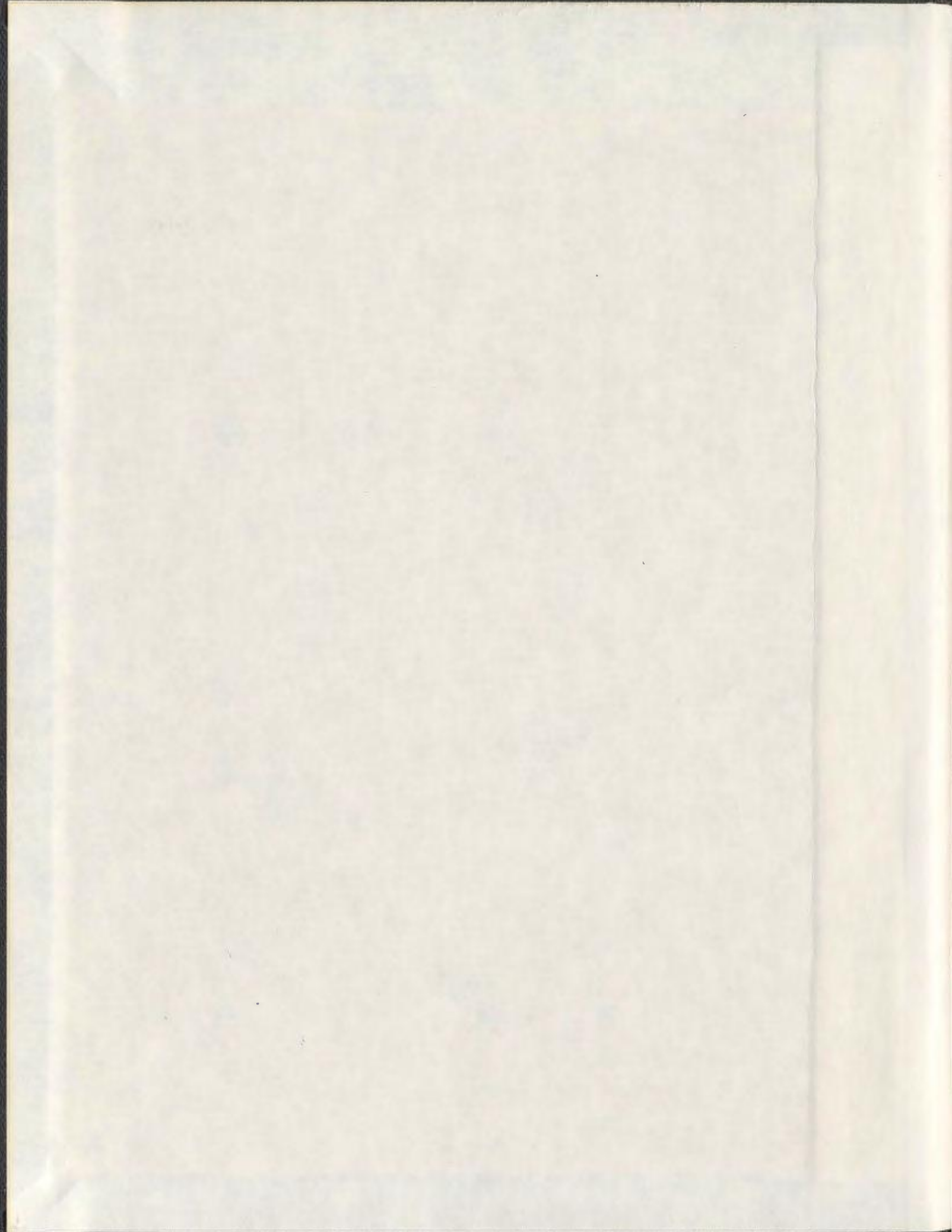


RAISING THE BAR: THE RECIPROCAL ROLES
AND DEVIANT DISTINCTIONS OF MUSIC AND
ALCOHOL IN ACADIANA

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**Raising the Bar: The Reciprocal Roles and Deviant Distinctions of Music and
Alcohol in Acadiana**

by

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ABSTRACT

The role of alcohol in musical settings is regularly relegated to that of incidental by-stander, but its pervasive presence as object, symbol or subject matter in Acadian and Cajun performance contexts highlights its constructive capacity in the formation of Acadian and Cajun musical worlds. Individual and collective attitudes towards alcohol consumption implicate a wide number of cultural domains which, in this work, include religious display, linguistic development, respect for social conventions, and the historically-situated construction of identities. This research uses alcohol as an interpretive lens for ethnomusicological understanding and, in so doing, questions the binaries of marginal and mainstream, normal and deviant, sacred and profane, traditional and contemporary, sober and inebriated. Attitudes towards alcohol are informed by, and reflected in, all of these cultural conflicts, highlighting how agitated such categorizations can be in lived culture. Throughout the dissertation, I combine the historical examples of Harry Choates and Cy à Mateur with ethnographic examinations of culturally-distinct performative habits, attitudes toward Catholicism, and compositional qualities. Compiling often incongruous combinations of discursive descriptions and enacted displays, my research suggests that opposition actually confirms interdependence.

Central to this study is an assertion that levels of cultural competence in Cajun Louisiana and Acadian Nova Scotia are uneven and that the repercussions of this unevenness are musically and behaviourally demonstrated. Rather than challenging binaries outright, I highlight a Cajun and Acadian comfort with ironic, indirect communication to prove that there is more interpretive space than binaries alone allow.

The capacity for each participant to engage with a musical moment and/or with another participant depends on each participant's availability, and availability is determined by factors that range from the highly personal to the meta-social. The presented musical occasions provide interpretive room for multiple simultaneous communities of meaning-makers and performers' intentions are sent, received, and responded to in widely divergent ways. Music, alcohol, and indirection—particularly in combination—demonstrate the affective potential of social criticism to alter musical meaning, but more than this they outline points of cultural intersection. Certainly, alcohol-affected musical environments are an expression of culture insofar as their patterns are learned, culturally affected, and can operate according to autonomous sets of relations. But ultimately this research proves that alcohol's musical influence is simultaneously governed by highly individualized preferences, motivations and effects. Drinking is essentially a social act, but the fact that the act is performed in a recognized social context does not demand that all participants have an equal relationship towards it or a single view as to its capacities.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to the memory of my grandmother, Marion MacLellan, who showed me there are many valuable things to learn from fun.

And to my Mom, my Dad, and my brothers, who are unrivalled in the ways they both provide and alleviate. They're fun, too.

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And certainly I thank and toast all of the people in Church Point, Chéticamp, and Lafayette who shared their music, their lives and their stories with me. There's not much of a dissertation without you.

May the best you've ever seen be the worst you'll ever see.

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Chapter One

Introduction & Background

**“All my musical heroes were lousy drunks”
(Steve Reilly, personal communication, October, 2010)**

Mark Falgout owns and operates the Blue Moon Saloon in Lafayette, Louisiana. He is a proud Cajun and is married to an equally proud Acadian from Church Point, Nova Scotia. They are raising their young children with keen attention to music, language, the sociability of culture in general, and they speak of how the shared attributes of Acadian and Cajun culture are as common as the behaviours that distinguish one group from the other. “We go to Nova Scotia to visit her family,” says Mark, and “Canadians keep all their drinkers in a pen away from their kids” (Falgout, personal communication, September 2011). Liquor laws at most Canadian music festivals would demand exactly that. But as a counter-example, the owners of The Blue Moon, one of the most popular live music venues in Lafayette, tell the story of their son being in their bar during an early afternoon sound check when the bar is closed to patrons. According to the story they tell, he doesn’t miss much. Later, at home, the little boy imitates the band members pulling a bottle (a juice box in his case) out of a bucket, taking a drink and beginning to play a small set of drums he received for Christmas (he asked for a drum set, an electric guitar, and a gun). “We don’t keep him away from it [the bar],” said Mark. “My boy doesn’t know that a beer’s any different than a juice box” and then, in a tone so common that it no longer even registers as defensive, “I don’t think my kid’s gonna be a drunk just ‘cause he puts his juice in a spider man bucket.”

Encouraged by this story and its relatives, this dissertation is a study of alcohol's effects on Acadian and Cajun music. It examines alcohol as a musical factor—that is, something that contributes to or influences musical outcomes, rather than an incidental attendant to music-making. The work aims to explore drinking as a practice, but as a practice that is part of the Acadian and Cajun musical system; a style that contributes to musical substance. In its most straightforward sense, this is an ethnographic study of three musical communities—one in Church Point, Nova Scotia; one in Chéticamp, Nova Scotia; one in Lafayette, Louisiana—so selected for their positions on the borders of the Acadian expulsion. These locations were also selected for their private and public displays of “being Acadian” as variously marked by individual and collective attitudes towards alcohol consumption. In its less straightforward sense, this dissertation is still a study of distance and borders. It is the study of how meaning can be made through interpretive discrepancies.

I am interested in asking questions about the interpretive space required for making meaning and how the distance between many possible meanings variably expands or contracts, excludes or includes, offends or comforts. This is the study of reciprocal influence— geography with history, traditional with contemporary performance standards, musical with social practice, sober with inebriated habits and tendencies, descriptive with abstract interpretations. The dissertation's focus on discursive descriptions is intended as means of appreciating the rich cultural practices of Acadiana. By discursively and practically considering the use of alcohol as a cultural factor, an *assemblage* is made possible (Deleuze and Patton 2004). In this *assemblage* the presence

or absence of alcohol allows music, religion, language, history and humour to be seen from new and refractive angles. For this research to be meaningful, every musician does not have to drink, every song does not have to be about drunkenness, every gesture of appreciation does not have to be measured with a raised glass. Instead, one needs only to acknowledge that where Acadian and Cajun music is, there are typically alcoholic beverages. Does the presence or absence of alcohol, I ask, make an audible or palpable difference in a musical encounter? In asking such a question this work becomes a study of how several musical meanings can be present at once.

Semiotician, Thomas Pavel, wrote of “really real” worlds saying that they enjoy an ontological priority over the world of make-believe (Pavel 1986, 57) —that the former constitutes the foundation upon which the latter is built. In my ethnographic work, performances affected by drink are often described by listeners and performers in this “make believe” sense. Drinking musicians have been described as “out of it” (Saulnier, personal communication, August 2012), “in the zone” (Trahan, personal communication October 2010), or “off his head” (Reilly, personal communication, October 2010). Presumably, the “really real” world includes the sober versions of these performers, audiences, songs and tunes. But informants, critics, listeners and performers alike regularly seem to disregard the fact that, in many cases, there *is no* sober version of the performer (though there is, of course, a sober version of the man). He quite simply never plays, sings or dances without a drink or two.

