the work of 'purification' seeks to erase awareness of these connects in order to maintain the illusion of the autonomy of these realms" Richard Bauman and Charles Briggs, *Voices of Modernity : Language Ideologies and the Politics of Inequality* (Cambridge England; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 4.

²⁴⁰ John Aubrey, *Remaines of Gentilisme and Judaisme*, Folk-Lore Society Publications 4 (Nendeln/Liechtenstein: Kraus Reprint, 1967), 7. Markings reflect those in the publication.

Despite this attitude, Aubrey is quite enthusiastic in his recording of material. In his accounts, as in later ones, references to Wassail are multiple and diverse, with a variety of different descriptions and meanings. Occurring in several different orthographic iterations such as wastel, wassal, wassaile, the word is adjective, noun, and verb. It is in these multiple spellings and grammatical identities that the various meanings of the word unfold: a particular kind of drinking bowl or cup, a blessing, a particular kind of cake, an activity blessing oxen, fields, or orchards. In a section on holy bread, Aubrey's notes mention a vessel for drinking the health of a monastic community:

But by the word Vastellus no doubt is meant the Wastel or Wassal Bowls, which as a piece of state was placed at the upper end of the table for the use of the Abbat, who drank out of that Plate a Health or a Pculum Charitatis to the rest of the fraternity.

In a section on blessing of the fields, he describes an activity blessing the oxen, and a cake special to that activity:

Mdm. At Twelve-tyde at night they use in the Countrey to wassaile their Oxen and to have Wassaile-Cakes made.
Ploughmen's Feasts....Holydaies
Gett the song which is sung in the ox-house when they wassell the oxen.²⁴¹

In a section on West of England customs, the most complex description yet, and the first of Aubrey's to mention a blessing of trees, "wassaile" is a twelfth night custom of blessing the oxen, complete with drinking the health of the oxen, a song, and a special "wassell-bowel":

Mdm. That non obstante the Change of Religion, the Plough-boies, and also the Schooleboies will keep-up and retain their old Ceremonies and Customes and priviledges, which in the west of England, is used still (and I believe) in other parts. So in Somersetshire when they Wassaile (which is on....I think Twelfth-eve) the Plough-men have the Twelve-cake, and they goe into the Ox-house to the oxen, with the Wassell-bowle and drink to the ox w. the crumpled horne that treads out the corne; they have an old conceived Rythme; and afterwards they goe

²⁴¹ Ibid., 9.

with their Wassel-bowle into the orchard and goe about the Trees to blesse them, and putt a piece of Tost upon the Rootes, in order to it.²⁴²

The additional blessing of the fruit trees with the Wassel-bowle, complete with an offering of toast, is the form of the wassail custom that is now best known, applied to the revived custom today.

Two further folklore documentary sources stand out, cited by many subsequent writers and researchers on the custom. These are reports cited by John Brand (1744-1806), and the collections of the *Gentleman's Magazine* edited by George Laurence Gomme (1853-1916). John Brand, antiquarian and rationalist Protestant cleric, first documented Wassail customs in his book *Observations on Popular Antiquities – Including the Whole of Mr. Bourne's Antiquitates Vulgaris with Adenda to Every Chapter of that Work* published in 1777 as an annotation of his predecessor Henry Bourne's (1694-1733) work. In the annotation of Henry Bourne's work, this description of Wassail occurs in a note on section devoted to harvest suppers:

Mr. Pennant informs us, that a custom prevails in Gloucestershire on the Twelfth-day, or on the Epiphany in the Evening: All of the Servants of every particular Farmer assemble together in one of the Fields that has been sown with Wheat; on the Border of which, in the most conspicuous or most elevated Place, they make twelve Fires of Stray in a Tow; around one of which, made larger than the Rest, they drink a cheerful Glass of Cyder to their Master's Heath, Success to the future Harvest and ect, then returning home, they feast on Cakes made of Carrawys, and etc, soaked in Cyder, which they claim as a Reward for their past Labours in sowing the grain. –This, he observes, seems to resemble a custom of the antient Danes, who in their Addresses to their rural Deities, emptied on every infocation a Cup in Honor of them.²⁴³

Brand's annotations to Bourne, enlarged with his unpublished collections and edited by Sir Henry Ellis in 1813 (1777-1869) as *Observations on Popular Antiquities: Chiefly Illustrating the*

²⁴² Ibid., 40.

²⁴³ Henry Bourne John Brand, *Observations on Popular Antiquities: Including the Whole of Mr. Bourne's ...* (J. Johnson, 1777), 336, <http://archive.org/details/observationsonp00bourgoog>.

*Origin of Our Vulgar Customs, Ceremonies, and Superstitions*²⁴⁴ became a seminal work of British folklore, authoritative in its scope, the model and architecture for many works after it. Material from Brand and Ellis was further edited and expanded by William Carew Hazlitt (1834-1913) in his a *Dictionary of Faiths of Folklore*,²⁴⁵ published in 1905.

George Laurence Gomme's compendium, *The Gentleman's Magazine Library: Being a Classified Collection of the Chief Contents of The Gentleman's Magazine from 1731 to 1868*,²⁴⁶ contains, in the first three volumes, references of interest to folklorists. These are organized thematically and topically, and searching through them, several references to Wassail can be found scattered throughout.²⁴⁷ It should be noted that Brand himself references sources from *The Gentleman's Magazine*, so its impact on collectors of folklore cannot be overstated. Two entries in particular are of note, in part because they are related, and in part because one represents an account from the Marches in Herefordshire, and the other from the West Country in Devonshire. The first entry describes the custom in Herefordshire by a correspondent named J.W. (who writes again almost thirty years later with another account), and the second entry is a direct response to J.W. describing a similar custom in Devonshire. The Herefordshire custom includes the twelve fires and a blessing of cattle, while the Devonshire custom includes the blessing of orchards:

1791 pg 116

A few days since, looking over The General Evening Post some old customs there noticed as being observed in the days of our venerable ancestor Alfred, it says, "In

²⁴⁴ John Brand, *Observations on Popular Antiquities*.

²⁴⁵ John Brand, Henry Ellis, and William Carew Hazlitt, *Brand's Popular Antiquities of Great Britain. Faiths and Folklore; a Dictionary of National Beliefs, Superstitions and Popular Customs, Past and Current, with Their Classical and Foreign Analogues, Described and Illustrated* (London, Reeves and Turner, 1905), <http://archive.org/details/cu31924027937949>.

²⁴⁶ George Laurence Gomme, *The Gentleman's Magazine Library : Being a Classified Collection of the Chief Contents of the Gentleman's Magazine from 1731 to 1868*. Edited by George Laurence Gomme (London : E. Stock, 1883), <http://archive.org/details/gentlemansmagazi01gommuoft>.

²⁴⁷ See Appendix for a full listing of references to wassail in Gomme's *Gentlemen's Magazine Library*, rearranged chronologically to reflect when they would have originally appeared in the magazine. Chronological arrangement reveals relationships between references and even correspondents who were responding to previous references in the magazine.

Glostershire the custom much prevails of having, on Twelfth-day, 12 small fires, and one large one made in many parishes there in honour of the day." As I have some reason to think this custom is more generally observed with us in Herefordshire and as I have myself been for many years a constant attendant on this festive occasion, I will beg leave to give you the particulars of the whole, as it is still kept up in most parishes here. It is here observed under the name of Wassailing (which I need not say to you is a Saxon custom), in the following manner: On the eve of Twelfth-day, at the approach of evening, the farmers, their friends, servants, etc., all assemble, and, near six o'clock, all walk together to a field where wheat is growing. The highest part of the ground is always chosen, where 12 small fires and one large one are lighted up. The attendants, headed by the master of the family pledge the company in old cyder, which circulates freely on these occasions. A circle is formed round the large fire, when a general hallooing takes place, which you hear answered from all the villages and fields near ; as I have myself counted 50 or 60 fires burning at the same time, which are generally placed on some eminence. This being finished, the company all return to the house, where the good housewife and her maids are preparing a good supper, which on this occasion is very plentiful. A large cake is always provided, with a hole in the middle. After supper, the company all attend the bailiff (or head of the oxen) to the Wain-house, where the following particulars are observed : the master, at the head of his friends, fills the cup (generally of strong ale), and stands opposite the first or finest of the oxen (24 of which I have often seen tied up in their stalls together) ; he then pledges him in a curious toast ; the company then follow his example with all the other oxen, addressing each by their name. This being over, the large cake is produced, and is, with much ceremony, put on the horn of the first ox, through the hole in the cake ; he is then tickled to make him toss his head : if he throws the cake behind, it is the mistress's perquisite ; if before (in what is termed the boosy), the bailiff claims this prize. This ended, the company all return to the house, the doors of which are: in- the mean time locked, and not opened till some joyous songs are ; sung. On entering, a scene of mirth and jollity commences, and reigns, thro' the house till a late, or rather an early, hour, the next morning. Cards are introduced, and the merry tale goes round. I have often enjoyed the hospitality, friendship, and harmony, I have been witness to on these occasions. I have not time, or indeed room, to add more at present. Some other time you shall hear of some other of our Herefordshire customs, J. W.²⁴⁸

The description of the Herefordshire custom above was read and commented on by another correspondent from Devon, demonstrating the power of the publication to elicit comparative collection and description of customary behaviour by the educated classes living and working in the English countryside at this time period:

1791, pg 403-404

Your Hereford correspondent, J. W.'s, account in your entertaining Miscellany, p. 116, of a custom observed in his county on Twelfth eve, induces me to transmit

²⁴⁸ Gomme, *The Gentleman's Magazine Library*, Vol 3 16-17.

you one not very unlike, which prevails in the other most noted part of this kingdom for cyder, the Southhams of Devonshire. On the eve of the Epiphany, the farmer, attended by his workmen, with a large pitcher of cyder, goes to the orchard, and there, encircling one of the best bearing trees, they drink the following toast three several times :

"Here's to thee, old apple tree,
Whence thou may'st bud, and whence thou may'st blow !
And whence thou may'st bear apples enow !
Hats full ! caps full !
Bushel ! bushel sacks full 1
And my pockets full too !
HUZZA !"

This done, they return to the house, the doors of which they are sure to find bolted by the females, who, be the weather what it may, are inexorable to all intreaties to open them till some one has guessed at what is on the spit, which is generally some nice little thing, difficult to be hit on, and is the reward of him who first names it. The doors are then thrown open, and the lucky clodpole receives the titbit as his recompence. Some are so superstitious as to believe that, if they neglect this custom, the trees will bear no apples that year. Yours, etc.,
ALPHONSO.²⁴⁹

Just over one hundred years later, these descriptions continue to have currency as evidence of authentic folk culture, finding their way into the more comprehensive collection of county folklore by Ella Mary Leather (1874-1928) in her 1912 publication *The Folk-Lore of Herefordshire*. She quotes the J.W. source from the 1791 *Gentleman's Magazine* in full, following with J.W.'s later correspondence to the magazine in 1820, after which she says, "The above accounts of the custom are correct in every detail, as it has been frequently described to me by those still living who took part in it; it was believed to have had a beneficial effect on the crops."²⁵⁰

The influence of these early folklore reports is ongoing. The verse related by Alphonso in 1791 is still used in many wassails today, with almost the exact same wording, acting as the central performative moment, where all participants are encouraged to chant along together in

²⁴⁹ Ibid., Vol 3 17-18.

²⁵⁰ Leather, *The Folk-Lore of Herefordshire*.

the seminal toast to the trees. I first encountered the verse when I visited the wassail in the village of Dunkeswell, Devon in 2007, where it was written out on a placard so all could chant along, and it remains a part of most every wassail I have seen.

The persistence of these early reports as sources for contemporary wassail customs is consistent but indirect, mediated through paraphrased historical reports in popular works on local history, such as local historian and folklorist Roy Palmer's works on the folklore of counties in the Marches. Though most people will not have sought out the source directly in Brand or Gomme's collections, the verse, in its brevity and performative portability, has clearly circulated through many other publications and performances, bringing with it other adjacent performative structures, such as the drinking of toasts in the orchard, the burning of twelve fires in the field, and the superstition that the orchard must be blessed to be fruitful in the coming year. Though he does not cite a source, folklorist Roy Palmer (1932-2015) repeats a portion of the verse in his compilation *Folklore of Hereford and Worcester*, reporting the revival of wassail in 1987 in Much Marcle, Herefordshire by Weston's Cider Company managing director Mr. Michael Roff. Subsequently, he reports that the custom began to catch on elsewhere throughout the region.²⁵¹

Gleaned from all of these references and meanings, it can be inferred that Wassail, often shared with a special cup or bowl, is both drink and salutation, whether to the cows, the orchards, the fields, the master and mistress of the house, etc. Anything can be Wassailed, and the many verses of various Wassail songs attest to this.²⁵² The heterogeneity of the custom is frustrating to tease apart, and searching historical sources that provide a neat picture of linear progression of the tradition, or even a clear relationship of geographical spread and the tradition's different incarnations, is impossible. But it is this very diversity of customs and geographic peculiarities

²⁵¹ Roy Palmer, *The Folklore of Hereford & Worcester* (Almeley: Logaston Press, 1992), 249.