Literature Review

To date, musical studies that address the ingestion of controlled substances have been dominated by two primary areas of examination: one that deals with the effects of music therapy on the treatment of substance abusers (Cevalasco, Kennedy, and Generally 2005; Aldridge and Fachner 2006; Winkelman 2003); the other dealing with the behavioural associations of select musical genres (typically reggae, jazz, rap, electronica, and heavy metal) and the influence of their lyrics on listeners' drug and alcohol use (Chen et al. 2006; Mulder et al. 2009; Collin 1997; Shapiro 2003). In the "music therapy and substance" examinations, music is often sophisticatedly used as a substitute for substance. The hope is that patients might experience, through music, the predominately positive emotions associated with a particular substance without incurring its often harmful physical and social side effects. In many studies, the culture of addiction—what socially surrounds the actual drug or alcohol use—is described as the largest obstacle in conquering the addiction itself (V.Menon and Levitin 2005; Egermann et al. 2011). Trials report a decrease in depression, stress, anxiety and anger following music therapy sessions (Cevalasco, Kennedy, and Generally 2005) or that altered states of consciousness achieved through shamanistic practices of chanting, drumming, or vocalized meditation induces mood elevating effects and are a positive psychobiological replacement for substance dependencies (Winkelman 2003). The culture of addiction, according to Egermann, Levitin, Winkelman, and Cevalasco, can act as a stand-in such that music, over time, lessens substance-related pressures and even replaces the addiction. In each of the

aforementioned studies, the association between physiological and psychological needs are very closely linked.

The associations of substance with specific musical genres are based on questionnaires and observations that connect aggression, sensation seeking, and lifestyle choices with personal musical preferences. This is supported by the notion that particular musical genres are, in and of themselves, responsible for societal change as they relate to drugs and alcohol (Shapiro 2003). Each development in popular music, it is argued, is accompanied by a new fashion in drugs or alcohol: acid house and rave are credited with bringing recreational drug use into the social mainstream and eschewing alcohol use altogether (Collin 1997); the rise of jazz in the 1920s includes parallel commentary on the increased popularity of marijuana among listeners in America (Fachner 2003). There is also academic interest in the drug abuse of famous musicians and public interest in their mishaps, tragedies and arrests (Wright 2000; Nehring 1997). Since the 1980s a rise in “straight edge” attitudes¹ (Haenfler 2004) has shifted the balance slightly with an increasing number of music stars contributing to a crusade against music’s association with drug and alcohol use.

In these studies and in popular discourse, the music and controlled substances partnership is often linked with leisure, liberation, self-expression, indulgence and

¹ “Straight edge” is a term coined by a song of the same name made popular by the 1980s hardcore punk band, *Minor Threat*. As a subculture of hardcore punk, “straight edge” adherents refrain from using alcohol, tobacco or drugs. The behavioural philosophy sometimes extends to include a refusal to engage in promiscuous sex, a commitment to vegetarianism or veganism and abstention from caffeine and prescription drugs.

independence. The association is longstanding. Drugs and alcohol are routinely referred to as the modern-day version of the sirens of ancient Greece (Peraino 2006, 11; Kennaway 2012). Seductively promising power, joy, wisdom and self realization, they (the sirens, the drugs, the alcohol) lure participants with “dangerous” music. The association summons Jacques Attali’s provocative theory of the relationship between music and power: “Thus music localizes and specifies power, because it makes and regiments the rare noises that cultures, in their normalization of behavior, see fit to authorize” (Attali 1989, 19). According to Attali, both musical and social noise is “prophetic because [it] create[s] new orders, unstable and changing” (19). Though not everyone who listens and heeds will be destroyed, damage to existing order is a very real threat. I suspect this idea of order, control, social norms and the temptation of increased artistic enlightenment is at the centre of attitudes towards alcohol and music in Cajun and Acadian communities as well.

I would also like to ask questions about the compatibility or incompatibility of Cajun and Acadian music with alcohol. In other music and substance studies, the testimonials of studied “users” often reveal a precise manner in which music and “substance” are incorporated into their lives. Beyond the aforementioned social sense of genre and substance combinations, the existing music and substance literature examines the complementary (in extreme cases, essential) relationship between the physiological effects of a particular drug and the psychological effect of particular musical genres (Christenson, Roberts, and Bjork 2012). The “elegantly wasted” effects of heroin and an ability, under its influence, to “tune different sounds and colours in and out” are

connected to the improvisatory and refined musical features of jazz (Schneider 2008), ecstasy's hypnotic effects accentuate the repetitive elements of electronic and dance music (Critcher 2000; Collin 1997; Gaillot, Maffesoli, and Nancy 1998), cocaine's high energy and aggression "belongs" with heavy metal (Chen et al. 2006), alcohol's accessibility with country music and some folk genres (Eastman 2012), marijuana with the spiritual practices underpinning reggae (Aldridge and Fachner 2006), psychedelic drugs with the imagination and suggestion rock and roll (Christenson, Roberts, and Bjork 2012). And though I do not forget abstention, I draw my conclusions only from omissions in the scholarly literature. Aside from aforementioned discussions of the straight edge philosophy of hardcore punk, I have found no literature on the subject of abstention and musical understanding. But this is not to say that sobriety is without associations according to musical genre. The academic silence implies (to me at least) an association between sobriety and the music of organized religion, classical music, children's music, and musical theatre, and there are, no doubt, others.

In each of these examinations, the value of controlled substances and music is described similarly: both are routinely discussed in terms of their ability to help one escape from personal burdens and tensions, stimulate fantasies and facilitate feelings of mental and physical ecstasy (Collin 1997, 24; Critcher 2000, 146). Moods are changed or reinforced through the influence of music, drugs and/or alcohol (Aldridge and Fachner 2006, 47-49). Certain musics and certain substances are thought to resist authority, assert personalities, develop relationships and/or teach things that are considered other-worldly or transcendental (Christenson, Roberts, and Bjork 2012, 123). Examined for curative or

destructive potential, studies of music and controlled substances are, in all of these cases, undertaken with an eye toward treatment. They have been invaluable to this dissertation.

Scholarship that deals more specifically with alcohol and music is comparably scarce, so I have relied on the literature of cultural studies and alcohol to ground the bulk of my work. International in its scope, cultural studies of alcohol typically centre on social organization where questions of permission are pivotal. Examinations that are temporal discuss appropriate times for drinking—according to season, age, time of day, as a rite of passage, or relative to other societal responsibilities (Pittman and White 1991; Heath 1995, 2000). Regionally and/or ethnically specific studies of alcohol in culture speak both of biological capacities for the metabolizing of alcohol and culturally-specific social concerns ranging from isolation and poverty to superstition, tradition and displays of gender (Gefou-Madianou 1992; Levine 1992; Donner 1994; Pittman and White 1991). Temperance scholarship is extensive and studies societal transitions to and from prohibitionist restrictions (White 1996; Levine 1992; Gusfield 1986). This work extends into examinations of perspective and the construction of reflective discourse. As an example, Giles' work (Giles 1999) studies retrospective accounts of drunken behaviour, relying on ideas of "collective remembering" to study the discursive construction of identity.

Of all literature discussing culture and alcohol, the most common, by far, are studies of addiction, abuse, violence and disorder. The work that begins from the "pathological position" covers the spectrum of attitudes. Ideas of "reasonable risk" (Martinic and Leigh 2004) extends to the "preventive paradox" of Kreitman's work

wherein the “safe limits” of alcohol consumption as advised by various experts is evaluated relative to its “in practice” results. As a point of departure, Kreitman notes that drinkers who exceed the advocated safe limits are thought to be at high risk of alcohol-related harm yet, statistically, they contribute to only a minority of the total numbers of alcohol casualties. In related work, and supported by the World Health Organization, the work of Klingemann and Gmel (2001) outlines the social consequences of alcohol’s involvement in the family, community, workplace and economy. With examinations of domestic and social violence as a primary focus, their aim is in determining how society might strike a proper balance between social order, safety, and establishing a strong social fabric (Klingemann and Gmel 2001). At the extreme end of the pathological position is Robin Room’s assertion that ambivalence is at the root of alcohol’s evil influence on society “ignoring its dangers while emphasizing its joys (Room 1976).

Less accusatory studies are often associated with sport and displays of masculinity (Archetti 1999; Magazine 2007; Spaaij 2008) or nationalistic associations between drinking and culture that see drinking as a form of patriotism (Crabbe 2004; Giulianotti 1991, 2002; Mager 2010). These studies are typically interested in amounts— in copious drinking and binges— and also tend to begin from a position of pathology. Some suggest that community authority, rituals, and solidarity are cultural practices that are capable of bringing drinking “under control” (Wilson 2005; MacAndrew and Edgerton 1969). Others suggest that drunken behaviour exemplifies a relaxation of cultural constraints before the levelling effects of nature (Descola and Palsson 1996; McGovern 2009; Heath 1995). The ongoing struggle of alcohol-related attitudes has to do with a general mystery

as to whether alcohol is a facilitator of *anomie* or *bonhomie* (Durkheim 2006; Featherstone and Deflem 2003), and a commonly accepted position is that, in the quest for the latter, many are afflicted with the destructive alienation of the former (Galanter 1997; Wilson 2005; Room 1976). Particularly in North America, there is a sense that alcohol's effects are unpredictable and its hold unmanageable. As a result, alcohol scholarship has rendered the substance not so much dangerous as it is risky.

Methodology and Research Hazards

The medical, social, moral, psychological and cultural merit of a treatment-based approach to music and alcohol is valid and continues to contribute to some of the most advanced and fruitful interdisciplinary partnerships of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. Alcoholism is indeed a disease—one that often has complex beginnings and disastrous effects and one that demands focussed and sustained treatment. I do not wish for the tone of this dissertation to undermine any of the work that continues to explore the physical, social and spiritual harms of alcoholism and I realize that the suffering of many addicts has been amplified by an approach that does not distinguish between the productive aspects of alcohol use and its physical, spiritual and social threats when overused. But this project is not a discussion of alcoholism, hooliganism, extremes or the carnivalesque. If anything, I feel the literature on social conditions affecting alcoholism overplays the idea of community as the answer to alcohol problems. I would prefer to draw a line of separation in this work. I acknowledge the merits of the research on one side of this line, that is, the study of alcoholism and the pathological treatment of alcohol in culture. But on the other side of this line is my research. What follows is an

exploration of the musical effects of those who are, for the most part, able to sustain this pairing healthily. I would like to study alcohol use that is meaningful, productive, and culturally significant.

This work is based on fieldwork I have done in and around Lafayette, Louisiana, and two Acadian communities in Nova Scotia: County Clare's Church Point and Inverness County's Chéticamp, Cape Breton Island. The on-site Lafayette research took place in the fall of 2009, 2010 and 2011 in the weeks around and including October's *Festivals Acadiens et Créoles*, and also in the spring and early summer of 2010. Nova Scotia fieldwork took place during Mi-Carême festivities, March of 2009-2011, and in the summer months of the same years. Church Point visits were originally oriented around *le fête nationale des acadiens* and its preparations—an annual event which encompasses the last two weeks of July and culminates on Acadie's birthday, August 15th. Fieldwork was also conducted in the community in the fall of 2010 and outside of festival season in the summer of 2011.

As the dissertation unfolds, the reader will notice that not all angles of analysis are presented with an even hand— affective concerns in one community are not necessarily as present in another and parallels are not always possible, or reasonable, to draw. I consider this reality to be as revealing as any commonality-based analysis and will justify investigative choices on a case-by-case basis. This dissertation focuses on the interconnections of participants rather than a detailed examination of any individual(s) with ethnographic descriptions that often begin scenically or “wide lensed” and then concentrate on varied actions/reactions within the same musical setting. By choosing this

approach, very little is “proven” in this work—at least through evidence-based assertions. Instead, discrepancies are highlighted again and again.

This approach has been used more regularly with literary criticism and sociology than with ethnomusicologists, but I think suggestion, interpretation, and informal evidence is valuable to the study of something as socially sensitive as the study of music and alcohol. For one thing, it makes explicit the tension that exists among universal and particular concerns. Indeed, the tension has become the central focus of this work. Not only is the tension unavoidable, but it is also teeming with over-arching theoretical information and subtle, self-centred interests. It exposes the paradox of establishing a particularity of universalism. As a result, there are occasions where my approach’s generalization of ethnographic material might frustrate the reader and a general dearth of quotes might appear to be presumptuous or superficial. With appropriate acknowledgement as to the shortcomings of this approach, its virtues are also many. First, it protects informants. The use of alcohol in musical performance remains connected to social stigma and though *I* am committed to exploring its productive capacities, this does not mean the feeling is shared within the studied communities.

In the same way that social intersections reveal meaning, they also implicate others. In a study that highlights the inseparability of all participants, revealing the identity of one informant will, by necessity, compromise the anonymity of another. These fieldwork sites are also small communities and some performers can be identified as readily by their repertoire, their mannerisms, their speech patterns or their social habits as their name. I also acknowledge that a fair bit of analysis came from very informal

moments of my own participant observation. Because I played and danced and sang and drank with my informants, I was often presented with enlightening moments on occasions when my intention was to take off the researcher hat for a little while. Again, to overlook these moments would compromise the foundations of this work, the general question being how musical meaning can be made both of intention and focus, and of accidental happenings and social coincidence.

Familiarity with identity discourse also presents something of a challenge in this research. This is explained, in part, by differences in Cajun and Acadian social behaviour, but it is also affected by the sheer volume of Cajun ethnomusicological investigations in contrast with the relative paucity of Acadian musical research. Typically, Cajuns were far more forthcoming, occasionally defensive, but rarely apologetic when discussing stereotypical depictions of themselves and the relationship between alcohol and musicianship. Acadians, especially those in a senior age bracket, would answer pointed questions or engage in discussions on the subject of drinking insofar as I came to them with impressions of my own that they could dispute or confirm. Many of the Acadians I spoke to (in St. Mary's Bay and in Chéticamp) were openly cautious about associating another member of the community with his/her drinking habits, but were also reluctant to speak in generalities about the subject. Gossip, however, was a different story, so if there were stories to uphold, embellish or deny, interviews would be more fruitful. Not the ideal approach to fieldwork, I confess.

The same behavioural discrepancies surfaced in discussing the degree to which people drink. In general, many Acadians I spoke to would say something to the effect of,

“he drinks, you know” if they had ever seen the subject with alcohol. Cajuns would use a similar expression only if they felt the drinking was extreme, getting out of hand and/or having a negative bearing on other aspects of the subject’s life. “Normal” drinking would instead be described by Louisianans euphemistically, for example, “he twists off now and then” or in affectionate reference to *bambocheurs* (rounders). Although I use quotations wherever possible throughout this work, the wide range of expressive reservation among informants has affected the frequency with which verbatim quotations appear. I like to think of this choice as a testament to the importance of intimacy and an example of how researchers can come to learn things in formal and informal ways.

In keeping with discussions of intimacy, my own heritage is directly tied to Inverness County, Cape Breton. I was raised, in part, in a community 60 kilometres south of Chéticamp and, in later years, taught music in an area high school. Although the two communities are distinct, degrees of separation are few—a situation exaggerated by the closeness of performing musicians in the area. As a performing musician, myself, the venues of Chéticamp and environs are regular stops on a circuit that spans much of Cape Breton’s western coast and the resulting intimacy in interviews and candid informants bears witness to the effect of comfort. In Lafayette, a place I had never visited before this work began, considerable time and energy were invested in developing a comparable level of comfort. Although the kindness and generosity of the region is remarkable and appreciated, I am under no illusions as to the difference between *beginning* the process of gaining trust, respect, understanding, familiarity and beginning from a position where

these processes are well underway. Indeed differences of this kind are, in part, what I am trying to uncover in this work as a whole.

In less familiar communities, my first steps toward cultural understanding almost always took place in a bar or festival where live music was being played and alcohol was being consumed. In Lafayette, this meant Grant Street Dance Hall, The Blue Moon Saloon, Whiskey River Landing, Vermillionville, La Poussière, and Café des Amis. In Chéticamp, musical venues included the Doryman, Le Gabriel and various concerts and legion hall dances. In Church Point, restaurants and houses often came to life with live music and the main venue, Club Social de Clare, changed theme from night to night, such that what was a techno bar on a Friday night might be full of stepdancers (often the same people) on a Saturday. Towards the end of my fieldwork, the frequency with which ethnographic work took place in bars and dances was complemented, sometimes even replaced, by house parties or smaller, semi-private occasions.

Interviews and casual conversations on the subject of drinking are a socially sensitive affair. The assumptions associated with “a drunk”² can sometimes contribute to a general reluctance to reveal one’s personal habits and attitudes particularly in small familiar communities. In spite of the fact that a good number of North Americans drink and most of them aren’t drunks (Canada 2010; Prevention 2012) the attitude bled into a good deal of my research. To be methodologically honest, I admit that I often found

² The “drunk” distinction comes with no small amount of judgment. In contrast with “an inebriated person,” informants generally label “a drunk” as a person who has a problem, who drinks inappropriately and/or dangerously, while inebriated people (those who are drunk) seem to be more acceptable.

myself very tentative when asking in an interview, “Do you drink?” and never once did I receive an unqualified answer. If, instead, either I or the informant had a drink when I approached him or if I asked an informant if I could get her a drink in the course of an interview, the tone of the rest of the interview was substantially different—even if the answer was no. The pathological treatment of alcohol consumption—forever discussed in terms of its abuse—has made it very difficult to discuss normatively, though most agree that drinking is certainly possible to *do* normatively. Undoubtedly this has had a bearing on this work. Discursive style and enacted practice were regularly incongruous.

Interviews typically began with biographical information solicited in straightforward question and answer style. These questions encouraged story-telling, asking consultants to describe experiences that might have informed their attitudes towards drinking and playing. I asked many of the same questions at different stages in our relationship—in casual conversation, in feedback interviews and in reference to specific social events when both I and my consultant were in attendance. I suspected that most interviewees would be more guarded about their alcohol use in the earlier stages of our relationship, but this was not always the case. Some informants grew less willing to talk about their alcohol-affected attitudes and experiences when it was clear that I would be around for an extended period of time.

The bulk of my information, however, came from observation, participant observation and more casual and collective conversations. I checked my own observations against participants’ interpretations of the same event, simultaneously or on the following day. These small-group comparisons included band-mates, dancers and/or

friends. In some cases I referred to short sound or video recordings of an event we had all attended to compare impressions “in the moment” with the “captured evidence.” I also collected a good deal of follow-up information by phone or email correspondence. Folklife sites (Arts 2012), online reviews and chat rooms such as LouisianaCajun.com (various 2012) and MamouPlayboys.com (Playboys 2011) also proved tremendously useful as did the individual blogs and websites of several of the artists and venues introduced hereafter.

Archival work took place in CIFA and CKJM, the French language radio stations of Comeauville (in county Clare) and Chéticamp, respectively. There, I explored programme logs to determine the relative popularity of Acadian and other musical styles as well as target audiences. I wanted to see if songs related to alcohol were associated with a particular listening audience and/or if there was a correlation between time period and the way alcohol was portrayed in musical material. I was also able to acquire archived recordings of themed and all-request shows.

These radio stations are small and both facilities double as small recording studios and quasi-archives so I was also able to obtain logs and often recordings of local amateur musicians who had recorded their own, or traditional, compositions. Some of these musicians had commercial and/or copyright interests, while others had archival goals. Additional archival work was facilitated by onsite collections belonging to the University of Louisiana at Lafayette’s Center for Louisiana Studies, l’Université de Sainte Anne in Church Point, Acadia University in Wolfville and *Les Trois Pignons* Cultural Centre in Chéticamp. These searches were primarily for recordings that were

commercially unavailable, such as the collected songs of Fr. Anselme Chiasson, field recordings of deceased residents of Church Point and environs, and also for media reviews and sound recordings of concerts, festivals and “jams.” The archives were also an invaluable source of interviews with musicians and storytellers now deceased.

The narratives of all of my informants are strongly shaped by their positive or negative attitudes towards alcohol. Their perceptions of how their attitudes compare to their peers means that there are considerable discrepancies among statistical representations of alcohol’s use, the discourse surrounding its consumption, and self-reported and observable practice (Waterton and Duffy 1984; Davis, Thake, and Vilhena 2010). I want to be clear that my examination of the constructive capacity of alcohol in the musico-cultural contexts I study is in no way meant to be a sweeping endorsement of destructive drinking. Neither should it be construed as an insensitive treatment of the very difficult situation that arises when addicts are placed in musical environments where drinking is not only condoned but seen as a central contributor to a cultural event. For reasons that will be explained throughout this work, the musical sites of my research are often difficult places to be a non-drinker. I know very well that all of the people presented in this study do not drink healthily. In the name of my dissertation’s focus, I also suspect myself of under-representing non-drinkers, who are, without a doubt, often equal (if not greater) cultural contributors to their inebriated neighbours. It is somewhat of a research hazard. Without condoning destructive behaviour, I would like to be able to ask questions about the motivations for pairing music and alcohol which may result in an alternative reading to the pathological approach. This dissertation aims to discuss the role of alcohol

in musical settings in a way that questions its heretofore common role as incidental by-stander.