²⁵² See Gloucestershire Wassail Appendix A

that makes Wassail such a rich genre for performative possibility for those interested in reviving or inventing their own version. One needs only the right moment and the desire, and a cornucopia of performative components are available to recombine according to one's imagination.

The intertextual relationships between early accounts, collections of folklore, and performances demonstrates both the strength and flexibility of the genre, with certain accounts being re-circulated and gaining authority through the social power wrought by the ordering imperative of Enlightenment era rationalist discourse in the form of folkloristic collection and description of rural life.

Broome Farm's First Wassail, Remembered

The emergence of Wassail at Broome Farm alongside its entry into craft cider making provides an ethnographic example of the development of a Wassail tradition in the corner of southeastern Herefordshire. In its ritual and festival references, sources, and innovations, we can see how the various components of Wassail were incorporated into a unique event that both derives from folkloric documentary sources indirectly and innovates analogous but relatable festival components that complement the event's generic structures and conventions.

Cider was not always made at Broome Farm, and there were certainly not Wassails within anyone's living memory. But someone had the idea of having a Wassail, and though it is unclear who did, or why, it emerged as one of the many festive occasions on a farm that regularly hosts an annual cider festival, benefit concerts for local charity, music, and weddings in the barn and orchard. A bed and breakfast run by Mike Johnson's sister Hillary and brother-in-law John brings visitors regularly on holiday or for dinner. Monthly first Friday gatherings in the

cider cellar, daily visits by customers and regulars, and a Christmas dinner for family and friends of the farm round out the farm's custom of hospitality. Broome Farm is a place that generates ideas and enthusiasm for parties, festivals, celebrations, and owner Mike Johnson and his extended family are generally open to considering new ideas for social events. Mike's narrative of how they began the Wassail at Broome Farm, and how it evolved over the years and eventually ended, shows how eclectic, inclusive, and expansive their idea for the event was. The first wassail included both the local Catholic priest and Anglican chaplain, blessing two separate orchards:

Mike Johnson: I don't know whose idea it would have been all those years ago because we hadn't been making cider very long when we did the first Wassail. In fact we only had the old orchard and the orchard over the road and the orchard in the village.

And it probably would have been much more to do with my mum and dad and Hillary and a much more communal idea to have a Wassail. So whose idea it was - I really don't know now. I'm sure it wouldn't have been mine, not all those years ago. And the interesting thing was that - it might have been Monica even - that we at the time were friends with two different - there was a Catholic priest who has always been a family friend of me mum and dad's. And then we met the country chaplain locally, and so we organized a Wassail and invited them both. And one blessed one orchard, and one blessed the other orchard. And then we went back and had the party. And we had a friend at the time who was a magician, so he did a lot of table magic and entertained the kids. So we had a great party after the Wassail.

But we didn't really have a Wassail like we do now with the fires and everything. It was - we all met at the orchard and did make a lot of noise and did that stuff. But we didn't really have fires. And then we walked all the way through the farm to the other orchard. But in the first orchard we just got the Catholic priest to bless it.

And then the rural chaplain got into trouble because he wrote about it in the parish magazine. And this bishop said you shouldn't have been doing anything in a pagan festival, which we hadn't - it wasn't pagan. You know it wasn't anything like that really. And it seemed a shame that - because he took it in the spirit which it was - which was just a way of blessing the orchards. We just paid, I suppose we just paid tribute to tradition in making noise and having a couple of shots fired over the trees. But in no way was it anything to do with evil spirits. It still isn't is it? It's just - we think it's a way of celebrating the fact that we're all here and the trees are there, and so on.²⁵³

²⁵³ Johnson, interview.

That first Wassail, a simple blessing of the trees and a procession and party, eventually evolved into a much bigger event, incorporating the twelve fires, Morris dancers, a Butler, and many more people:

Mike Johnson: The first couple we did, we just didn't have the twelve fires - we just had one big fire. And we got Morris dancers in, and we did it in a completely wrong time of year. That was really just have a party, because we've met a certain amount of people, we said let's do that, like it does happen here, if you know what I mean.

It just moved on to doing - I went to a couple of other Wassails and saw a couple of other things people were doing, so we adapted ours to do the twelve fires and think about the twelve apostles and stuff. Then we had a couple of wassails where Alan had this big influence and he had this huge balloon bombs that made a fantastic noise. Sadly it upset my Dad a bit because he thought it was bad for the animals, but it was spectacular actually. Trying to think... I have a photo of it that Ian took. It was great.

As with all these things, no one else was really doing them much at the time, and so it grew and grew and grew and we were ending up with - well we were booking a band, which always helped, because the party was fantastic. And then it grew to so many people that we realized we couldn't do it anymore, because unless the weather was perfect, how could you cope with all those people and the car parking. Which is why we've had three or four years without doing them. As well as the cold weather. So that was what made it nice this year. Didn't have to worry about anything really. It was a nice little party wasn't it?

Maria Kennedy: Yeah - I was a bit stressed out in the beginning, but you know.

Mike Johnson: I know exactly! In the end, you have to, you really do have to delegate certain things. And you know that that person is doing that thing, and you don't have to worry about it. It was great that John did the Butlering. You just need to have somebody who's prepared to do certain things, who's good at them.²⁵⁴

John Edwards, an employee of Mike's at Broome farm, eventually took on the role of the Butler in the Wassails at the farm, and reprised his role during the winter I helped to revive the performance. John is a distinctive figure on the farm, usually dressed in immaculately clean army fatigues, his blond dreadlocks, which can sweep the ground, tucked neatly up for work. He can often be found pressure-washing and sterilizing barrels and large plastic beverage containers. He

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

smiles quietly through his wire-rimmed glasses, speaking thoughtfully in a disciplined baritone voice amongst the more rowdy conversations in the cellar. Sometimes, he brings his tenor banjo to the cellar and plays.

When John Edwards became part of the Wassail at Broome Farm, he went searching for information on its history and found a manual put together by local Wassail enthusiasts Pete Symonds, Eric Freeman, and Albert Rixen. Their manual was called CROW: Campaign for the Revival of Wassail. John reflected on his search for sources for his performance:

John Edwards: Yeah so we're looking for information to do a Wassail here, and I picked up Pete Symonds CROW - Campaign for the Revival for Wassailing booklet, and then did a bit more research outwards from that on the internet. And then I've got a few books at home. I've always been interested in folklore. That's one thing - that's kind of an abiding interest with me. Folklore, folk traditions

Maria Kennedy: Folk music obviously

John Edwards: That came later. I had an interest in folk traditions and paganism more. I only got interested in folk music when my keyboard got stolen and I had to start playing my dad's ukelele. There was nothing else that either had enough strings, or....

Maria Kennedy: I was curious what kind of folklore you were interested in and what books you had?

John Edwards: Oh god yeah, probably one of my favorites - I can't remember the name of the author, you must pardon me. It's a book called practical magic in the northern tradition. That's a great little book that a friend of mine gave me...as in northern hemisphere. That's a cracking book - full of interesting nuggets. But it's more like yeah, I joined a Morris side for awhile when I was younger. He's laughing now [Allan laughing]

Allan: I did that as well....Breighton

John Edwards: I was with the Pershore Old Wonder [...] for a little while, but I was too young for it...²⁵⁵

Allan, whom Mike had mentioned earlier as contributing the large explosions to the event, and John had both done stints in Morris dance groups or sides, and were well-

²⁵⁵ John Edwards et al., January 15, 2013.

acquainted with the music, dance, costume, and general attitude of misrule fostered in that folk genre. The influence of Morris Dance on Wassail was also noted by Mike as he searched for other inspirations to expand their repertoire. While the earliest Wassails at Broome Farm were not, as Mike emphasized, in any way pagan, it is clear that for John at least, this aspect of folklore held a particular interest for him. But the Campaign for the Revival of Wassail and those behind it had a much different interest, one that resonated with John's identity not as an enthusiast in paganism or folk music, but as an agricultural worker.

Rural Labor and Social Contracts:

Eric Freeman, Pete Symonds and CROW, the *Campaign for the Revival of Wassail*

I went to find the men behind the Campaign for the Revival of Wassail, and I was told by all to meet Pete Symonds. He came to talk with me at the cider cellar at Broome Farm, and Mike told me to prepare myself for a long interview. Pete arrived, and I invited him to sit down, but he never did. He stood, a towering figure, animated by his passion for the subject, and discoursed for almost three hours with little interruption. I mostly listened, as a litany poured forth from him. Mike sat with us awhile, until work called him away. I had encountered Pete before, the charcoal blackening his face in his role as the Butler for the Wassail and Mary Llwd at Chepstow. But this was my first time meeting him in conversation instead of performance. Yet his conversation was much like a performance. He clearly wanted to tell me a story, so that I could understand one performance of festival through another performance of history.

The men behind the Campaign for the Revival of Wassail shared the values and lifestyles shaped by rural, mechanical, and manual labour. For Pete Symonds, a former electrician from the Forest of Dean, Eric Freeman, a life-long farmer in the rural countryside of Gloucestershire west

of the Severn, and Albert Rixen, a plumber and engineer, Wassail was a tribute to the work of the agricultural year and an emblem of the social contract between farmers and their agricultural workers. Pete Symonds is a skilled tradesman in a rural community whose livelihood suffered with the outsourcing of industrial work overseas. He saw in Wassail the opportunity to celebrate the social bonds of working men and commemorate the cooperative nature of agricultural labor in an era before industrialization. Eric Freeman, friend of Pete's and collaborator in the CROW enterprise, has helped revive Wassails in several villages in the vicinity of his own property, Byfords Farm, near Huntley, Gloucestershire, where he holds his own Wassail, which attracts up to 200 people each year. Eric was a tireless supporter of agriculturally-oriented social networks such as the Young Farmers and groups devoted to saving rare breeds of livestock; he has dedicated much of his life to the practice of farming not just as a business or even a personal vocation, but a way of life still full of social and cultural richness. These two were joined in their wassail endeavors by Albert Rixen, devoted to restoring old steam engines, including antique steam powered cider equipment. He also lent his workman's approach to wassail and cider making, keeping alive the mechanical heritage of agricultural work.

Addressing the founding of CROW, Pete handed me his manual for wassail, *Everything You Need to Know About Wassail*, as well as a copy of *The Butler's 10 Minute Rule Book*, a compilation of songs, toasts, and poems, saying:

Now when I set up the thing called CROW - Campaign for the Revival of Wassailing - And what I wanted was people to send me, if they knew, any traditional toasts to the tree [...] And the word toast comes from this wassail, cause of what we're going to do. So I look at this tree, and I'm holding this thing of cider up, and I say, "Old Apple tree, we wassail and hope that thou wilt bear. For the Lord doth know where we shall be till the apples come another year. So bloom well, and bear well, and merry let us be. That every man take off his hat and shout out to thee, wassail." They'd wassail with me, I wassailed them. Good health to the tree.²⁵⁶

²⁵⁶ Pete Symonds, interview by Maria Kennedy, January 10, 2013.

The toast to the tree honors the tree for its labor in bearing a crop, asking for another fruitful year. The toasts that Pete sought to collect likewise demonstrate the reciprocity of wishing good health to master and mistress, to the crops and the animals. Agricultural labor, and the social bonds that enabled rural prosperity were at the center of these toasts, and the many verses of some wassail songs, like the Gloucestershire Wassail, show how the contributions of each member of the farm household – humans, animals, and crops - were recognized as vital to the success of all.

In reviving the Wassail today, the relationships of the pre-mechanized farm economy cannot be recaptured, but social bonds available in rural England today can be recognized, improvised, and even re-invented. Celebrating a wassail today still involves labor. The considerable labor involved in preparing the bonfires, making the torches, and orchestrating the festival mirror the kind of shared, social labor Pete, Eric, and Albert wanted to celebrate. Eric Freeman, reminiscing on the origin of his own revival of the Wassail, connected it directly to other agricultural revivals, such as the Harvest Home, a festival he also celebrates at his farm.