Doomed to Repeat It: Acadians and Cajuns in an Historical Context

In a work where “evidence” is so difficult to produce, I would like to contextualize my study with that which *is* verifiable and historically significant. Among the most important things to understand is that the dominant image of Acadian and Cajun culture, socially and academically, faithfully refers to a singular point in history— all while proclaiming that connections to this point have been irrevocably severed (Nostrand and Estaville 2001; Ross and Deveau 1992; Buckner, Frank, and Campbell 1998; Louder and Waddell 1993). The circumstances of the 1755 expulsion, which I will immediately discuss, are indeed foundational historic information, but in no way are they the only, or even the primary, governing forces of cultural behaviour. Members of the Cajun or Acadian community do not fully master the fabricated authenticity of Cajun or Acadian identity (Anderson 2006) and, of course, they also have identities beyond those that are ethnically determined. By virtue of being a minority population, members of each community have, at the very least, a double status in that they are Cajun/Acadian *and* “other”—settling among larger and comparably better off people in Southern White America and English/Scottish/Irish Atlantic Canada. They are cultural players within several reverberating and overlapping cultures. In addition, they are communities comprising idiosyncratic individuals. The situation means that a remarkable number of ontological systems are at play in any given individual. This can be complicated in that several of these systems compete for attention and none of them can command

unqualified loyalty. There may be a sense of stability in feeling that one belongs to a coherent community, but the compromises of communities' intersections are knotty.

The "coherent community" takes as its point of departure a core group of Acadian settlers who came to Canada from 1632-1653 (Louder and Waddell 1993). Their immigration was the result of a confluence of disastrous conditions in the Centre-Ouest region of France. The peasant class was afflicted by disease, religious war, lawlessness, high taxes, drought and famine, and the parts of the New World that constitute present-day Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and the Magdalen Islands of Quebec promised agricultural opportunity and religious freedom. Acadians did, for a time, find that which they sought—forming close relations with the Mi'kmaq and collectively developing innovative hunting, fishing and diking techniques.³ But they were living in a contested borderland region between British and French territories, so the Acadians found themselves repeatedly entangled in the political and territorial conflict

³ Because Western France is, in agricultural terms, environmentally similar to Acadia, many of the farming methods used to reclaim the salt marshes of France and Holland proved effective along the Bay of Fundy as well. The diking system for which Acadians are celebrated involved reinforced sods which walled off sections of marshland to prevent tidal flooding. Irrigation canals allowed rainwater to flow through sluices or *aboiteaux* and drained the marsh while a valve system at the ocean side closed at high tide to prevent sea water from reclaiming the marsh. In time, rainwater leached the salt from the land, uncovering rich soil for wheat, flax and other crops to grow. The ingenuity, labour and resource-boosting effects of this system are, to this day, noticeable in the fertility of Acadian-settled regions of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia and cast the subsequent disrespect shown to Acadians in an even more egregious light. For further reading on the subject, refer to, among others, historical geographers Graeme Wynn and Karl Butzer. Both discuss, in distinct ways, European connections and historical diffusion as it pertains to wetland agriculture in the Bay of Fundy region (Butzer 2002; Wynn 1979)

between colonial powers (Ross and Deveau 1992). The British ultimately gained control with the signing of the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713.⁴

The British were eager to fortify themselves, but were suspicious of the Acadians' apparent independence, their fluency with a language the British did not have, their relations with the Mi'kmaq, and their Catholic religious practices and so the British demanded that Acadians pledge allegiance to the crown. Suspicious themselves, and refusing to sign an unconditional oath, many Acadians spent the next forty-five years maintaining supply lines with the French at Fort Beauséjours and the Fortress of Louisbourg and engaging in various militia operations against the British. The British considered this sort of behaviour irritating if not threatening and so in 1755 and onward through 1763, Acadians were systematically deported to Britain, France or other British colonies at the behest of Lieutenant Governor Charles Lawrence (see expulsion maps Appendix 1.1, 1.2, 1.3). Some Acadians were able to escape this deportation and endured incredible hardship while hiding in the woods—a possibility frequently credited to warm relations with the Mi'kmaq population and their common quality of resourcefulness.⁵ This relationship was also notable in resistance efforts which amounted to guerrilla

⁴ France, however, retained Prince Edward Island as well as Cape Breton Island, where it began to construct the fortress of Louisbourg.

⁵ Due to their remote location, Acadians in the Magdalen Islands were left relatively untouched and many today claim both Quebecois and Acadian heritage. Other expelled Acadians landed on the west coast of Newfoundland where their presence is still prominent in and around St. George's Bay.

warfare against the British at Beauséjours, Lawrencetown, Halifax, Lunenburg, and Maine.⁶ Small numbers of other Acadians avoided exile, more or less as prisoners of war.

In 1764, Acadians were permitted to repatriate. Land grants were given in 1768, but Acadians were not given the right to own land until the early 1770s. Those who returned represented a significant minority and, of them, very few were allowed to return to their established properties and were forced to start anew. Due to perseverance and an unparalleled fertility rate, the Acadian population in Nova Scotia exploded (Statscan 2008). The largest community of Nova Scotia Acadians settled in Clare, Digby County. Comprising a long string of small villages, with Church Point at its centre, Clare sits on the shore of St. Mary's Bay—a sub basin of the Gulf of Maine. At time of writing, the county is home to about 9,000 people—the majority of whom are Acadian and bilingual. Church Point is also the site of the only French-language university in Nova Scotia, l'Université de Sainte Anne. The economy is largely based on fishing and forestry though there is a seasonal tourist economy as well.

Chéticamp, the largest Francophone enclave in Cape Breton Island, was established in 1785 by just fourteen settlers and was a haven and destination point for several Acadians following the expulsion (Chiasson 1986). The village sits at the base of the Cape Breton Highlands National Park and is currently home to approximately 3,000

⁶ Historical figures of the Acadian resistance such as Joseph Broussard dit Beausoleil remain current in Acadian and Cajun cultural identification by incorporating their names into many of the most successful Cajun and Acadian bands: Lafayette-based band, *Beausoleil avec Michael Doucet*, has earned Grammy nominations and provides the soundtrack for the Hollywood film, *The Big Easy* (McBride et al. 1998). *Beausoleil Broussard* is an Acadian group from New Brunswick whose albums, produced in the 1970s and 80s, remain incredibly popular throughout Acadian Canada (Broussard 2003)

people. Historically a fishing town, its current economic welfare is largely dependent on tourism (see Acadian region maps Appendix 1.4). Both communities are fairly homogeneous, but Chéticamp is surrounded by communities that are primarily Scottish, while communities neighbouring Church Point are also Acadian. Chéticamp and Church Point are the focus communities for my Acadian fieldwork.

Other victims of the expulsion, the Cajuns,⁷ established themselves in Louisiana after circuitous journeys through France, Spain, and the Antilles (Nostrand and Estaville 2001; Dormon 1983; Brasseaux 1992). Settlement in Louisiana was the direct result of Spain gaining control of Louisiana in the mid-1760s. Acadians who had been repatriated to France volunteered to help settle the newly acquired colony and the Spanish government accepted their offer, paying for the transport of 1,600 settlers. When they arrived in Louisiana in 1785, colonial forts employed and otherwise sponsored the settlers in starting their new lives by providing tools, seed corn, livestock, guns, medical services, and a church. A second wave of Acadians eager to rejoin their kin came twenty years later.

Cajun settlement in Louisiana occurred amid a broader context of French-speaking immigration to the region, including the arrival of European and American whites, African and Caribbean slaves, and free Blacks (Giraud 1974). The region is also

⁷ An anglicized corruption of the abbreviated form of "Acadien" or "*cadien*"

home to several Native American tribes,⁸ and boasts a large population of Creoles, who, in Louisiana, can be black, white, or mixed-race. Cajuns and other Louisianans became American citizens when the United States acquired Louisiana from France in 1803's Louisiana Purchase.

The region referred to as "Acadiana" in southern Louisiana stretches from just west of New Orleans to the Texas border along the Gulf of Mexico coast, and about 160 kilometers inland to Marksville. Acadiana includes twenty-two parishes (or counties) and residents refer to Lafayette as "the heart of Cajun country" (see Acadian Parishes map, Appendix 1.5). Despite the frequent association of Cajuns with swamplands and bayous, Acadiana consists mainly of low gentle hills in the north section and dry land prairies, with marshes and bayous in the south, closer to the coast. The wetlands increase in frequency in and around the Calcasieu River, Atchafalaya Basin, and Mississippi Basin and are cultivated with fields of rice and sugarcane.

Both Acadians and Cajuns have a reputation for being hard-working manual labourers, committed Catholics, French speakers, culture bearers and disenfranchised minorities (Longfellow, Ross, and Le Blanc 2003; Carroll 2002; Buckner, Frank, and Campbell 1998).⁹ Both groups have independently developed language preservation

⁸ The influence of Houma, Chitimacha, Tunica-Biloxi, Choctaw, and Coushatta groups is represented in the names of geographical regions, rivers and bayous and in foodways, agricultural and artistic practice, stories, songs and language throughout Louisiana.

⁹ The Cajun reality has been, until a very recent economic and academic interest in Cajun culture, statistically stable as the life of the poor and working class. Louisiana has the second highest poverty rate in the United States, second to Mississippi, and the rate is higher still in Evangeline, Acadia, and other rural parishes where Cajun populations are most dense (Census Bureau 2010). Acadians in Canada are similarly impoverished. In the Evangeline Region of Prince Edward Island, in Southwestern Nova Scotia and in the

policies which have, in recent years, amounted to culturally specific curriculum efforts and tourist-fuelled revivals (Nostrand and Estaville 2001; Bankston 1998).¹⁰

Musical Focus

I am interested primarily in the contemporary live performance repertoire of Cajuns and Acadians, particularly as it is presented in song. The qualities distinguishing “traditional” from “contemporary” or “song” from “instrumental” are, however, particularly difficult to tease out in these musical traditions. Cajun songs, for example, often include lengthy instrumental breaks¹¹ and, temporally, revitalization

Acadian Peninsula in New Brunswick, 42% of Francophones did not complete high school, and this percentage is above 45% in New Brunswick’s highly-Acadian Kent County. In these areas, the Francophone populations are generally employed in low-skilled industrial jobs or in seasonal work such as logging and fishing. As a result, they experience an economic life far different from Francophones elsewhere in North America, where fluency in French tends to be an indicator of *higher* economic and educational levels (FCFA 2006). The economic status of those claiming Cajun ancestry is modest, the occupations are largely manual and Marxist interpretations of the role of alcohol in working class life have argued that capitalist and colonialist societies have tacitly sanctioned alcohol’s consumption as a means of social control (White 1996; Room and Barrows 1991)—a subject beyond the scope of this dissertation, but definitely relevant.

¹⁰ CODOFIL (Council of the Development of French in Louisiana) was created in 1968 to “do any and all things necessary to accomplish the development, utilization, and preservation of the French language as found in Louisiana for the cultural, economic and touristic benefit of the state” (www.codofil.org). CSAP (Conseil Scolaire Acadien Provincial) is a French- first language education programme with Acadian-specific adaptations directed towards preserving the Acadian character of its twenty-three schools, thereby restricting the admission of students of non-Acadian heritage and/or linguistic ability (www.csap.ednet.ns.ca.criteres). Both communities refer to the 1970s as the beginning of a cultural reawakening.

¹¹ Acadians often arrange traditional songs instrumentally or engage in the practice of *turlutter* in which nonsense syllables are vocalized to imitate instrumental tunes and their articulations (This is also referred to as *reels à bouche* or, most frequently, incorporated in requests to “*djigger* a tune”). It is also difficult to separate dancing from either of these traditions and though I will not focus particularly on the movements or choreography of any particular dance, I will not ignore its bearing on social practice and musical tendencies. I have only rarely experienced Acadian or Cajun music “live” without some degree of complementary dance movement. Many Cajun and Acadian musicians and interviewees credit dance with the signature accents and metrical organization of their performance repertoire. In Lafayette, this dance is primarily coupled, while in Acadian regions of Nova Scotia, the

efforts have made “contemporary” that which was considered archival material only a few years ago. Though my interests lie primarily in live performance, I do occasionally refer to recorded examples when performers suggest an alteration in their style to suit a perceived or actual change in their audience. Recordings are similarly helpful when there seem to be discrepancies among presentations of “official” and “casual” culture.

Of the musicians presented in this dissertation, very few are full-time performers. I do, however, feel compelled to take note of distinctions among musicians and non-musicians as they appeared to me in Cajun and Acadian regions. While most of the Acadian musicians in this study were largely indistinguishable from Acadian non-musicians in terms of economic status, educational background, or markers of cosmopolitanism, those performing in Lafayette were often of a higher economic status than many of their listeners. Several of the Cajun musicians whose performances are analyzed in this dissertation have or are pursuing post-secondary degrees (folklore, literature, French language and music degrees dominate). They describe themselves as financially stable, tour as performing bands and/or travel recreationally. Though they, too, have “day jobs” their work often complements their artistic life in a way unlike their Acadian cousins who work, often “away,” as manual labourers and tradesmen. Of the Cajun musicians presented here, some are arts journalists or writers, some have recording studios or record labels, others make or repair instruments, some are graphic

dominant dance form is solo step-dance or group line or set-dances in which participants are not necessarily paired into couples.

designers, others are involved administratively in music festivals or lecture at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette.

While I emphasize the fact that the musicians presented here in no way constitute an exhaustive list, some comparative features among the communities should be highlighted in order to provide the reader with appropriate contextual information. First, Lafayette enjoys a year-round tourist trade, which is aided by its subtropical climate. This encourages a somewhat competitive and lucrative music business in Lafayette that is far less present in Acadian regions where winters can be harsh and smaller populations make professional musical opportunities scant. Lafayette is also home to the University of Louisiana at Lafayette which has a strong Cajun Studies Separtment and a library of Cajun and Creole archival material that is bustling with Cajun enthusiasts. Though Church Point is also home to an Acadian-centred university, there is no comparison in the size and affluence of these universities.¹² Finally, Lafayette's oil and gas industry and its population that, despite being informed by its rural surroundings, is, in fact, urban allow for far more cosmopolitan interactions than are possible in the remote, rural areas populated by Acadians in Canada. Historically speaking, these are relatively new distinctions. Though some of these Cajun musicians appear better-off than their Acadian cousins, they are rarely more than a generation removed from a comparable situation—a fact regularly displayed in their artistic and emotional sensibilities. Though these distinctions are significant, I reiterate that the Cajun demographic does continue to be

¹² Louisiana State University at Lafayette has an enrollment of approximately 16,000 while Université Sainte Anne has approximately 700 registered students.

disadvantaged economically and in terms of education, but the most public musical figures in contemporary Louisiana are perhaps less representative of this situation than one might suspect—certainly less “average” than Acadian musical figures.

Musical Features of Acadian Nova Scotia: Some Introductory Generalizations

It seems somewhat unusual given the prominence of Acadian dancing today, but, traditionally, dancing was denigrated by clerical authorities. Barring unusual and infrequent exceptions granted by local and exceptionally liberal priests, dancing in Acadian communities was prohibited at all times except for the most special of occasions, most of them religious: weddings, Christmas and New Year’s Eve, *Mi-Carême*, the feast of the epiphany and *la Chandeleur* (candlemas).¹³ The Acadian traditions associated with these events have many regional variations. I discuss them more completely in chapter four, but valuable work on the folklore and specific traditions of regionalized religious traditions in Acadia has already been done by Anselme Chiasson, Georges Arsenault, and Sally Ross (Chiasson 1986; Arsenault and Ross 2009). Related work includes Barbara Leblanc’s analyses of the social structure

¹³Mi- Carême is a mid-Lenten celebration that serves as a reprieve from forty days of prayerful fasting and abstinence. Chandeleur or candlemas is also a Roman Catholic tradition and marks the end of the Epiphany season (February 2). In the Latin rite, it is celebrated as the “Feast of the Presentation of Jesus at the Temple” and is the fourth Joyful mystery of the rosary. Candlemas is reflected in earlier practices of “churching” (ritually purifying) new mothers, forty days after the birth of a child. Like many other Christian rituals, some of the practices of Candlemas stem from paganism—among them the blessing of religious candles for the year as a festival of light marking the halfway point between the winter solstice and the spring equinox. Superstitions are also plentiful—among them weather predictions (“If Candlemas be fair and bright, winter will have another fight/ If Candlemas brings cloud and rain, winter will not come again”), family deaths forecasted according to the way in which a candle’s wax drips, and death/separation being hurried by bringing a snowdrop plant into a house on Candlemas day. In a contemporary context, neither tradition is particularly strong among Catholics, though both are more present in French Catholic communities.

embedded in Acadian dance tradition, viewing developments in Acadian dance as a reflection of gender roles in Chéticamp (Leblanc in Greenhill et al. 1997, 101-112).

In a similar and related fashion, clerical influence was palpable in the denigration of instrumental music. The discussion of the longevity of Old World French influence on Acadian musical traditions has been the topic of much scholarly investigation (Donovan 2002; Gallat-Morin et al. 2003; Creighton 1972). France's influence ranges widely depending on economic, social and geographic factors of various scattered Acadian locales. But in Church Point and Chéticamp, unaccompanied folksong was (and according to many, remains) the dominant Acadian musical tradition. Over time, the song repertoire has come to be considered by many as the most representative of an Acadian musicality uncorrupted by the traditions of English speaking neighbours.

Primarily monophonic, the catalogue is comprised of *complaintes* (laments), humorous songs (which often have localized variations), and topical or historical songs. The lyrics of these songs frequently reference Acadian preoccupations with the sea and the expulsion. Contemporary Acadian song is typically sung in a regional dialect called, simply, "Acadian French" (and distinct from *chiac* as spoken by Acadians in New Brunswick). Its use is credited as an important feature in preserving and popularizing Acadian language in the face of the widespread anglicization of Acadian communities.

In the 1940s, priests Father Anselme Chiasson (a prominent Acadian folk song collector) and Father Léandre Brault (Acadian choral director) began to collect, transcribe and disseminate Acadian traditional songs as part of their mission to promote Acadian linguistic and cultural identity through the valorisation of Acadian folk song traditions. Their efforts produced numerous printed collections of Acadian folk song and a vast collection of archival recordings as well as public performances of choral songs (Chiasson and Boudreau 2002; Chiasson 1986). Many of the most popular songs tend to be in duple metre, very frequently in 6/8 which contributes to a dancing lilt and accommodates the “pick-up” beat characteristic of French language structure that I will discuss in greater detail in chapter three. The repertoire is vast, enduring and developing and it is, above all other genres that have been introduced to the region, loved and respected, but there is an expressed fear that it has, in part, fallen victim to modernity and/or the pervasiveness of English language and pop sensibilities (Chiasson and Boudreau 2002, v).

Instrumental music in Acadian Nova Scotia is typically a fiddle-centred solo tradition. Fiddles may double in unison or, occasionally, octaves, but harmonizing moments are very rare. Accompanying instruments are piano and/or guitar, spoons or “bones,” and percussive dancing feet. In contrast to the song repertoire, instrumental music is often tied in with a sort of inferiority complex which positions itself against the popularity of other fiddle traditions from across the globe. Many Acadian performers suggest that their repertoire is not Acadian in itself, but that they add Acadian stylistic markers to the Scottish music of neighbouring communities or to

the geographically distant but burgeoning bluegrass and country repertoire.¹⁴

Acadian fiddlers in Nova Scotia play tunes in medleys of a single, or closely related, key. Jigs, hornpipes, reels, slow airs or instrumental versions of Acadian songs are typical. Strathspeys generally point to the influence of Scottish players, and are, therefore, more common in Chéticamp than in Church Point.¹⁵ The tunes are set in major and minor scales but also in modes which possess characteristics of both the major and minor scales. These “modal” tunes sometimes adjust to suit tempered accompanying instruments. The third and seventh scale degree are the most likely to be altered “sharp” or “flat” and, in several popular tunes, the treatment of these scale degrees will vary from player to player, even performance to performance.

In Nova Scotia, “Acadian stylistic markers,” tend to refer to a fairly legato sound with slurred bowing and alterations in accent that are usually emphasized by syncopated double stops, added pitches on upbeats and accented final beats. Again, these rhythmic alterations are frequently seen as a linguistic marker as French language structure operates in a similar fashion of initial de-emphasized syllables and strong final syllables. Rhythmic elements characteristic of an Acadian style are also evident in the way Acadian instrumentalists keep the beat with their feet. Though the feet of instrumentalists are percussive throughout most of Nova Scotia (where

¹⁴ There is an annual bluegrass festival in Clare that directly precedes, and often overlaps, August celebrations of *Fête nationale de l'Acadie*. The musical results are beyond the scope of this paper, but provide fascinating examples of the ways in which aspects of a parallel musical tradition are embraced or dismissed.