I suppose it all started - there was a folk revival. These folk concerts were going strong in the 90s. People come together who had the same feelings you know, and then it sort of blossomed I think. And I was well interested in it. And always remembered going to a harvest supper in a hall up on the Cotswolds, when I was a young farmer. And the old man, Mr. Gayden, got up and sang the Farmer's Boy. And I never forgot that. And that wasn't like a church service. That was the celebration of the harvest. And I thought well really we ought to be doing that, you know.²⁵⁷

For Eric Freeman, Wassail belonged alongside other kinds of customs and festivals related to rural life and agricultural labor, which for him, are still a part of his everyday life.²⁵⁸ Eric jokingly describes himself as “passionately English,” while also noting cultural stereotypes that

²⁵⁷ Eric Freeman, interview by Maria Kennedy, December 4, 2012.

²⁵⁸ Eric Freeman's personal memories of farming life are collected in his home publication *Thumbsticks and Frails: Some of Eric's reflections on country life*.

commonly depict the English as the least passionate of the national groups in the British Isles. Eric is unabashedly politically conservative, and he believes in preserving and celebrating those things that mark what he sees as English national and ethnic traits: social reserve, negotiating spirit, pragmatic outlook. Eric's conservatism allows him to locate English identity in an idea of country life where this kind of social contract between employers and laborers was part of the fabric of English life, a fabric that is being torn apart by the economic forces of large scale farming and labor unrest. He sees this kind of unrest characterizing the national characters of other cultures, like the more "excitable" Celtic nations of Welsh, Irish, and Scottish, not to mention the Latin cultures of France and the Mediterranean. Eric's nationalist views, when written on the page, seem startling and at odds with his pleasant nature and generous hospitality. Like many rural farmers with conservative leanings, his ideas appeal in their passion for the defense of a traditional way of life, but chafe in their stereotypical portrayal of modernity and its multiculturalism.

Eric's rootedness in rural agricultural life allowed him to find a tenuous link to the performance of Wassail within his own neighbourhood. Though he had no memory of Wassails himself, one of his elderly neighbors came to the Wassail at his farm, and it jogged something of a memory:

My old neighbor, he's eighty-seven Christmas Eve. He came, you see, and he didn't know what he was going to see, and he came out round the tree and said, "You know, I remember something being done when I was a kid." he said. It was the hanging the stuff on the tree that triggered his memory. And he said, "I'm not sure where it was, but it could have been here," he said, on this place. "Or it could have been at my place, or it could have been up there by the green." He said, "I'm sure it was along this lane somewhere." But I haven't had anybody else say anything.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁹ Freeman, interview.

This lone shadow of a memory, jogged by the part of the ritual that involves hanging toast on a tree, was intriguingly place-specific, oriented to the immediate context of a few farms and the village green. With so little to go on, Eric needed other sources to build his own festival.

Eric found his sources for wassail in individuals involved in the local folk music club, Morris dancing, and historian Roy Palmer.²⁶⁰ Most of Roy Palmer's references are from folk song collections, with notable attention given to the revival of the tradition by Westons Cider Company in Much Marcle in 1987 and other local events that derived from it.²⁶¹ Palmer cites the text of the ritual toast first noted by correspondent ALPHONSO in the Gentleman's Magazine in 1791, though he does not give a direct attribution for a source. The toast is, at this point, ubiquitous, circulating freely, though with remarkable consistency, much like the Wassail songs, Morris Dances, and even the Wassail bowls themselves that contribute to the performative components of the festival.

²⁶⁰ Marilyn Palmer and Roy Palmer, *The Folklore of Gloucestershire*, 2nd edition (Stroud: The History Press Ltd, 2001).

²⁶¹ Palmer, *The Folklore of Hereford & Worcester*.



Eric Freeman's Wassail
Byfords Farm, Huntley
Gloucestershire
January 5, 2013
Eric Freeman, bottom right



Fertility and health, the object of the blessing of the orchards and the direct message of the stable entextualized components of the festival, rather than being seen as a superstitious belief, can be interpreted as the outcome of productive relationships. Rethinking these performative aspects of wassail from the point of view of the performers can re-orient the historical meaning of the festival and help us understand more about its contemporary performers as well. In the historical contexts that Eric Freeman and Pete Symonds reference, the performance would have been carried out by agricultural workers, and it would have served as a traditional method of negotiating with their land-owning employers. This relationship itself can be interpreted as a site of productivity and fertility, which is realized in material form in the agricultural output of the orchard. Without a satisfied workforce or good relationships between masters and men, the farm could not be productive. Without workers, there would be no harvest, no fertility. It's also important to remember that the social contract of pre-industrial rural labor celebrated in these contemporary festivals didn't always succeed, that standards of living for agricultural workers in the pre-industrial era were generally dire.²⁶² But in the interpretation of Wassail as an agricultural social contract, the festival was a moment when that contract was tested, when the workers held the orchard and the farm hostage for a night, demanding food and drink from their employers in return for performing the wassail and ensuring a fertile crop in the year to come.

This interpretation of such festivals is both an internal, emic, analysis of many practitioners from rural or working class backgrounds like Pete and Eric, possibly influenced in revival contexts by the prevailing interpretive framework applied by social historians to folk custom throughout the latter half of the twentieth century in Britain.²⁶³ The academic interpretive

²⁶² Ward, *Roses Round the Door?*

²⁶³ Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*.

frame has advanced the understanding of folk custom beyond the earlier frames of interpretation for folklore of pagan survivals, refocusing attention towards the customs and festivals as performative genres used to enact class solidarity and legal rights of the poor.²⁶⁴

As Eric noted, the 1990s seemed to be an opportune time for the revival of Wassail as an agricultural festival celebrating the apple crop, aided by the upswing in interest in other forms of folk revival, such as folk music. Perhaps coming after the effects of Thatcherism, which decimated labor rights and foreshadowed the outsourcing and globalization of manufacturing, the revival of interest in celebrating agricultural labor can be better understood. Similarly, after decades of post-war farming policy which had emphasized production volume, undermining the small mixed family farms which had characterized the countryside, festivals celebrating traditional agriculture and its social bonds are an understandable reaction. In particular, the rise of Wassail in its form as an orchard blessing makes sense when one considers that traditional orchards were now seen as unproductive and endangered in the new agricultural regime. The agricultural policy measures that began to reverse the effects of productivism and encourage conservation of landscape for biodiversity and cultural heritage discussed in chapters three and four began to protect orchards in 1991, around the same time that Eric Freeman and others began to bless the orchards, fields, and farms in their own way, with their own cultural resources of folk song and festival.

Against the backdrop of weakened labor rights and the pressures of globalization on small farms, the celebration of harvest festivals and wassail as idealized portraits of benevolent reciprocal relationships between landowning employers and farm laborers makes sense. In addition to agricultural festivals like Eric Freeman's Harvest Home Supper, the Wassail is a

²⁶⁴ Bushaway, *By Rite*.

blessing of orchards that celebrates manual labor, reciprocal relationships, traditional forms of agricultural work, and the crops and landscapes that are the physical manifestation of that work.

The practice of Wassail in the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries, as interpreted through frame of social history, was a kind of symbolic labor negotiation, with the potential harvest hanging in the balance. Historically, the next Monday after Twelfth Night, known as Plough Monday, agricultural work started again after the fallow period following the harvest. The fields were ploughed for the coming year. Pete Symmonds described the Wassail as an agricultural social contract in this way, acting out a hypothetical interaction between labourer and employer from a bygone era, where the wassail is an opportunity for laborer and employer to meet, to see each other's potential if unknown, or to mend old wrongs if they have marred an existing relationship, all in the service of a good harvest:

So a wassail is, 'please let it be a good harvest.' You have a wassail on a Saturday night. [...] On plough Sunday, you take the plough into the church..... And on the Monday...that's first day you take the plough out into the field and you start [...] This is the start of a very risky business, ploughing and sowing.

So Saturday night - its no good me coming here Monday morning, - 'Could I start here Monday?' - he wants to know me before, and he's spoke me, 'Now you'll come and plough for me won't ye, you'll come and do the work for me, now I've got all the corn, all the seeds, I've got the ploughs, all the horses, and you're coming aren't you?'

So when I come round here on Saturday night, and we're going to start this business on Monday [...]

'If I'm going to come and work for you, so pleased to meet you. Hello Boss, I hope we get on well. I really hope.' Things are going to go round during the year. We know that, but we hope it's going to go well.

Do you know what I mean? We ain't sure we're going to get on, we ain't sure where this ship's going, but we're going to do our best to get on well.

'Oh by the way, you and I fouled up last year, didn't us, I be sorry about that. I really am sorry that we fouled out. But we be good friends from now on.' So on Saturday night, this is that night when you be sorry that you upset people, you be sorry you had cross words. 'Let's start afresh.' You know this is a new beginning. And it's serious mind, deadly serious, you really make an effort to get on.²⁶⁵

²⁶⁵ Symonds, interview.

The meaning assigned to ritual and festival, both internally (emic) by practitioners and externally (etic) by scholars, reflects the prevailing social issues of the time. Eric Freeman and Pete Symonds, whose enthusiasm for revival of wassail has been so important in Herefordshire and Gloucestershire, apply a frame that is rooted in an understanding of agricultural labor. As social historian Bob Bushaway has demonstrated, this interpretive frame for customs, traditions, and festivals was a common emic frame throughout the period from 1700 to 1880, missed by scholars searching for pagan origins or ancient mythic survivals:

...custom linked together the components of the local community calendar, and reflected, on the one hand, the symbolism of social cohesion in which the rural labourer was able to defend popular rights, and, on the other, provided models for socially disruptive behavior and established a cultural environment for more orthodox movements of social protest. Much more than the vestigial remains of pagan belief, the function of custom and usage during this period was essentially social and economic.²⁶⁶

Bushaway addresses Wassail directly, noting its similarity to the Harvest Home as customs that promoted “social cohesion within the community. As with many similar customs, and particularly harvest, the elements of commensality and group solidarity were combined.”²⁶⁷ The various elements of Wassail contribute to this overall function: the processing through village and orchard provided, “a frame of reference for the customary activities which occurred on other key calendar dates,” while the provision of food and drink strengthened bonds between farmer and labourer, and cemented the farmer’s obligation to care for the labouring poor through occupational contracts and through customary festivals which, “provided the labouring poor with an opportunity to regale themselves at the expense of the farmers.”²⁶⁸

Further, the celebration of cider trees in particular in Wassail might be seen as the protection of a customary form of payment that the laborers knew they would enjoy in the

²⁶⁶ Bushaway, *By Rite*, 1–2.

²⁶⁷ Ibid., 155.

²⁶⁸ Ibid., 154–58.

coming year during their manual work on the farm. Bushaway emphasizes the importance of ritual and festival as tools at the disposal of the labouring poor to protect their customary dues in the farmer-laborer economic and social relationship. The provision of cider or beer as a form of payment, especially during the hard work of harvest, was one of these traditional exchanges.

Bushaway notes:

The centrality of cider-making and cider itself in the relationship between farmer and labourer. Here, the farm labourer is concerned to protect and promote the source of production of his customary prerequisite. If no cider was made, then none could be consumed as part of the work contract.²⁶⁹

The use of cider as payment for labour was finally outlawed by the Truck Act of 1887, which forbid the payment of laborers in forms other than currency. The causes and effects of this law are complex, its intent being to amend bad labor practices that deprived workers of wages in a society where the customary dues and relationships were quickly eroding in the face of mechanization and industrialization. However, these customary dues were also fiercely protected as symbols of a relationship where workers could pressure and demand rights from their employers within the social obligations of a more limited and tightly knit community. Though Bushaway does not make an explicit link between Wassail and the protection of cider as part of the worker's contract, the relationship is an obvious one. Labourers would certainly have an interest in blessing crops and livestock in general, but especially those crops that directly contributed to their welfare and refreshment in the work of the coming year, as cider would do.

Eric and Pete's interpretive frame for wassail can easily be read as a continuation of this approach to custom, albeit through a revived and reflective form. It is how they want the festival to work, even if it no longer represents a direct negotiation between laborers and farmer

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 120.

employers. A better interpretation might take note of this historical frame of Wassails long ago, and ask what new functions it accomplishes, what social contracts are now up for negotiation? As Henry Glassie has demonstrated in his work on the comparable custom of Christmas Mumming in Ireland, traditions thrive when and where their aesthetic dimensions and social functions fit the desires and needs of a community, and when they do not, they fade away. But they can also be revived.²⁷⁰ Perhaps muted or not fully available as interpretive frames for all participants, the poetic materials, vestiges of forgotten meanings, may still lodge dormant in the performance, ready to be activated and understood when an analogous interpretive moment occurs.

Conclusion – Contemporary Functions of Wassail

If the interpretation of wassail promoted by Pete Symonds and Eric Freeman looks back towards an attitude about customary behavior that foregrounded social and economic bargaining power in agricultural labor contexts, other frames of interpretation can also be discovered in the practice of Wassail. And if one interpretation prevails in a particular performance, it does not necessarily exclude other meanings. Just as the components of Wassail are various and flexible, as demonstrated by both the historical accounts and my ethnographic observations, the interpretations of its significance and meanings also vary widely. As Richard Bauman has suggested in his studies of performance, discourse, and genre, a community's approach to the construction and performance of a particular genre can indicate its capacity to instantiate cultural change: "...generic innovation is more conducive to the exercise of creativity, resistance to

²⁷⁰ Henry Glassie, *All Silver and No Brass : An Irish Christmas Mumming* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975).

hegemonic order, and openness to change.”²⁷¹ The generic flexibility and expansiveness of Wassail festival traditions indicates it is a generic form that can accommodate many structural forms and interpretive frames, making it an ideal genre in which cultural and social changes can be expressed and experimented with through performance.

Each Wassail will be different, but some broad trends can be suggested that indicate the kinds of cultural and social change to which Wassail is giving performative expression in the late twentieth and twenty first centuries. The new social contract might be less between farmers and laborers, as it is between farmers and urban dwellers, many of whom flock to these events in the countryside. Some return to childhood homes in the countryside from their adult urban lives, reviving or maintaining connections between country and city. Some make pilgrimages from lives defined entirely by the city to discover a rural life that is largely strange and alien to them, except through the imagery and stereotypes of popular culture. And there are still many very rural celebrations that gather friends, family, neighbors, and workers to the nearby farm or pub to celebrate the ongoing solidarity of local communities. The capacity of Wassail to speak to both audiences, to urban visitors as well as to local communities, suggests that it partakes of the kind of folklorization processes that John McDowell has described in his work:

...within the process of folklorizing tradition, that is, the effort to make it accessible and appealing to a cosmopolitan audience, there exists a contrary impulse, to recapture and enhance local expressivity. These contrary tendencies introduce a resilient multivocality into the mediated environments of the expressive contact zone, those nodes of artistic communication where the local meets the global. In addition to the much-discussed exploitation and transformation of local culture in post modernity, we can devise a less-documented reflex, the reinforcement of local aesthetic practices.²⁷²

²⁷¹ Bauman, *A World of Others' Words*, 8.

²⁷² John H. McDowell, “Rethinking Folklorization in Ecuador: Multivocality in the Expressive Contact Zone,” *Western Folklore* 69, no. 2 (2010): 186.

Broome Farm's Wassail exhibited all of these elements of relationship appealing to both outside audiences and internal ones. Both its beginning and end suggest the ways in which farmers are taking advantage of the increased interest of urban, non-farming people in encountering agricultural spaces, as well as the limits that farmers face in accommodating this post-productivist urban-rural relationship. The Wassail at Broome Farm ultimately ceased in part because the logistics of the festival became too strained – too many people were coming, and the resources of the farm could not support logistical issues like parking and provision of food and shelter for visitors in the uncertain weather at that time of year. The farm, despite its many capacities as a social venue and its owners love of hospitality was not a tourist destination. It was still a working farm.

Clearly, however, the ceasing of the Wassail was a problem not of disinterest but of demand outstripping capacity. As demonstrated by the numbers of people that came to the Broome Farm Wassail and that still attend other large Wassail events, as well as the proliferation of Wassails in all kinds of venues and communities, from church to pub, hosted by local choirs, folk music groups, and community gardens and orchards, there is a demand to participate in these kinds of events that orient relationships between people and landscape, between consumers and the sites of production, and that bring together strangers and friends to form new bonds for a new year.

Appendix A:
Poems of Robert Herrick

TWELFTH NIGHT: OR, KING AND QUEEN. ²⁷³

NOW, now the mirth comes
With the cake full of plums,
Where bean's the king of the sport here ;
Beside we must know,
The pea also
Must revel, as queen, in the court here.

Begin then to choose,
This night as ye use,
Who shall for the present delight here,
Be a king by the lot,
And who shall not
Be Twelfth-day queen for the night here.

Which known, let us make
Joy-sops with the cake ;
And let not a man then be seen here,
Who unurg'd will not drink
To the base from the brink
A health to the king and queen here.

Next crown a bowl full
With gentle lamb's wool :
Add sugar, nutmeg, and ginger,
With store of ale too ;
And thus ye must do
To make the wassail a swinger.

Give then to the king
And queen wassailing :
And though with ale ye be whet here,
Yet part from hence
As free from offence
As when ye innocent met here.

²⁷³ A. W. Pollard, *Works of Robert Herrick: Volume II* (Lawrence & Bullen, 1898).

THE WASSAIL²⁷⁴

GIVE way, give way, ye gates, and win
An easy blessing to your bin
And basket, by our entering in.

May both with manchets stand replete ;
Your larders, too, so hung with meat,
That though a thousand, thousand eat,

Yet, ere twelve moons shall whirl about
Their silv'ry spheres, there's none may doubt
But more's sent in than was served out.

Next, may your dairies prosper so,
As that your pans no ebb may know ;
But if they do, the more to flow,

Like to a solemn sober stream,
Bank'd all with lilies, and the cream
Of sweetest cowslips filling them.

Then, may your plants be prest with fruit,
Nor bee, or hive you have be mute ;
But sweetly sounding like a lute.

Last, may your harrows, shares, and ploughs,
Your stacks, your stocks, your sweetest mows,
All prosper by our virgin vows.

Alas ! we bless, but see none here
That brings us either ale or beer ;
In a dry house all things are near.

Let's leave a longer time to wait,
Where rust and cobwebs bind the gate ;
And all live here with needy fate.

Where chimneys do for ever weep
For want of warmth, and stomachs keep,
With noise, the servants' eyes from sleep.

It is in vain to sing, or stay
Our free feet here ; but we'll away :

²⁷⁴ ROBERT HERRICK, *Works of Robert Herrick, Vol 1: The Hesperides & Noble Numbers*. Edited by Alfred Pollard with a Preface by A C Swinburne. (LONDON: LAWRENCE & BULLEN 1898., 1898).

Yet to the Lares this we'll say :

The time will come when you'll be sad,
And reckon this for fortune bad,
T'ave lost the good ye might have had.

Appendix B: The Gloucestershire Wassail,
as noted in *Everything You Need to Know About a Wassail* by A. Butler, published by the
Campaign for the Revival of Wassailing

Chorus

Wassail! wassail! all over the town,
Our toast it is white and our ale it is brown;
Our bowl it is made of the white maple tree;
With the wassailing bowl¹, we'll drink to thee.

So here is to Cherry and to his right cheek
Pray God send our master a good piece of beef
And a good piece of beef that may we all see
With the wassailing bowl, we'll drink to thee.

Here's to Dobbin, and to her right eye,
God send our master a good Christmas pie;
A good Christmas pie that may we all see,
With my wassailing bowl I drink to thee.³

So here is to Broad May and to her broad horn
May God send our master a good crop of corn
And a good crop of corn that may we all see
With the wassailing bowl, we'll drink to thee.

And here is to Fillpail and to her left ear
Pray God send our master a happy New Year
And a happy New Year as e'er he did see
With the wassailing bowl, we'll drink to thee.

Here's to our Colly, and to her long tail,
Pray God that our master He never may fail
Of a bowl of strong beer I pray you draw near,
And our jolly wassail it's then you shall hear.

Come butler, come fill us a bowl of the best
Then we hope that your soul in heaven may rest
But if you do draw us a bowl of the small
Then down shall go butler, bowl and all.

Then here's to the maid in the lily white smock
Who tripped to the door and slipped back the lock
Who tripped to the door and pulled back the pin
For to let these jolly wassailers in.

Appendix C:

Wassail Quotes from GL Gomme *Gentleman's Magazine Library*, arranged chronologically by date of appearance in the magazine (rather than by Gomme's topical arrangement)

[1784, Part I., pp. 98, 99]

Your anonymous correspondent, vol. liii. p. 928, having said that he never heard of Lamb's-wool, or Christmas-eve, and cannot guess the meaning, I am induced to trouble you with the following attempt at an explanation of what was meant by the expression. [See post, p. 44, and sub voce "Christmas."] In that part of Yorkshire (near Leedes) where I was born and spent my youth, I remember when I was a boy that it was customary for many families on the twelfth eve of Christmas (not on Christmas-eve, as your correspondent [ante, p. 6], mentions) to invite their relations, friends, and neighbours to their houses to play at cards, and to partake of a supper, of which minced pies were an indispensable ingredient ; and after supper was brought in the Wassail Cup or Wassail Bowl, being a large bowl, such as is now used for punch, filled with sweetened ale and roasted apples. I have seen bowls used for his purpose that held above a gallon. A plate of spiced cake was first handed about to the company, and then the Wassail Bowl, of which everyone partook by taking with a spoon out of the ale a roasted apple, and eating it, and then drinking the healths of the company out of the Bowl, wishing them a merry Christmas* and a happy New Year. The ingredients put into the bowl ; viz., ale, sugar, nutmeg, and roasted apples, were usually called Lamb's-wool, and the night on which it used to be drunk (which was generally on the twelfth-eve) was commonly called Wassail Eve. I am of opinion that the custom was very ancient ; but from whence it arose, or why the mixture was called Lamb's-wool, I do not at present pretend to account. Shakespeare certainly alluded to it in his *Midsummer Night's Dream*, where he makes Puck, or Robin goodfellow, say : "Sometimes lurk I in a gossip's bowl,

In very likeness of a roasted crab,* And when she drinks against her lips I bob, And on her withered dewlap pour the ale." A very common accident, especially to old people, who oftentimes had as much Lamb's-wool in the bowl as they could lift to their heads and sometimes more than they could do so without assistance Since the alteration of the style, the Wassail JJowl or Wassail Cup as it was called, is so much gone into disuse in this part of the country' that I have scarcely seen it introduced into company these thirty years Indeed, the festival of Christmas is not celebrated since that period as it used to be in my remembrance. We have in this place a very ancient custom yet kept up, viz. the Cur/eu Bells.called here Culfer, i.e. that is, Cool-fire; which are two of the church bells rung alternately, every morning and evening at seven o'clock, during the twelve days of Christmas only, and at no other time of the year. They make a most disagreeable sound.

JOSIAH BECK.WITH.

P.S. Furmety used, in my remembrance, to be always the breakfast and supper on Christmas-eve in this country.²⁷⁵

....

CHRISTMAS-WASSAIL.

[1784, Part I., p. 347.]

The drinking the Wassail Bowl or cup was in all probability owing to keeping Christmas in the same manner they had before the feast of Jule. There was nothing the northern nations so much

²⁷⁵ Gomme, *The Gentleman's Magazine Library*, Vol 3, 16-17.

delighted in as carousing ale ; especially at this season, when fighting was over. It was likewise the custom at all their feasts for the master of the house to fill a large bowl or pitcher, and drink out of it first himself, and then give it to him that sat next, and so it went round. One custom more should be remembered ; and this is, it was usual some years ago in Christmas time for the poorer people to go from door to door with a wassail cup adorned with ribbons and a golden apple at the top, singing and begging money for it : the original of which was that they also might procure Lamb's wool to fill it, and regale themselves as well as the rich. [See ante, p. 16.]²⁷⁶

.....

OLD CUSTOMS.

[1785, Vol III.,p. 853.]

In these parts several old customs are still in use ; such as at Christmas great blocks of wood burnt in the hall for the neighbours, with cakes and ale and lamb's-wool ; carol-singers, morris dancers, wassellers, etc. On Plough-Monday they dress up a plough, which is carried about. Another ceremony is Heaving on Easter-Monday. At another time of the year Blazing, which is straw lighted at night on the tops of trees. The old bell-harp is likewise a favourite instrument with the country people. [See note 22]

Yours, etc., OBSERVATOR.²⁷⁷

....