¹⁵ Strathspeys are typically preceded by a march and followed by a series of reels in a medley designed for solo dancer(s) but often used for “listening music” in concerts as well.

instrumental performers are almost always seated), Acadian fiddlers show clogging influences while keeping time as well as while dancing. A feature of this dance and time-keeping is “accent-by-omission”—that is, interrupting a regular percussive pattern by dragging the feet, pausing, or stepping/leaping particularly high on an accented beat. In bowing, this appears as a “cut,” meaning a slightly uneven bowed triplet that replaces one note with two or three notes of the same pitch for rhythmic variety and “lift.”

As I will discuss in coming chapters, many Acadians remain unconvinced that these alterations are a sufficient contribution to label the style as “Acadian instrumental repertoire,” while others argue that Acadians have had as much influence on the instrumental styles of Nova Scotia as any other ethnic group, but have been denied claim. Sound engineer and musical historian, Paul MacDonald, relayed the following impression at a house party in Nova Scotia:

The development of styles all happened as a parallel existence; most importantly during a time that predated nationalism and distinctions of regional and ethnic background. This is why the mystery of the Acadian fiddle style will probably never be explained completely. Scottish music here [in Nova Scotia] doesn’t sound like Scottish music in Scotland. That’s ‘cause Scottish players were playing Irish tunes, Irish players played Scotch tunes, French fiddlers played both and adapted French song melodies to the New World craze. Actually, in my mind the Acadian fiddle style that’s around now is proof that there was a time that musicians didn’t differentiate except on the subject of quality of the earworm. (Paul MacDonald, personal communication, October, 2011)

In this comment, MacDonald outlines many of the identity-forming issues which underscore the musical contexts which inform this dissertation: many

marginalized and displaced people were settling Nova Scotia together. Though they shared difficult conditions and poor treatment they had distinct backgrounds. In “the new world” a hierarchy emerged determining who was more or less marginalized than his (also marginalized) neighbour and whose ideas of “quality” were more or less valued. This played out socially, musically, linguistically and behaviourally.

Musical Features of Cajun Louisiana: Some Introductory Generalizations

Although Cajun musical genres bear the mark of multiple influences, the style is less compartmentalized than the Acadian music I’ve just described. Instrumental, vocal and dance music are often one and the same in and around Lafayette and the subject matter of songs includes travel and return, lost love due to drunkenness and poverty, and a plethora of regionally-focused waltzes and two-steps. Descriptions of instruments in Louisiana immediately after the dispersal are basically nonexistent. Country music scholar Bill Malone suggests that the roots of Cajun music can be found in the confluence of French immigrants supporting a *contredanse* tradition, with the fiddle as a transitional/common instrument from Acadian style to the western swing of neighbouring Texas (Malone 2003).

Instrumentally, the most basic Cajun ensemble consists of a single-row diatonic accordion,¹⁶ fiddle(s) tuned one step lower than standard pitch, a vocalist (who is almost

¹⁶ The presence of the accordion is attributed to German influence, with their immigration to Cajun regions of Louisiana near the end of the 1800s (François 1990). Because the instrument is limited in range, Cajun music is mostly played in the keys of C and G with a C-accordion, or D and A with a D-accordion.

always an instrumentalist as well), and an instrument to keep the beat—sometimes a triangle (also referred to as a *T-fer*), very frequently a guitar or, increasingly, drums, steel guitar or bass guitar, sometimes a washboard. Twin fiddles are common, in a relationship wherein one fiddler makes regular use of rhythmic “bassing” chords (percussive and harmonic double stops comprising chord tones) and the other takes a lead melody. Sliding into or out of a pitch is common and fiddlers often alternate between lead and accompanying roles. These relational components will be discussed in greater detail in chapter five.

An essential element of Cajun music is dance-based rhythm. Derived from quadrilles, reels, mazurkas and polkas, contemporary dances are dominated by the waltz and two-step. Jitterbug has influenced the two-step, making it a lively couple dance that allows for soloistic moments. There is somewhat of a traditionalist division among contemporary dancers as Cajun dance customs predating the Second World War instead valued synchronous dancing with little motion of the upper body (François 1990). Structure for the dancers is provided by rhythm instruments that play fairly strictly on each quarter note, with very few harmonic variants, squarely marking out the meter of each bar. Dances, particularly waltzes, generally move in a counter-clockwise circular path around a given dance space.

Structurally, Cajun songs usually comprise a “tune” of eight measures and a “turn” of eight measures. Many bands place a “resting bar” between each, making the turn or tune nine measures long. Though the structure is in no way rigid, Cajun bands usually play the tune together, and then the vocalist takes the lead. Afterwards, lead turns

and tunes are passed through the melody instruments—usually twice each—and the order of play repeats. When a musician takes the lead, he can improvise or embellish the melody, so long as he does not conflict with the I-IV-V harmonic structure. The vocalist is just as free to improvise and he often interjects with short expressions of emotion.¹⁷ Songs are sung in Cajun French which is informal. Cajun French is generally marked by numerous contractions and comprise verb conjugations that are distinct from other French dialects. A good deal of English is also incorporated.¹⁸

Aims and Objectives

The study of alcohol in culture has to include some admission that its underpinnings are somewhat dubious. The effects of either alcohol or culture on an individual are debatable, imprecise and subject to varied interpretations. But this admission need not undermine the project altogether, so the distinct aims of this project remain:

- To investigate the pervasive role of alcohol as object or symbol in the construction of Acadian and Cajun musical worlds.
- To demonstrate how attitudes toward alcohol are informed by, and reflected in, other prominent cultural domains (i.e. tendencies in expressing humour, religiosity, oral history).
- To explore the potential of social criticism when discussing and assessing music's ability to be affected by alcohol use.

¹⁷ Common (maybe even cliché) expressions include *criminelle*, *ye yaille*, or Harry Choates' signature *Ehhh*, *ha haaa!* discussed further in the coming chapters.

¹⁸ Notes on orthography are presented in greater detail in Chapter three's discussion of lyric and language.

Without denying that there are many biological factors at play when discussing alcohol's effects, this work makes no effort towards uncovering any of them. In fact, this study very rarely approaches consumption quantitatively, and moments focused on debilitating drunkenness are few (no matter how musical that drunk might be). Instead, the coming chapters treat drinking as a medium for constructing the musical world of Nova Scotia Acadians and Louisiana Cajuns.¹⁹

I examine historically connected, but stylistically and geographically distinct, musical moments in Church Point, Chéticamp, and Lafayette in which alcohol played a socially constructive role. Though by many accounts (including my own), the scope of this dissertation is sizeable, it is necessarily so by virtue of alcohol's pervasive nature. The dissertation's breadth is an attempt to indicate possible areas of intersection—a representation of the ways many spheres of cultural practice could be coloured by attitudes toward alcohol. Alcohol's role in musical cultures appears to transcend avenues of genre, geography or generation. This allows for analytical arrays that might not be considered within these usual social boundaries of communicative style, ethnicity or age and so the work's temporal, geographic and discursive girth is, I think, balanced by a willful limitation of inquiry provided by alcohol.

¹⁹ Cajuns and Acadians have established enclaves throughout North America and, of course, have regionally specific variations in their cultural practices depending on any number of factors. For the sake of convenience, however, I will refer to my study groups (in and around Church Point, Nova Scotia; Chéticamp, Nova Scotia; and in and around Lafayette, Louisiana) as Cajuns and Acadians from this point on. In no way does this suggest that a Church Point Acadian is the same as one from, for example, western Prince Edward Island. When distinctions further subdividing the focus groups are required, I will make this clear.

This dissertation examines music and alcohol communicatively²⁰ and, in so doing, makes central alcohol's influence on the answers to these questions: is a message sent always received in the spirit that it is meant? Are all possible messages intended for all listeners? Do individual participants have differing capacities for delivery and receipt? I also ask how participants adjust behaviour to suit variable responses to a single musical moment. Many Acadian and Cajun scholars position themselves against a sort of reductionism regarding the music's meaning, but they assert or prioritize meaning, nonetheless (Chiasson 1986; Seale 1991; Arsenault and Ross 2009; Sexton and Oster 2001; Savoy 1984; Mattern 1998). In contrast, this research makes no effort to discover *a* musical meaning through the interrogation of any given text or even its cultural context, but considers the concurrent range of attitudes and educations that can be found in repertoire and its listeners, composers, and performers. I am interested in the pluralities of style, reference, representation, expressiveness, and reception as they are affected by alcohol consumption. The communicative success of these elements is difficult to measure, but fundamental to musical satisfaction.

²⁰ For the purposes of this work, I propose "communicative examination" as an avenue towards legitimizing the way things come to be known in informal and/or unsaid ways. I have been drawn to the communicative aspect primarily because informants describe themselves or one another in interviews in ways that are rarely identical to the way I (or other community members) see them interacting with one another. This sometimes has to do with comfort in an interview setting or an ease with reflection or descriptiveness, and could, on rare occasion, have to do with intentional misrepresentation, but it is also affected by the "in-betweens" of social interaction that are threaded throughout this work.

Alcohol and Culture: Theoretical Grounding

As a means of theoretical introduction, I refer again to the conception of alcohol as not dangerous so much as risky. The subject is most thoroughly discussed by Mary Douglas (Douglas 1987, 1992, 2002), Dwight Heath (Heath 1995, 2000), and Joseph Gusfield (Gusfield 1996). All three draw attention to substantial evidence suggesting that not only attitudes, but also the physical and psychological effects of alcohol are largely culturally determined. I will expand on each of these directly to justify the ways in which these scholars inform much of the work that unfolds in this dissertation. In broad strokes, neither Douglas, nor Gusfield, nor Heath suggest that the effects of alcohol are impenetrable or beyond understanding, but each draws attention to a general complicity in accepting attitudes toward alcohol that are neither founded nor universal. Alcohol use is conducive to negotiations of exclusion and inclusion—alternately blamed and credited in ways that reveal a cultural familiarity akin to the expertise required in connoisseurship. Connoisseurship and expertise measure cultural capital in many aspects of social life, but the concept is distilled in alcohol-related behaviour, having the power to “identify the person as well as the wine” (Bourdieu 1984; Douglas 1987, 9).

Alcohol’s association with harm, risk, and deviance invoke Mary Douglas’s writings on “Ritual Uncleaness” (Douglas 2002). There, she writes of the way individuals and, in turn, communities envision physical and spiritual health as a struggle with contaminants. Being *too* clean or segregating oneself from impurities can prohibit growing stronger, renders one unprepared for the unforeseen, and damages a sense of communion with the impure. Without a sense of the impure, there is a debilitating

separation from struggle, which is essential for moral growth. Without impurity, the possibility for outreach is also eliminated— for saving or for being saved. There is a certain humanity and humility attached to the unclean. On the other hand, maintained cleanliness allows for the distinction between the everyday and the exceptional. Motivated by a desire to prioritize cultural elements, preserved purity eliminates confusion, establishes a standard of greatness, maintains an avenue for respect. The process determines what is worthy of protection, what is in need of protection, what is resilient and what is beyond renewal.