[1791 pg 116]

A few days since, looking over The General Evening Post some old customs there noticed as being observed in the days of our venerable ancestor Alfred, it says, "In Glostershire the custom much prevails of having, on Twelfth-day, 12 small fires, and one large one made in many parishes there in honour of the day." As I have some reason to think this custom is more generally observed with us in Herefordshire and as I have myself been for many years a constant attendant on this festive occasion, I will beg leave to give you the particulars of the whole, as it is still kept up in most parishes here. It is here observed under the name of Wassailing (which I need not say to you is a Saxon custom), in the following manner: On the eve of Twelfth-day, at the approach of evening, the farmers, their friends, servants, etc., all assemble, and, near six o'clock, all walk together to a field where wheat is growing. The highest part of the ground is always chosen, where 12 small fires and one large one are lighted up. The attendants, headed by the master of the family pledge the company in old cyder, which circulates freely on these occasions. A circle is formed round the large fire, when a general hallooing takes place, which you hear answered from all the villages and fields near ; as I have myself counted 50 or 60 fires burning at the same time, which are generally placed on some eminence. This being finished, the company all return to the house, where the good housewife and her maids are preparing a good supper, which on this occasion is very plentiful. A large cake is always provided, with a hole in the middle. After supper, the company all attend the bailiff (or head of the oxen) to the Wain-house, where the following particulars are observed : the master, at the head of his friends, fills the cup (generally of strong ale), and stands opposite the first or finest of the oxen (24 of which I have often seen tied up in their stalls together) ; he then pledges him in a curious toast ; the company then follow his example with all the other oxen, addressing each by their name. This

²⁷⁶ Ibid., Vol 3, 76-77.

²⁷⁷ Ibid., Vol 3, 74.

being over, the large cake is produced, and "'is, with much ceremony, put on the horn of the first ox, through the hole in the cake ; he is then tickled to make him toss his head : if he throws the cake behind, it is the mistress's perquisite ; if before (in what is termed the boosy), the bailiff claims this prfze. This ended, the company all return to the house, the doors of which are: in- the mean time locked, and not opened till some joyous songs are ; sung. On entering, a scene of mirth and jollity commences, and reigns, thro' the house till a late, or rather an early, hour, the next morning. Cards are introduced, and the merry tale goes round. I have often enjoyed the hospitality, friendship, and harmony, I have been witness to on these occasions. I have not time, or indeed room, to add more at present. Some other time you shall hear of some other of our Herefordshire customs, J. W.²⁷⁸

.....

1791, pg 403-404

Your Hereford correspondent, J. W.'s, account in your entertaining Miscellany, p. 116, of a custom observed in his county on Twelfth eve, induces me to transmit you one not very unlike, which prevails in the other most noted part of this kingdom for cyder, the Southhams of Devonshire. On the eve of the Epiphany, the farmer, attended by his workmen, with a large pitcher of cyder, goes to the orchard, and there, encircling one of the best bearing trees, they drink the following toast three several times :

" Here's to thee, old apple tree,
 Whence thou may'st bud, and whence thou may'st blow !
 And whence thou may'st bear apples enow !
 Hats full ! caps full !
 Bushel ! bushel sacks full !
 And my pockets full too !
 HUZZA !"

This done, they return to the house, the doors of which they are sure to find bolted by the females, who, be the weather what it may, are inexorable to all intreaties to open them till some one has guessed at what is on the spit, which is generally some nice little thing, difficult to be hit on, and is the reward of him who first names it. The doors are then thrown open, and the lucky clodpole receives the titbit as his recompence. Some are so superstitious as to believe that, if they neglect this custom, the trees will bear no apples that year. Yours, etc., ALPHONSO.²⁷⁹

Inn Names

[1818, Part II., pp. 13-17.]

Our custom of drinking healths, and the Wassel bowl, appear to have originated in the introduction of the British Monarch Vortigern to Rowena the beautiful blue-eyed daughter (or, according to other writers, niece) of the Saxon Hengist. She kneeled down, and presenting to the King a cup of spiced wine, said, "Lord King, Waes lull" Health be to you ; to which Vortigern, instructed by his interpreter, replied, "Drinc heil," I drink your health ; and then, as Robert of Gloucester says, "Kuste hire, and sitte hire adoune, and glad dronk hire heil, And that was tho' in this land the verst was-hail." Waes heal from that period not unnaturally became the name of the drinking-cups of the Anglo-Saxons ; and the word IVassel is only a corruption of the antient

²⁷⁸ Ibid., Vol 3, 16-17.

²⁷⁹ Ibid., Vol 3, 17-18.

Waes heal or Wish health bowl. The term Wassel occurs often in Shakespeare, and is sometimes used for general intemperance or festivity. To this day it is the constant custom in Glamorganshire for the country people to bring a cup of spiced ale, which they call Wassel, and sing gratulatory songs at the doors of their more opulent neighbours at Christmas.²⁸⁰

Christmas-Eve.

[1820, Part I., p. 33.]

I beg to communicate to you an ancient superstitious custom, still obtaining at Tretyre, in Herefordshire, upon Christmas Eve. They make a Cake, poke a stick through it, fasten it upon the horn of an ox, and say certain words, begging a good crop of corn for the master. The men and boys, attending the oxen, range themselves around. If the ox throws the cake behind, it belongs to the men; if before, to the boys. They take with them a wooden bottle of cyder, and drink it, repeating the charm before-mentioned. I strongly suspect, from the ox and the cake, an allusion to some sacrifice to Ceres; and the Confarreatio, the Harvest-home, being a ceremonial appertaining to that Goddess; but I have no means of referring to the new Edition of the "Antiquitates Vulgares," or time to examine the custom archaeologically. [See ante, p. 19]

A. B. and C.²⁸¹

.....

[1820, Part 11., pp. 418, 419.]

In your Magazine for January last [see note 4] I observed your Correspondent A. B. and C. gives a concise account of the antient custom of Wassailing, that formerly was much celebrated in many parts of Herefordshire, and in some parts of Gloucestershire. As I have many years been an attendant on these social and hospitable meetings, permit me to offer to your readers some particulars of this ceremony, as I have seen it kept up, with all due form, on the farm of Huntington,* two miles West from Hereford, that for many years was occupied by my late respectable friend and neighbour, Mr. Samuel Tully, well known to the publick, and many of your readers, as a farmer and grazier, more particularly distinguished for his excellent and beautiful breed of cattle. Among many visitors to Mr. Tully, at Huntington, to see his fine stock of cattle, I remember meeting the late Duke of Bedford, Lord Somerville, Sir Richard Colt Hoare, and other well-known amateurs in fine animals. A few years preceding the very unfortunate death of Mr. Tully, I for the last time witnessed the joyous scene of wassailing.

On the Twelfth day, the Epiphany, Mr. Tully and his numerous visitors, near the hour of six o'clock in the evening, walked to a field where wheat was growing, and on the highest part of the land one large and twelve small fires were lighted up. While burning, the master and some of his company, formed in a circle round the larger fire, and after pledging each other in good Herefordshire cyder, all the attendants joined in shouting and rejoicing. On the fires being extinguished, the company all returned to the hospitable mansion, where an excellent and plentiful supper was provided for the family, and all ranks of visitors. After the glass had circulated, and some songs had been sung, and happiness diffused through all the numerous company, near the hour of nine or ten o'clock, a second procession was formed, by all who joined in the concluding and more interesting ceremony. On coming to the out-house, where the

²⁸⁰ Ibid., Vol 2, 286-286.

²⁸¹ Ibid., Vol 3, 75.

oxen and cows were in their stalls, the bailiff attended with a large plumcake, which, when made, had a hole in the middle. Previous to its being placed on the horn of the ox, the master and his friends each took a small cup with ale, and drank a toast to each ox, in nearly the following words (each of the 24 oxen having a name) : the master began with the first :

" Here's to thee, Benbaw,* and to thy white horn,
God send thy master a good crop of corn ;
Of wheat, rye, and barley, and all sorts of grain ;
You eat your oats, and I'll drink my beer ;
May the Lord send us all a happy new year !"

After the last ox was toasted, the bailiff placed the cake on the horn of the first ox, the boy touching him with a pointed goad. This induced the ox to shake his head, when the cake was tossed on either side ; if on one side, it was to be the perquisite of the bailiff, who divided it amongst the company. On returning to the house, mirtand feasting prevailed till a late, or rather an early hour. The Harvest-supper is frequently celebrated at this time. Much of the ceremony is now omitted. The twelve fires are frequently made, and concluded by a social evening. I have lately, near six o'clock in the evening of Wassailing, from our public walk, the side of the Castle, if the evening proved clear, seen numerous fires on the hills around, particularly on the camps of Dynedor, Aconbury, Credenhill, etc., scenes many of your Antiquarian readers well know. J. W.²⁸²

*Huntington farm is one mile from White Cross, on the road from Hereford to South Wales, and to the Roman station of Ariconium. The view of Hereford from this well-known Cross, which makes an excellent foreground, is extremely grand; I have frequently drawn it from recollection, and particularly did so on the day I was with the Monks on Mount St. Barnardt in August, 1816, going to Italy, for the two reasons that pleased the Prior, as it showed him the town in England where I generally resided, and a cross built by a Catholic Bishop (Charton), in 1347, whose monument and arms (as on the Cross) are in Hereford Cathedral. This Cross has been often engraved (see *Gent. Mag.*, vol. Ixii., p. 298), and particularly in Britton's "Architectural Antiquities."

*He was killed by a vicious bull, in a field near his own house.

*Note 4 (page 19). This communication is printed under " Christmas Eve " on page 75.

....

CHRISTMAS FESTIVALS.

[1824, Part II pp. 587-590.]

[extract from longer entry]

The first intimation of Christmas, in Yorkshire, is by what are there called vessel-cup singers, generally poor old women, who, about three weeks before Christmas, go from house to house, with a waxen or wooden doll, fantastically dressed, and sometimes adorned with an orange, or a fine rosy-tinged apple. With this in their hands, they sing or chant an old carol, of which the following homely stanza forms a part:

"God bless the master of this house,
The mistress also,
And all the little children

²⁸² Ibid., Vol 3, 19-20.

That round the table go !
The image of the child is, no doubt, intended to represent the infant Saviour; and the vessel-cup is, most probably, the remains of the wassail bowl, which anciently formed a part of the festivities of this season of the year.

AN²⁸³

.....

On the Holiday Times of Old.

[1824, Part I., pp. 227-229.]

"Christians in old time did rejoice

And feast at this blest tide." OLD CAROL.

The following Remarks on the Holiday Times of Old, which occur in a Review of Mr. Davies Gilbert's "Christmas Carols," in a recent Number of the "Literary Gazette" [Jan. 31, 1824], will, we think, be deemed so generally interesting, that we hope to be forgiven by our intelligent Contemporary for borrowing them from his columns.

EDIT.

Though we know not whether our querulous grumblings will meet with sympathy from any of our readers, we cannot refrain from uttering our grievances at the sad effects of an over-civilized population. The time is just passed when we so emphatically wish each other "a merry Christmas, and a happy new year when it comes ;" and We by no means deny that in many parts of the town eating and drinking, and conviviality in general, are much encouraged at this season. But, alas ! the neglect and consequent decline of good old customs trouble us much. In vain do we look for

"The jolly Wassel-Bowl," and "The Bore's Heade," "with garlandes gay and rosemary." Popular superstitions and customs may generally be traced back to Heathen times, for on their rites and mysteries were many of the Catholic ceremonies afterwards engrafted ; and to the Saturnalia we are, or rather our ancestors were, probably indebted for some of our Christmas pastimes. The Reformation first injured their popularity, and the age of Puritanism gave them a fresh shock. It was even ordered by Parliament, Dec. 24, 1652, "That no observation shall be had of the five and twentieth day of December, commonly called Christmas Day; nor any solemnity used or exercised in churches upon that day in respect thereof." They now appear to be neglected by society in proportion to its degree of polish ; and in the metropolis and its immediate neighbourhood, are little encouraged by the higher classes, and but partially by the middling ranks, while among the lower portion of the people they frequently degenerate into debauchery. In the country, especially in the far western and northern counties, Christmas is yet kept up with much spirit; the yule-log still crackles on the hearth, and " the sirloins of beef, the minced pies, the plum-porridge, the capons, turkeys, geese, and plum-puddings," smoke upon the hospitable board. Each master of a family, like the old courtier in the ballad, appears to have "... a good old fashion, when Christmase is come, To call in all his old neighbours with bagpipe and drum, With good cheer enough to furnish every old room, And old liquor able to make a cat speak, and man dumb." "O ! rus, quando te aspiciam." Yet even there the hand of improvement has been active, and some valuable relic of ancient festivities is occasionally ushered from the parlour to the kitchen, never more to return. The decoration of houses and churches with evergreens is continued, however, in London ; nor is there a deficiency, to the best of our experience, in the

²⁸³ Ibid., Vol 3, 93-94.

demands for Christmas boxes ; the original intention of which was probably to enable the poor to partake of the festivities of the season, from the gratuities of their more wealthy fellow-creatures and, God forbid ! that, while feasting ourselves, we should not assist our poor neighbours and dependants to enjoy themselves. Certain nocturnal wandering minstrels occasionally disturb the slumbers of the citizens for about a month prior to Christmas, calling themselves Waits ; but, " alack the day !" instead of playing and singing the good old Carol, our ears are saluted with Roy's Wife, St Patrick's Day, or the latest Quadrille tune. Our author bears witness that in many parts of the country, especially in the West, the Carol is still preserved, and is sung in the parish churches on Christmas Day, the singers also going about to the different houses blithely carolling such cheering tunes as, "A Child this day is born" " Sit you, merry gentlemen" "I saw three ships come sailing in," etc., etc.*²⁸⁴

²⁸⁴ Ibid., Vol 1, 153-155.

Conclusion

The Cider Poetic in Performance

The Broome Farm Wassail, Revived

The largest tree in the old orchard at Broome farm was the Wassail tree. It was a Foxwhelp tree, with bright red apples, high in acid, an old cider variety originating in Herefordshire or Gloucestershire. As I described in the previous chapter, Mike Johnson had held several Wassails at the farm starting about twenty years beforehand, but they got too large, too public, and the weather was bad, so he had discontinued them a few years ago. But with my presence on the farm, and my enthusiasm for the subject, it became a question – would we have a Wassail at the farm? Mike told me that if I wanted to plan one, it was up to me. So along with Mike's nephew Toby and Toby's girlfriend Kate, I began to plan a Wassail.

The folklorist's participation in the revival of traditions is nothing new, and the exploration of historical sources for Wassail in the previous chapter demonstrates folklorists' integral part in the perpetuation of key components of the tradition. I felt my passion for the subject had sparked the interests of others around me. It was a mutually reinforcing feedback loop, reawakening memories of customs they had themselves revived and let go again. Kate was particularly keen to plan the Wassail, and others were excited to participate. Together, Kate and I set about organizing the material and social components of a small private gathering for friends and family of the farm. Mike did not want a large public affair. And though the initiative to restage their Wassail may have been mine, I found that once set in motion, I had relatively little influence on the way the event played out. These were things that the people of Broome Farm had done before, or aligned with other activities on the farm. Wassail was, in many ways, an extension of other forms of labor, festivity, celebration, and sociability already at play on the

farm. Wassail was another opportunity to enact these existing social relations on a different occasion, in a slightly novel frame, a frame materially constructed through cider and fire.

We made torches from large branches, wrapping burlap around them and soaking them in a mixture of diesel and petrol. On the day of the Wassail, we met up at the farm at about three in the afternoon to make the twelve fires around the tree, which took a bit more effort and time than we expected. Breaking down the tree prunings from the orchard that John Edwards and I had gathered in the trailer the day before, we made twelve little piles of kindling with hay, and doused them in the leftover diesel/petrol mixture that the torches had been soaking in.

Toby, in charge of refreshments, had been roasting pork – butchered from one of his own pigs - all afternoon down at Wellsbrook Cottage. Kate and I cleared up the space inside the barn and set up tables. Phil and Mike had been bottling cider in the bottling shed and in the barn during the week, but they cleared away the pallets for us first. I had made a big batch of ginger cake, and Kate was making an “authentic” Wassail drink complete with egg whites and egg yolks, from a recipe she had found on the internet.

People started to gather in the cellar at the usual time in the evening, about five-thirty, but the crowd soon swelled beyond the regular gathering of five or six people. John Edwards, part-time employee at Mike’s cider company, showed up in his Butlering costume - old black suit and black face,²⁸⁵ his long dreadlocks flowing out of an old top hat, and creases of enthusiasm shaping his eyes beneath his wire rimmed glasses. John was the Butler for other Wassails in the area and had agreed to resume his function from past Wassails at Broome Farm. He had brought

²⁸⁵ The black-face element of the event has disputed origins and is partially related to the practices of Border Morris, a sub-set of Morris Dancers from the Marches who routinely perform in black-face. Contemporary explanations of this practice insist that it represents a form of disguise that agricultural workers would have employed to obscure their identities while earning extra money performing in the off-season. This explanation is complicated by other interpretations of Morris Dance that point to a racialized origin as “Morrish Dancing.” See: John Forrest, *The History of Morris Dancing, 1458-1750* (University of Toronto Press, 1999). Also Pauline Greenhill, “Folk and Academic Racism: Concepts from Morris and Folklore,” *The Journal of American Folklore* 115, no. 456 (April 1, 2002): 226–46.

some song sheets and his bodhrain. John was prepared to lead us into the orchard and into the heart of the custom. If Kate and I had organized the bones of the event, assembled the people, and made sure there was food and drink, John Edwards was about to orchestrate the beating heart of the Wassail procession into the dark night in the orchard.

The cellar was heaving with people as we neared seven o'clock. Pushing his way through the crowd in the cellar, Phil handed me two plastic bottles to fill up with cider for the toasting in the orchard. Kate and I walked out to the orchard carrying the large maple Wassail bowl that sat in the cellar. We grabbed the last of the diesel mixture to douse the bonfires with, since they were getting gradually soaked with the spitting rain.

Lighting our torches in the bonfire at the cellar, the group of about forty people began to process out past the stone barns towards the path to the orchards. The sudden proliferation of fire and light from the torches pushed the dark and the rain away. From here on out, I was no longer in charge, and didn't really know what would happen. John led us forth, processing through the orchards to the steady beat of the drum. I thought we would just walk straight to the tree, but walk lengthened, up through the old orchard and out along the track out to the nine acre orchard, where we walked up to the Holly Tree and then out around and back finally into the old orchard. John led our group of forty friends and neighbors, with his drum, beating out a march, and we squelched our way through the muddy tracks between the trees, laughing and chattering along the way. We were tracing the property with fire, with laughter, with noise, with the presence of a people who deeply loved this place.

When we reached the Wassail tree - the big old Foxwhelp in the old orchard - John led us to start marching around it clockwise three times before we stopped. We lit the bonfires with the torches, sang the Gloucestershire Wassail song, and toasted the tree. I rushed over to start

pouring out the cider for the toast, which we'd stashed at the base of the tree, and people just came up to me in the middle with their glasses, into which I sloshed portions of cider. Kate filled up the Wassail bowl with her hot drink, steaming from an enormous teapot. Phil started passing the Wassail bowl around the circle, one person drinking, and handing it to the person next to them.

Noise increased, rowdiness began to prevail, as the ritual part of the event passed into talking and socializing around the tree. As the torches began to burn out and the fires began to burn down to red and orange embers, people drifted back to the barn, where Toby and Kate started carving up the pork, and I joined them behind the serving table, slicing up the rolls and serving up the sandwiches. People were ravenous, and we almost finished off the rolls entirely.

Eventually, as people finished eating and drinking, John set up the microphone. We sang the "Farmer's Anthem" for Mike, and then "The Farmer's Boy." We drew closer and closer into a circle and passed the task of singing a song or reciting around the circle. Kate recited the song, *Beer is Best*. Mike and Toby and a friend did a trio of harmonica blues music. Traditional songs blurred into the blues, the barn filling with the music we knew played in the cider cellar on any night of the week. But where we usually retired from the work of the orchard into the cellar, on this night the cider cellar had expanded outward, into the orchard, where we drank not only with each other, but with the trees.



**Broome Farm
 Wassail**
 Peterstow,
 Herefordshire
 January 11,
 2013

From Social Contract to Sensory Contact: Wassail as Embodied Experience

At Broome farm, the Wassail we organized together was simply one festival among many other events and gatherings. It fit into the expectations of sociability and made sense in the daily work and fun at the farm. People here spend their days working amongst the trees, pruning them, mowing the grass below them, picking up their fallen apples, and pressing the juice out of them. They carefully store, blend, and bottle the juice, and then sit all night in the cellar drinking it. Their conversations dwell on discriminating its finer qualities, and it isn't so strange that they would spend a night circling around the greatest single tree, passing a common cup of cider, and blessing the trees in the midst of the orchard. While urban visitors to other Wassails might come to encounter sensory experience of orchards that is strange and foreign to their daily lives, at Broome Farm, the orchard is a constant material presence that shapes the lives of those who live and work there. But for both kinds of participants in Wassail, whether the orchard is strange or familiar, the physical presence of the orchard is a powerful affective experience. If the social contract of farmer and laborer discussed in the last chapter is no longer the primary frame of interpretation for Wassail's significance today, the embodied encounter with the orchard, described through a discourse of superstition, suggests new frames for its meaning

The language of superstition and references to pagan origins - singing to the trees to awaken them, encourage fertility, and drive away evil spirits - is often, as we have seen, tongue in cheek and melodramatic. But this language of superstition has a hint of transformative magical realism, as Pete Brown's description of the liminal qualities of Wassail in the previous chapter suggests. For those urbanites to whom the orchard is strange, the magic is in the encounter of a body habituated to the regimentations of urban life with the sensory excitations of unfamiliar ground. The smell of mud and decaying leaves, the quiet and darkness of an unelectrified

environment, the soft ruffling of chickens in the coop, the rough grunting of the sheep in the field, are all heightened and animated by torches, singing, cider, song, and dance. As the experiences of urban and rural life continue to widen in the post-industrial context, the strangeness of rural experience for urbanites edges towards the surreal, and Wassail only heightens this perception.

But for those participants habituated to the orchard, the Wassail compresses all the daily activities of the farm during the year into one night, one ritual that reinforces the daily life of the farm even at its lowest ebb, during the darkest nights of the year. The magic of the ritual for those familiar with the orchard is rooted in the deep realism of bodies habituated to the orchard in everyday encounters, where trees are recognized not so much by their names as by their placement in a field, their particular taste, the times of the year that they are encountered for pruning, spraying, mowing, and harvesting. The intimacy of the body with the orchard is one that perhaps goes unnoticed by those unfamiliar with agricultural labor, and uncommented on by those whose work in the orchard is taken as a matter of course.

Ethnobotanists Will McClatchey and Dave Reedy noticed this in their studies of cider makers, that traditional cider makers often organize their knowledge about trees and apple varieties used in their cider making not by named varieties, so much as taste, smell, and spatial locations in the orchard:

We have learned from our interviews that people do not merely think about their orchard apples as named cultivar varieties. Rather, orchard information is retained in more complex ways such as use categories and taste profiles that are associated with the trees [...] people who are keeping track of many apple varieties often do this without having formal names for the varieties. These orchard managers track the trees with sensory descriptors and remember where specific trees are growing within their property.²⁸⁶

²⁸⁶ Reedy et al., “A Mouthful of Diversity.”

This understanding of the orchard as a place organized not only through tree names and field maps, but as a place known through habitual encounter and experience, is a valuable key to the experience of the orchard through Wassail. The body and its habitual encounters, the part of agricultural labor that has been most removed through mechanization and industrialization, is still a primary mode of encounter with the countryside for those who work in it. This is also true for those who visit it through events like Wassail. The festival is an event in which the body is re-centered as the site of experience and knowledge within rural life.

The revival of Wassail has coincided with both the revival of the craft cider industry on the one hand, and the impetus to conserve traditionally managed agricultural land on the other. It is an intensification of the subjectively oriented engagement with rural spaces, and is a tool for building community identity and solidarity, while also welcoming outsiders. It also, as the revival of Wassail at Much Marcle by Westons Cider in 1987 shows, a commercial endeavor, harnessing the power of cultural heritage in the service of advertising an agricultural product.

Dorothy Noyes is sensitive to the tensions participants in the festival feel between the importance of embodied, emergent experience and the economic and cultural capital the festival generates as a tourist destination. This tension, between the emergent, experiential aspects of the festival, what Noyes calls its “powerful techniques of the body,” and the desire to create a stable and marketable text of performance that can be commodified and reproducible over time, marks a central problem in the creation of heritage discourses in general, though particularly for those intangible forms of heritage which draw on and contribute to social interaction as part of their primary functions.²⁸⁷

²⁸⁷ Noyes, Dorothy. *Fire in the Plaça : Catalan Festival Politics after Franco*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003.

In the case of Wassail, perhaps it is less a case of creating stable texts of performance as it is of strengthening the link between consumers and producers of craft cider, and between communities and agricultural landscapes. The festival performance is not itself the thing that needs to be commodified and reproducible. Rather, the festival is a flexible and adaptable conduit connecting people and agricultural products and landscapes, through technologies of the body that incorporate familiar intimate connections or excite foreign and strange sensations. It is a social contract reoriented towards strengthening the internal connections of farmers and rural residents to their land and communities, and forging connections between urbanites and rural experiences. In its variability and emergent structures, Wassail is also a festival genre that nurtures emergent embodied experiences and has the capacity to innovate bodily encounters with rural landscapes and the social and economic contracts of agriculture in England continue to evolve.