According to Douglas, specific and often personal ideas of dirt, profanity or contamination are concerned with two things: care for hygiene and respect for conventions. Both of these are bound up in ideas of contagion with an implied immorality attached to the extremes of fastidious and filthy. In the dirt of “honest labour” and “good fun” (which is quite regularly relegated to “long ago”) there is sometimes found a cleansing or fortifying property (Douglas 2002, 7,121,166). Physically rationalized in terms of boosted immune systems, socially “good dirt” functions as a release valve, a distraction from the impurities of presumably more profane, if less visible, preoccupations. This brand of defilement is justified by a “work hard, play hard” context, wherein participants earn grace periods or “time-out” zones based on the “bigger picture” view of their lives (Douglas 2002, 64).

The chief preoccupation in discussions of purity is the risk (or chance) of contamination. Those drawn to gritty-ness fear sterilization, the pure fear contamination, and protectionist strategies exist for both groups. The most impure can be cleaned, the

most pure can be corrupted and ever more involved ways of restricting access are developed, assessing balance according to contextually determined criteria. The rituals that emerge and recede are formed of emphasis and dismissal, levels of sensitivity, and the interaction of ideas and events. In that sense, the social universe is divided between things and actions which are subject to restriction and others which are not. It's a question of degree. Something which is clean relative to one object, being or activity can be seen as unclean relative to another. My drinking informants, for example, regularly referred to themselves as being somewhere on a continuum between "a drunk" and "a saint" and they almost always included contextual qualifiers. They would tell me that they had no qualms with drink after work, but only an addict would drink on his lunch hour. They'd drink onstage if it was a dance, but not if it was a "soft seater" concert. In the coming chapters, I ask how these distinctions are made, adjusted, and perceived by participants.

Dwight Heath's contribution to the impurity subject considers notable societal changes in terms of who is credited with expertise when it comes to governing life's behaviours (Heath 1995, 2000). Over history, temperance thinking has shifted from the religious to the scientific (or pseudo-scientific), but the change amounts to very little in terms of the counsel each maintains. The same thing—specifically abstention—remains "good for you," but it is no longer good because god or family says so. Instead, drinking has become a health concern. What is considered moral now comes from a different place—the place of self-help, body-awareness, and success (Roof 2011; Marshall 1979; Griffiths and Wallace 1998; Wilson 2005). In the worlds of de-tox, raw food and hundred mile diets, the moral lens comes with no small dose of nostalgia—a longing for simpler

times—the good ol’ days before toxins, pesticides and preservatives, when alcohol was homemade or untaxed. As with anything that measures change, however, there is an equally powerful measure of continuity.

Alcohol studies cross-culturally treasure the fact that modern drinking customs and attitudes are not so unlike historical ones, but there are instances of selective amnesia when consequence is tinged by nostalgia. The negative aspects of alcoholic customs can be forgiven or forgotten, it seems, if priority has been placed on its positive repercussions. Richard Boyle, for example, chooses to overlook the hooliganistic aspects of drink and Scottish football. Instead he favours an interpretation which sees the activities as representing the political history of the Scottish working class. Whether or not they are violent, these activities, Boyle argues, are the important activities of a small nation “unable to express itself in more orthodox political arenas” (Boyle 2000, 23). In *The Future of Nostalgia* (Boym 2001) Svetlana Boym outlines selective tendencies in the ways meaning is given to longing. Restorative nostalgia, she writes, proposes to “rebuild the lost home and patch up the memory gaps” while reflective nostalgia dwells in longing and loss, the imperfect process of remembrance (41). Similarly, Coontz questions the component parts that come together to create the mythological “traditional family” image in contemporary America. Coontz emphasizes that the most flattering aspects of a given era are what is held in cultural memory the longest, while the detractors are forgotten quickly (Coontz 1992). Most specific to the topic at hand, Dwight Heath examines alcohol’s social use in North America and elsewhere as having a sustained presence in spite of the tyranny of policies designed to heal its ills through graded prohibition (Heath

1995, 2000). Most recently (Heath 2007), Heath took to task the World Health Organization (WHO) by writing,

The scientific literature about drinking shows that a preoccupation with the harms that occasionally befall those who drink too much or too fast is coupled with a virtual ignorance (in both senses of that term) about the benefits....It is ironic that reviews of the subject that appear under the World Health Organization imprint have paid almost no attention to two thirds of WHO's definition of health: "mental and social well-being" while focusing overwhelmingly on the physical aspects. (72)

Can public interest in alcohol's evils make room for a parallel investigation of alcohol's constructive capacities? When alcohol is considered a guilty pleasure or a release valve, what can be learned of the safer, smaller, more intimate circles, where there is a confidence in moderation that is not always expressed publicly or "officially"?

There is a distance between the enacted and the reported when it comes to alcohol. I would like to examine the cultural significance of this distance and, as this dissertation proceeds, consider alcohol as an indicator of contextual awareness. Should the use of alcohol always (or ever) be considered incidental in musical environments? My hypothesis is that the discrepancies found amid reported and socially enacted treatments of alcohol are not unlike the fruitful ambiguities of musical participation and the variable and rewarding disparity between each rendering of a tune. Alcohol and music frequently share company, but the questions that are culturally meaningful ask how highly individualized and relative evaluations of drinking and playing behaviour are considered appropriate or significant. As I ask, in this dissertation, about the paired ambiguities of alcohol and music, I would like to look also at their nuanced potential. Are the results of

an alcohol and music pairing always mysterious or are there ways Cajuns and Acadians harness their constructive capacities in culturally specific ways?

Discrepancies, Codes, Relatives

The quality of a musical experience need not be threatened by ambiguous or discrepant renderings. Often, satisfaction *depends on*, for example, a drummer who is “on top of” or “behind” the beat, accordion reeds that are tuned slightly “out” or “wet” to achieve brightness, the strained sound of drunks singing in harmony. These are examples of the participatory discrepancies Steven Feld and Charles Keil describe in *Music Grooves* (Keil and Feld 1994), but also of mediation as introduced in *Vocal Anthropology: From the Music of Language to the Language of Song* (Feld et al. 2007). In this work, the “mediation” focuses on discursive “connections between performance and place, class, ethnicity, agency, difference and social identity” (Feld et al., 2007, p.x) and the social construction of musical sound that allows for a “ritualized, explicit consideration... of the voice as the material embodiment of social ideology and experience (Feld et al. 2007, 332). Processual and/or textural, the discrepancies reveal relationships. Satisfaction comes as a result of entanglement, of uncertainty as to the precise source of musical pleasure. Communication, in this sense, is no longer ontologically reified as a transmission or force; it can only exist relationally, in between, at unions and intersections.

A communications perspective always focuses on a relationship rather than a thing or entity. In the case of human expressive modalities, the focus is on the

relationship between the origin and action of sensations, the character of interpretations, and consequences. Keil and Feld write that, in every case, the importance of communication depends on the following:

- the primacy of the social, interactive, intersubjective realm of these processes.
- the fact that engagement shapes, defines, maintains and brings forth tacit or explicit subjective realities for participants in the scene.
- the way in which meaning fundamentally implicates interpretation.
- the complex relation of production codes and producer's intentions to interpreted messages.
- the need for socially situated investigation. (Keil and Feld 1994, 79)

They wisely caution against a formalist concern with “cracking the code” rather than seeing codes as a *fait social total* (81). But their concern with socially situated investigation suggests to me that they think there actually is *a* social situation. Meaning accumulates, and it does so by ricocheting off some interpreters, some performers, some references, and by by-passing others. Experience is cumulative, and interactively cumulative, but it is also selectively cumulative. No single person present in a musical setting is interacting with an identical group. Each interacts with his own history, his own references, with other not-present groups and influences, and with his own tastes, preferences, capacities, and inclinations. Processes of coding and decoding are neither pure nor autonomous. Again, I call upon “mediation”—acknowledging that the concrete domains—what is actually done, like playing music, dancing, worshipping, and drinking—connect with the more abstract domains of memory, positionality, and theories of feeling.

This kind of thinking expands the idea of “text” to include all the dimensions of a performative act. It is underscored by a concept of performance that has been well examined in the scholarship of practice theory and phenomenology—a concept that begins with seeing performance as a representation of world events (Tedlock 1972; Woodbury 1987; Fine 1984; Bauman 1977) and develops into questions that ask whether performance is best seen as behaviour, action or experience. If performance is seen as behaviour rather than action or experience, how can one account for intention and significance in performative gestures (Hymes 1996; Hymes 1962; Glassie 1982; Bauman 1977)? When Chomsky-esque systems of competence are analyzed (Berger 1999; Giddens 1984), change, agency and responsibility can be questioned relative to a subject’s meaningful action. At this juncture, phenomenology scholars begin to present experience as situated in acts of perception, tightly connecting context and meaning “because the subject’s meaningful engagement with an item of expressive culture is always an activity performed in and influenced by the immediate situation; likewise, the active engagement that forms experience is constrained and enabled by the subject’s social history” (Berger 1999, 7). Though the forthcoming chapters are in no way a deep phenomenological assessment of musical practices in Acadian Nova Scotia and Cajun Louisiana, they do keep in mind the possibility of reciprocal bearing and consider that a musical text—be it repertoire, performance, recording, venue or performer—may, at least in part, be constituted by the way in which each aspect, in relative combination, is experienced by each participant.

The connection of the affective and objective is too often reduced to metaphoric frames in the hopes that a good metaphor might assist in enriching musical meanings, contextualizing them in terms of expressive ideology, identity and coherence. The claim is that metaphors succeed because they operate on meaning over form. Metaphors “generalize in ways no taxonomy might while specifying in ways descriptions rarely achieve” (Keil and Feld 1994, 91). Metaphors rely upon the instantaneous recognition that things are simultaneously alike and unlike. Agreed, when most people talk about music, like and unlike is the way they go about it, but some of the metaphors used in musical discourse become so tired as to be rendered meaningless. It is no longer sufficient to say that Cajun music is “a gumbo where every kind of culture gets stirred into the same pot” (LouisianaTravel&Tourism 2012) and we learn very little about Acadian music by hearing that it is always “building a bridge between old and new worlds” (Dérangement 2009). It becomes necessary to seek out less direct relationships as well—to reinvigorate analysis with the push and pull of other possible meanings.