**The Cider Poetic, Affect, and Authenticity:
Ciderland Imagined and Enacted in Rural Heritage Discourses**

This dissertation has explored a series of interlinked cultural genres that draw on the poetic materials of what I have termed the “cider poetic” in order to trace the relationships between texts, bodies, landscapes, and performances in the contemporary construction of discourses rural conservation and heritage in Britain that contribute to an imagined geography of *Ciderland*.

I have considered the cider poetic as a palimpsest of resonant expressive materials accumulating – and losing – meanings over time. Meanings present in one period of use may cease to resonate when the material contexts of their lived expressions no longer exist. But they can be excavated by the careful historian, and they can begin to resonate again if re-animated by

analogous cultural moments. I have worked to trace the affective resonance of orchards throughout this study, as they are articulated in texts and embodied and materialized in labor on the landscape.

Orchards have come to stand for changing relations between nature and culture at various times from the early modern period to the present. The strength and impact of this affective resonance is often evidenced in the density of intertextual relations between texts and performances, and the migration of poetic materials between them. This density is observed in the composition of discourses of conservation and heritage and their manifestation in material and social practices of related activities. The first chapter examined four key themes of the cider poetic in literature, sensory experiences and childhood, Enlightenment improvement, the romanticism of labor, and ecology and community. The second chapter illustrated the social roles through which rural heritage is communicated. The cider poetic contributes to the composition of the social role of the Old Boys, but it is also mediated by Master cider makers, who shape the discourse of cider as they enact innovations in the craft today. In chapter three, I examined three discourses of conservation and heritage shaping the maintenance of orchards and the craft of cider making today. These institutional discourses and their policies shape the field within which individuals practice the craft today. In chapter four, I introduced framework of objective and subjective engagement to show how the practices of orchard conservation and craft cider making are carried out across discourses. This investigation into practice highlights the ongoing interaction of the archive and the repertoire as interdependent forms of knowledge in the perpetuation of heritage.

In the last chapter, we investigated the transformations between text and practice in the form of festivals, a genre where the body itself is animated, where the rhetoric of heritage is

dramatized and experienced. As Noyes has suggested through her theory of techniques of incorporation, the everyday habits of the body are constantly shaping and conforming individuals in the material forms of social relations, and these habits find expression in dramatic form through the festival. Some habits of social life examined in the preceding chapters find expression here in the drama of Wassail: cultivating social roles for agricultural labor; managing the intimate management relationships with landscape forms; searching for, cultivating, and shaping trees; making cider; drinking in close social groups; forming archives of orchard knowledge and repertoires of cider making and cider drinking.

Rituals and festivals are social performances of identity that incorporate people into an engagement and participation of social groups and cultural ideas in bodily, sensory forms that create affective experiences. While the texts of performance - the dances, songs, costumes, puppets – remain important aspects of the festival’s claims to heritage, Noyes illustrates that affect and embodiment are crucial to the effectiveness of the festival as an expressive mode which responds to the community’s internal social strife as well as the external economic and political pressures of its global and national ties. Experience, embodiment, and affect, rather than being merely ephemeral by-products of the festival seen as an enduring text, prove to be the qualities which most powerfully exert social and political influence on the emergent sense of identity that binds the community together. She describes festival in these terms, “It dramatizes actual or proposed social arrangement, especially collective identities and hierarchies, in order to win consent, force acquiescence or destabilize other such representations,” going on to say that “repeated performance, grounded in everyday material relations, can gradually transmute experience into something like essence.”²⁸⁸ This idea of essence begins to describe the

²⁸⁸ Noyes, Dorothy. 2003. *Fire in the Plaça : Catalan Festival Politics after Franco*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 4.

subjective experience where ideas of authenticity are generated. Regina Bendix, in her critique of authenticity, still recognizes it as a profound subjective experience worthy of attention and rich for study:

After years of reading and thinking about what, if anything, could still be authentic, I saw authenticity at best as a quality of experience: the chills running down one's spine during musical performances, for instance, moments that may stir one to tears, laughter, and elation - which on reflection crystallize into categories and in the process lose the immediacy that characterizes authenticity.²⁸⁹

Bendix continues, “The greatest strength of folklore studies is the perennial finger they hold to the pulse of what human beings, through their expressive culture, crave or fear most deeply.”²⁹⁰ A folklore studies approach to heritage discourse should take into account both the political and social management of representational power through heritage discourses, but it should also attend to the subjective experience of heritage.

If the work of E.P. Thompson and Bob Bushaway has demonstrated the power of traditional expression for the maintenance of customary rights against the forces of capitalism and industrialization, Raymond Williams and his intellectual legacy offers us a way of thinking about cultural expressions resonant with the power of custom and tradition, experienced as feeling, but not yet mobilized into organized polemic or political action. The structure of feeling posited by Raymond Williams offers a way of understanding cultural meanings as emergent expressive moments that mark cultural ideas in transition, making it a powerful analytical model for recognizing moments of social change and thinking about how people manage them.

To understand the nature of structure of feeling, we must understand both the historical meanings attached to expressive material, and the contemporary issues contributing to its current use. The point of resonance between the past and the present is where feeling and its expressions

²⁸⁹ Bendix, *In Search of Authenticity*, 14.

²⁹⁰ Ibid., 21.

erupt into material life. The rupture in one direction of text into materiality, or in the opposite direction, the ossifying of materiality into the bounded text, mark transitional processes in the production of cultural objects. The previous chapters have attempted to articulate and illustrate the processes of moving between discursive constructions of conservation and heritage and the material ways that bodies and landscapes are experienced and shaped in the ensuing process of conservation. Such movements between sign systems, bodily performances, and material objects are often colored by feeling and affect, by the subjective interaction and experience of these cultural objects.

Transition means change, and change begets subjective reaction – joy, anxiety, anger, frustration, hope. Addressing Raymond Williams’s concept of structures of feeling through her own term, “ordinary affects,” Kathleen Stewart has suggested that these eruptions are not isolated, but have trajectory, velocity, and density, that their significance is:

...not through ‘meanings’ per se, but rather in the way that they pick up density and texture as they move through bodies, dreams, dramas, and social worldings of all kinds. Their significance lies in the intensities they build and in what thoughts and feelings they make possible. The question they beg is not what they might mean in an order of representations, or whether they are good or bad in an overarching scheme of things, but where they might go and what potential modes of knowing, relating, and attending to things are already somehow present in them in a state of potentiality and resonance.²⁹¹

The significance of structures of feeling, or Stewart’s ordinary affects, then, is not only in individual cultural expressions in isolation, but in the mobility and evolution of aesthetic material as it occurs again and again building up complex associations between historical moments at points of expressive contact. To this end, I have demonstrated that one may trace the mobility and evolution of ideas about English rural life and the construction of rural heritage discourses through the emergence and evolution of the cider poetic. And I have shown that the

²⁹¹ Stewart, Kathleen. 2007. *Ordinary Affects*. Duke University Press, 3.

contemporary revival of craft cider making, in the context of orchard conservation, is a mirror through which dramatic changes to the social and economic fabric of rural life can be seen. This revival is not only a resurrection of a rural past long gone, but an attempt to adapt core meanings of rural life to new realities of environmental conservation, the economic changes of globalization, and the emergence of gender equality. My intertextual approach, highlighting the importance of affect and the power of poetic resources to shape imagination and landscape, shows that revival is an important structure of heritage in the post-modern, post-industrial context of Britain.

A Cider Poetic, Given and Received

I stood at the microphone at the end of our Broome Farm Wassail, reading out my own poem in the cold barn. This was the barn where weddings were celebrated, where the Cider Festival musicians played, where the Christmas dinner was served to over 60 friends, family and neighbors, where we ate our lunch and made tea during the pressing and harvesting season, where pallets of bottles were brought to be labeled. This barn once housed cattle in the days when the farm produced dairy and had a milk run. It housed sheep after the dairying became unprofitable. And now, it is the home of cider making and celebration.

In this barn after our night ritual in the orchard, trooping through the trees with fire and shouting, I stood up to the microphone and read a poem I was asked to read again and again at this occasion and others, which hangs framed in the cider cellar at the Broome. More than this dissertation may ever be, it is a written and spoken communion with the friends I had worked with at the farm. It represents thoughts and feelings I was able to absorb from our work together at the cider press and give back like others gave their own talents as musicians, or talkers, or

jokesters, or gossips, or cider makers. As Herefordshire's own folklorist Ella Mary Leather said in the preface to her 1912 publication, "It is useless for the collector of folk-lore to ask bald leading questions; like travellers of another sort, it is well to *carry samples*, for your old countryman loves to hear a story; having heard, he longs to tell you one as good or better."²⁹² This moment at the end of the Wassail, like so many spent sitting around in the cellar or at bonfires in the orchard, or like the larger event of the Broome Farm Cider Festival itself, was an exchange of music, words, and ideas born from the mutual experience and appreciation of work on the farm. This was in many ways, the culmination of my ethnographic research, distilled into a poem, read at the Wassail, just weeks before I was to return to the United States.

This event, and these words, represent perhaps the most collaborative ends of my ethnographic work, where the lines between me as a researcher and me as a full participant are thinnest. It is perhaps appropriate that here, where I cannot dislodge myself from the scene of action, from the very perpetuation of orchard heritage and Wassail, that I come full circle, for Wassail was where I first entered into the experience of orchards and agricultural heritage in England so many years before my research began. It is not surprising that I would find myself drawn into and most fully incorporated into the scene of my fieldwork at the Wassail, which marked the very beginning and of my interest in folklore and the very end of my research, for incorporation is exactly what rituals and festivals are designed to accomplish.

I had attempted to collect and capture the materiality of my experiences at the cider farm in a new text, one my friends found compelling and moving enough to incorporate into its own festival performance, moving back into a material and embodied form, an emergent, vocalized display of words pouring out of my mouth as frosty, cider-scented breath in the cold night air, muddled in memory perhaps by intoxication and sleepiness, the discomfort of damp coats and

²⁹² Leather, xvi

shoes, and the release of a season of farm labor put to rest and the social formalities of Christmas finally over.

As I gave this poem to my friends at the Broome Farm Wassail near the conclusion of my time with them, I place it here at the end of this work of writing, a summation of ethnographic experiences that, in pleasing my friends at the farm, I hope will convey our shared experience together of work, talk, sociability, and celebration.

The Last Pressing

The morning of the last pressing,
The apples are gilded with frost,
piled in trailers in the orchard.

Each mouldering leaf, each grotty twig,
Mixed in amongst the fruit is crusted with the cold moist air,
The cold curtain of December.

The day of the last pressing,
My toes are numb in my wellies,
and the hydraulic press heaves slow against the chill.

We fold the cloths, full of cold pomace,
Catch the rhythm of the juice into the pail –
Spill, lift, carry, pour, gurgle,
tap the bucket on the barrel for the last drop,
spill and fill again.

They say that cider making is the art of pouring,
Refined. Pour the apples off the tree. Pour them into bags,
Pour them in the mill, then pour the pomace,
Fill the press, and finally pour the juice into the barrel,
where it will ferment and then be still until the spring.

Through the last pressing, I heave the baskets of apples through their bath
Without restraint, washing the grot and grime and frost away,
Knowing it is the last day of our autumn work

The evening of the last pressing comes so quick,
The daylight folded in so fast,
How was the light pressed out so soon, we ask?

And we pack it in, go to the cellar,
pour a drink, and pass the dark away
with those who've worked with us, this shortest day.

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Public Arts and Humanities Employment

- 2015 – present **The ARTS Council of the Southern Finger Lakes**, Corning, NY
Folk Arts Coordinator
- Developed and executed public programs and exhibits for the Folk Arts program with collaborative institutional and community partners (see details below)
 - Conducted ethnographic, archival, and historical research
 - Managed administration of projects, including marketing, volunteer coordination, budget planning, artist booking, grant writing, and supervision of interns, facilitating contractors for graphic design, sound, and festival infrastructure
- 2010-11; 2014 **Institute for Digital Arts and Humanities, Indiana University**, Bloomington, IN
Graduate Assistant
- Coordinated presentations and seminars with fellows; planned annual retreat
- 2007 – 2010 **Traditional Arts Indiana**, Bloomington, IN
Graduate Assistant: Public Programs
- Coordinated production and design of exhibit panels for the Rotating Exhibit Network, managing program with 36 public libraries (2008-2010).
 - Edited TAI Magazine and initiated redesign for magazine format (2007-2010)
- 2006 **Indiana University Foundation**, Bloomington, IN
Intern: Strategic Planning and Communication (fall semester)

- 2005 – 2006 **WJFF Radio Catskill**, Jeffersonville, NY
Intern: Public and Community Radio Programming (summers)
- 1999 – 2004 **Conner Prairie Living History Museum**, Fishers, IN
Living History Interpreter (seasonal)

Research

Publications

- 2013 Book Chapter: “The Foraged Countryside: Perceptions of Nature and Culture in Four Encounters with Fungi.” *Shaping Rural Areas in Europe. Perceptions and Outcomes on the Present and the Future*. eds. Luís Silva & Elisabete Figueiredo. Springer, 2013.
- 2008 Article: “‘Strangers Expected’: Families living together in scripture at the Bean Blossom Mennonite Church.” *Midwestern Folklore*. 34:1 (2008): 23-40.

Reviews

- 2014 Review of *The English Breakfast: The Biography of a National Meal with Recipes*, by Kaori O’Connor. *Museum Anthropology Review*. August 2014.
- 2013 Review of *The Individual and Tradition*, edited by Pravina Shukla, Ray Cashman, and Tom Mould. *Folklore*, 2013.
- 2013 Review of *Rolf Gardiner: Folk, Nature, and Culture in Interwar Britain*, edited by Matthew Jefferies and Mike Tyldesley. *Journal of Folklore Research Online Reviews*, 2013.
- 2009 Review of *Tea Culture of Japan*, by Sadako Ohki and Takeshi Watanabe *Journal of Folklore Research Reviews*, December 2009 .

Awards, Fellowships, Grants

- 2013 – 2014 **Indiana University, College of Arts and Sciences**: Dissertation Year Fellowship \$20,000.00
- 2011 – 2013 **Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, Canada**: Doctoral Fellowship \$40,000.00
- 2012 **Countryside and Community Research Institute, University of Gloucestershire**: Visiting Student
- 2010 **Indiana University, College of Arts and Sciences**: Travel Grant: \$300.00
- 2009 **Indiana University, Department of Folklore**: Chair’s Recognition Award
- 2007 **New York Press Association**: Third place, Coverage of Agriculture

2005 – 2006 **Indiana University, School of Journalism:** Cushman Fellowship: \$13,500.00

2003 **McGill University, English Department:** Lionel Shapiro Award for Creative Writing: \$1,500.00

Grants: Under Review for programs at The ARTS Council of the Southern Finger Lakes and partner institutions

2018 **Community Foundation of Elmira-Corning and the Finger Lakes:** Community Grants: \$15,000.00

Grants: Received for The ARTS Council of the Southern Finger Lakes & partners

2018 **The New York State Council on the Arts:** Folk Arts Regional and County Program Support, The ARTS Council of the Southern Finger Lakes, \$43,000.00/year (multi-year funding).

2018 **The New York State Council on the Arts:** Folk Arts Project Support: “At the Jewish Table: Heritage, Food, and Family in Elmira.” The Chemung County Historical Society, \$14,000.00

2018 **The New York State Council on the Arts:** Folk Arts Apprenticeships: “Finnish Music: Richard Koski.” The ARTS Council of the Southern Finger Lakes, \$5,000.00

2017 **Watkins Glen Area Chamber of Commerce:** Tourism Assistance Program Grant: The Old Time Fiddlers Gathering and Folk Arts Festival, \$9,000.00

2017 **Community Foundation of Elmira-Corning and the Finger Lakes:** Community Grants: \$10,000.00

2017 **New York State Council on the Arts:** Folk Arts Internship Funding: \$5,000.00

2016 **Watkins Glen Area Chamber of Commerce:** Tourism Assistance Program Grant: The Old Time Fiddlers Gathering and Folk Arts Festival, \$9,000.00

2016 **Community Foundation of Elmira-Corning and the Finger Lakes:** Community Grants: \$10,000.00

Academic Conference Presentations

2018 Participant in roundtable: *Folklore Careers Beyond and Within Academia*. Roundtable accepted at the Modern Languages Association Conference: New York, NY.

2017 “The Dark Side of the Cider Cellar: Intersections of Drinking Culture and Fieldwork” in organized panel: *Hard Thinking about Hard Drinking: Community and Controversy in the Production*

and Consumption of Alcohol. Paper presented at The American Folklore Society Conference: Minneapolis, MN.

- 2016 “Cider, Orchards, and the Vernacular Landscapes of Rural New York” in organized panel: *Reframing the Rural: Making Traditional Agricultural Practices Pertinent to Contemporary Concerns*. Paper presented at the American Folklore Society Conference: Miami, Florida
- 2015 “Folk Arts Programming and the Craft Cider Revival: Heritage in the Marketplace” in organized panel: *Folklore and Agriculture*. Paper presented at the American Folklore Society Conference: Long Beach, California
- 2014 “The Cider Poetic: The Literary Orchard Inscribing Rural Heritage” in organized panel: *Literary cartographies: the co-production of page and place*. Paper accepted to the Royal Geographical Society / Institute of British Geographers Conference: London, UK
- 2013 “The Cider Poetic: Rhetorics of Agricultural Ideals in Britain” in organized panel: *Framing Foodways: Modes and Meanings of Public Contestation*. Paper presented to the American Folklore Society Conference: Providence, Rhode Island
- 2013 “Orchard Conservation in Britain: New Rhetorical Constructions of Old Geographical Frontiers.” Paper presented Royal Geographical Society / Institute of British Geographers Conference: London, UK
- 2012 “Finding Cider Apple and Perry Pear Trees: Informal Orchard Conservation in the Three Counties.” Paper presented at the Countryside and Community Research Institute’s Post Graduate Winter School: Cheltenham, Gloucestershire)
- 2011 “Small Holding and Urban Gardening: Agriculture as participatory heritage in the United Kingdom” Paper presented at the International Society for Ethnology and Folklore Congress: Lisbon, Portugal
- 2011 “River Cottage: Constructing Agricultural Heritage Participation through Media” Paper presented at the Indiana University Ohio State University Folklore Graduate Student Conference: Bloomington, Indiana
- 2010 “Agriculture as Participatory Heritage in Britain” Paper presented at the American Folklore Society Conference: Nashville, Tennessee
- 2009 “The New Romanticism: Folkloristic Approaches to Agriculture” Paper presented at Food in Bloom: Cross-Pollination and Cultivation of Food Systems, Cultures, and Methods: Indiana University Society for the Anthropology of Food and Nutrition: Bloomington, Indiana
- 2009 “Theories of Public Space” Poster presented at the American Folklore Society Conference: Boise, Idaho
- 2008 “Horizons of Place: Catskill Community Geographies in Radio” Paper presented at the American Folklore Society Conference: Louisville, Kentucky

- 2007 “Adopting Tradition and Adapting Performance: Wassailing in Dunkeswell, Devon” Paper presented at the American Folklore Society Conference: Quebec City, Canada

Academic Invited Talk

- 2017 “From Old Orchards to Craft Cider” Talk presented at the University of North Carolina Department of Folklore Colloquium. March 7, 2017

Public Programs and Exhibits

- 2015 – present **The Old Time Fiddlers Gathering and Folk Arts Festival** Annual Festival: The ARTS Council of the Southern Finger Lakes. Lakewood Vineyards, Watkins Glen, NY. June 20-21, 2015 (Old Time); June 18-19, 2016 (Old Time and Nordic Folk Arts); June 17-18 2017 (Old Time and Nordic Folk Arts) www.Fiddlersgathering.org
Producer and curator (fieldwork and artist selection, management, administration, marketing, logistics)
- 2017 **Behind the Glass: InCider Information.** Artist collaboration, lecture, and discussion panel. The Corning Museum of Glass, Corning, NY. September 14, 2017. <http://www.cmog.org/event/behind-glass-september>
Producer and curator (fieldwork and artist selection, program development, public lecture)
- 2017 **Folk Arts at the Market.** Public outreach. The ARTS Council of the Southern Finger Lakes. Six local farmers markets, May-October 2017.
Producer and Curator (fieldwork and artist selection, administration, marketing, exhibit panel writing and design, public presentation)
- 2017 **Elmira Cultural Mapping** Fieldwork project. The ARTS Council of the Southern Finger Lakes. Ongoing research 2017-2018.
Curator (fieldwork and program development)
- 2016 – present **Finger Lakes Fruit Heritage Programming at Cider Week Finger Lakes.** The ARTS Council of the Southern Finger Lakes. October 2016, 2017). <https://earts.org/programs/folk-arts-2/active-projects/finger-lakes-fruit-heritage/>
Producer and Curator (fieldwork, program development, marketing, public presentations)
- 2016 - present **At the Jewish Table** Fieldwork 2016-17, exhibit proposed 2018, and Fall Folk Arts Workshops: Jewish Heritage in Elmira” 2016. The ARTS Council of the Southern Finger Lakes in collaboration with the Jewish Center and Federation of the Twin Tiers and Congregation Kol Ami. <https://earts.org/programs/folk-arts-2/active-projects/elmira-jewish-food-memories/>
Producer and Curator (fieldwork, project management, exhibit research)

- 2015 – 2016 **Black Voices of Corning: Perspectives on Place.** Exhibit and Public Programs, including Gospel Concert; Oral History Workshop; Inspired by Black Voices Gallery Show; Food and Migration with Michael Twitty. The Heritage Village of the Southern Finger Lakes. September 12, 2015 - February 26, 2016.
www.Blackvoicesofcorning.org
Producer and Curator (fieldwork, archival and object research, exhibit design and panel text, installation, public program coordination, marketing)
- 2015 **The Gathering of Dancers.** Traditional Dance Festival. The ARTS Council of the Southern Finger Lakes in collaboration with New Heights Dance Theater. April 25, 2015 The Arnot Mall, Horseheads, NY. <https://earts.org/programs/folk-arts-2/active-projects/past-projects/gatherings-of-dancers/>
Producer and Curator (artist selection, management, public presentation, marketing)
- 2008 – 2010 **Rotating Exhibit Network.** Traditional Arts Indiana in collaboration with Indiana Public Libraries. Producer and Curator (coordinated fieldworkers, edited text, managed administration of program)

Teaching

- 2009-10; 2013 **Department of Anthropology, Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis, Indianapolis, IN**
Instructor
F101 Introduction to Folklore (Summer 2013, Fall 2009)
F131 Folklore of the United States (Spring 2010)
- 2007 **Indiana University School of Journalism, Bloomington, IN**
Teaching Assistant (Spring 2007)
J210 Introduction to Visual Communications, Professor Steve Raymer

Service

- 2017 – present **New York Folklore Society**, Board Member
- 2016 – 2017 **New York State Council on the Arts**, Panelist: Folk Arts Program Grant Review Panel
- 2016 – 2017 **New York Folklore Society**, Committee Member: Upstate Regional Survey
- 2016 **National Endowment for the Arts**, Panelist: State and Regional Partnership Grant Review Panel, Folk Arts Program
- 2016 – present **The Backbone Ridge History Group**, Board Member
- 2010 **IU Episcopal Campus Ministry**, Discernment Committee Member

2007 – 2010 **IU Folklore Graduate Student Association** President (2008); Professional Development Committee (2007-10)

Professional Affiliations

American Folklore Society
New York Folklore Society
The Royal Geographical Society

Popular Media

2017 **Heritage Radio Network: *Beer Sessions Radio*** with Jimmy Carbone: Radio Guest

2014 **WFIU Public Radio: *Earth Eats*** with Annie Corrigan: Radio Guest

- <http://indianapublicmedia.org/earthheats/wassailing-backyard-chicken-tips-mushrooms-wine/>
- <http://indianapublicmedia.org/earthheats/magic-cider-art-coffee-roasting-season-paw-paws/>
- <http://indianapublicmedia.org/earthheats/claudia-roden-mistletoe-loves-apple-trees-fireroast-duck/>

2012 – present Blog: *Cider With Maria* <http://ciderwithmaria.com>

2012 Essay: “Folklore and Landscape.” *Words and Wild Places: Collection of Creative Writing*. Caring for God’s Acre. Shropshire, England.

Agriculture Experience

Employment

2013 – 2014 **Oliver Winery and Vineyard**, Bloomington, IN
Tasting Room and Vineyard Employee, Administrative Assistant

2012 – 2013 **Ross-on-Wye Cider and Perry Company**, United Kingdom
Cider production assistant

2005 – 2007 **Gorzynski Organic Farm**: Farm Employee, Cohecton Center, New York
(seasonal)

Courses and Volunteering

2013 **Grow Organic Educator Series Course**, Hilltop Gardens, Bloomington, IN

2004 – 2011 **World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms**: Farm Volunteer, United Kingdom
(summers 2004, 2009, 2011)