Cultural interpretations of alcohol may suffer from dismissive treatment, but there’s an upside to being largely excluded from the world of cultural platitudes. Because alcohol has only rarely been considered culturally constructive, the tropes that shackle other long-recognized influences in Acadian and Cajun culture (i.e. religion, language, diaspora, food) are undeveloped, and most informants—if they will speak on the subject—will speak with their own voice. In a very Durkheimian way, alcohol’s place in musical participation is such that “representation is as yet undifferentiated from the movements and actions which make the communion towards which it tends a reality to

the group. [Their] participation is so effectively lived that it is not yet properly imagined” (Durkheim and Fields 1995). It is my hope that analysis of alcohol’s cultural capacity will benefit from interpretive devices that are “effectively lived” and are, perhaps, more spacious than metaphors. Enter irony and all its sociologically sophisticated ambivalence.

Irony in instrumental music is often restricted to discussions of parodic quoting, using references to indicate opposition or resistance (Hanslick and Payzant 1986; Monson 1994; Norris 1991; Longyear 1970), but if inter-textual musical incongruities can be found ironic, why not intra-textual incongruities? If irony is thought to come of significant deviations from expectations, then I would like to ask who decides which deviations are prominent enough to be ironic? Are individual listeners the primary decision makers? Or individual spectators/listeners? Individual performers? Asking these questions about alcohol and music’s combination might allow ambiguity to be seen as an interpretive asset rather than a problem. Through irony, maybe the focus on an incapacity for expressing distinct moods can be usurped, or at very least coupled with an interest in kaleidoscopic communication.

Irony, Reference and the Unreal

Double-voicedness is not a new angle in musical scholarship, and it is acutely present in the musical analysis of North America’s marginalized groups. Double-voicedness has been used as an analytical angle to study the masculinity and theatricality of salsa (Aparicio 1998) and glam rock (Auslander 2006), “queerness” (Peraino 2006),

and country music's relationship with "working men" (McCusker and Pecknold 2004); it has been discussed as a strategy used by those overcoming the limitations of gender and the "subversion of identity" in, among others, Butler's *Gender Trouble* (Butler 2006) and McClary's *Feminine Endings* (McClary 2002). Double-voicedness is universally regarded as an essential element of the racial unevenness which underscores blues ideology (Davis 1998; Oliver 1982; Baker 1984); it is used to undermine class and education distinctions, particularly in country and "hillbilly" music of the American south (Fox 2004; Lange 2004) and to discuss the politics of rebellion in jazz (Smith 2005; Fischlin 2003). Studies of disadvantaged groups frequently employ binaries of complacency and resistance, but there is more space than this, room for more than two meaning-makers. Negotiations of respect and challenge in "marginal music" or in the legalized deviance of alcohol consumption highlight how agitated categorizations can be. More than challenging these binaries, I would like to suggest their interdependence.

My interest in interdependence comes of a general disillusionment with the notion of absolutes and clearly delineated boundaries. The liberating effect of opening up new territories of exploration has a counterweight, however, in that it also makes it harder for people to know where they belong, or, in aggravated cases, *if* they belong anywhere. Cultural groups that are so defined by their historical pasts, as the Acadians and Cajuns are, are ceaselessly involved in discussions of duality, slippage, collapse, compromise, old viewpoints and contemporary frameworks. Certainly the past has a bearing on anyone's identity, but the historicization of Acadians and Cajuns is amplified by a constant backward-looking identity marker. As cultural groups, Acadians and Cajuns are

defined by the expulsion—a whole group, subdivided according to significant criteria and centuries old, defined by a single, compromising event. The debilitating threat of any framework is that it tends to dictate (and hence delimit) what or how things should be done, but without a relevant one, a subject can feel confused or unmoored.

Looking at archetypal forms of “the drinker” or “the Cajun” or “the Acadian” can be instructive insofar as they emphasize a contingency in societal ideals. But the stereotypes alone are, of course, inadequate as a framework for this study as they boldly dismiss personal agency and hold an altogether too-ready assumption that a clean distinction can be made between a drinking and a sober musical self, a cultural identity and an identity built on anything else. The assumption is that one self is more real than another, presumably accidental, one, but there is insufficient attention given to their inextricability—that the processes creating one self (sober or inebriated) are present in the other.

The interpretive frame of fiction or unreal has repercussions. By and large, North Americans have been conditioned to think of an inebriated self as an “unreal” self.²¹ There is a fiction attached to what this self does, an irresponsibility that renders it worthy of only secondary consideration. But if you’ve been in the room with an inebriated person, if that person is you, or even if you have familiarity with only the literary form of

²¹ This dissertation has already introduced the trend in North American media towards presenting alcohol as a facilitator of the unreal (p.40), but the discussion is expanded to include religious discussions of alcohol and “out of selfness” in the forthcoming chapter of Catholicism, culture and alcohol. For additional source material on the subject of a fictionalized self as it relates to alcohol and culture in western society see works by Douglas (1987, 2002), Roof (2011), Wilson (2005), Gusfield (1986, 1996), Griffiths and Wallace (1998), Marshall (1979) and Heath (1995, 2002). Of particular interest is Dwight Heath’s most recent article on the subject of why we don’t know more about the benefits of drinking (2007).

fiction, you will know that an immersion in a fictional world should not be considered only for itself, but also for its dependence and influence on the “real world.” Meaning is found in entanglement.

I would like, now, to return for a moment to Thomas Pavel’s work on “the really real” as introduced at the outset of this chapter. Following Pavel’s exploration of the boundaries between real and fictional frameworks (Pavel 1986), the qualities which mark individuals in this dissertation as “under the influence” are not always clear. Pavel writes that fictional worlds arise out of the actual world, but if it is persuasive and effective, the fictional world subsequently becomes an autonomous structure. It becomes the basis of its own independent universe, one which does not derive its authority through direct reference to the real world but through its own set of relations. Because the bar or house party or festival stage presents a potentially independent universe, it cannot be readily accessed if the drinker or the listener clings too tightly to real world origins.

To illustrate this in more “on the ground” terms, I reference an interview with members of the young Cajun band, *Feufollet*. They discussed the days when they were newly legal in bars and their parents would come to support them. They described moments when the band was drinking and playing and enjoying an enthusiastic audience only to look up and see their parents dancing in among the rest of the crowd—some of them drinking, too. Most members of *Feufollet* admitted to moments of embarrassment at seeing their parents in this light for the first time, but laughingly agreed that the musical moment is best served (for the band, their parents, and the unrelated) if noone behaves as

parents or children while at the bar. Instead, this “independent universe” makes, according to them, a better space for performers and listeners.

In many cases, that difference between the real and the imaginary may be negligible and imperceptible, but as this work unfolds I aim to ask whether or not “real world” starting points must be left behind to travel a certain emotional and intellectual distance. Like being immersed in a book, “being out of it” in drunkenness implies being *into* another set of possibilities. As with “being in the groove,” participants are invested. Conversely, the real-world preoccupations that have participants wondering who is going to drive home or whether the band leader will stick to his set list if he’s had more than two beer are legitimate, but can frame the musical experience with interpretive concerns that are outside of the moment at hand. This is not to say that the ingestion of alcohol is a prerequisite for making meaning or that concerns outside of the moment do not contribute to the making of meaning. Instead, I suggest that experiential unevenness is worthy of exploration in terms of how it can contribute to a musical effect. Participants can play the same chords, drink the same drinks, but do they necessarily experience the same experience? For each participant, the real and alternate worlds have a different bearing on each other, and, in turn, on performing relationships. At surface, however, the musical event is the same.

It is for this reason that irony figures so largely in this dissertation. In theorizing irony there are the major players of the ironist and the interpreter, who may or may not be the intended addressee of the ironist. The interpreter not only decides whether or not an utterance is ironic but, additionally, what the ironic meaning might be. Consider in

parallel the drinking performer and the listener. The listener may or may not share the performer's attitude toward drinking, may or may not be drinking himself. The listener not only decides the degree to which alcohol is affecting the performance, but, additionally, whether it is detrimental or a source of additional pleasure. Issues of intentionality are decidedly snarled, but in the study of, to use Linda Hutcheon's term, "irony's edge," discussions of intention are unavoidable (Hutcheon 1994). After all, the touchy political issues that arise around irony's usage and interpretation invariably focus on the issue of intention of either ironist or the interpreter (often both). And it is because of this very foregrounding of the politics of human agency that irony has become an important strategy of oppositional rhetoric. Again, to draw more pointed parallels to this work, the intentional use of alcohol in musical performance highlights variability. The forthcoming ethnographic material highlights how some listeners see a performance primarily in terms of musical execution, while others see it as a performative event communicating philosophical and social material as well as musical material.

Irony may create communities, but I would like to explore how discursive communities make irony possible in the first place. According to Hutcheon, the more the shared context, the fewer and the less obvious the markers needed to signal—or attribute—irony. Similarly, inebriated musical behaviour is an expression of culture insofar as it takes the form of a highly patterned, learned comportment which varies from group to group. Analysts must accept the uncertainty of the precise source of musical pleasure, but not dismiss the factors—like alcohol—that contribute to this uncertainty. In most cases, the informants in this study are faced with fluctuating environments and

inclinations. Though the well-established stories and stereotypes are often a source of security, participants' orientations are not nearly so static, their scope not nearly so limited.

Limiting scope is a highly practical and longstanding theoretical strategy wherein analysts can discard the unimportant stuff in order to focus on the significant. Unlike everyday lives where one seems to wade through masses of meaningless material, a song, a night at the bar, or a weekend festival are thought to offer distilled meaning— as if the activities that happen while drinking and playing are what a person would do all the time if only he could have his own way. But they need each other. Again, to refer to linguist Thomas Pavel, “societies that believe in myths unfold at two different levels: the profane reality, characterized by ontological paucity and precariousness, contrasts with a mythical level, ontologically self-sufficient, containing a privileged space and a cyclical time. Gods and Heroes inhabit the sacred space, but this space is not felt [to be] fictional: if anything, it is endowed with *more* weight and stability than the mortals' space ” (Pavel 1986, 77). So what is to be made of statements like those of accordionist Steve Reilly, as he says “all my [musical] heroes were lousy drunks” (Steve Reilly, personal communication October 2010)? In that case, the profane reality is characterized by ontological *density* and precariousness.

It's a recurring attitude among drinking musicians—the paradox that one “gets through” the anonymity of “real life” in order to be “who they really are” in an “unreal” moment of performance. Non-drinking musicians often feel the same way, but when drinking musicians speak of the role of alcohol, they grant it an incredible amount of

responsibility, saying that alcohol eliminates obstacles, reduces nerves, allows a person to connect to other musicians. The real world may appear as just a watered down realm of significance, but it is required if cultural perceptions are to be framed. The challenge is to make sense of the drinking and performing world in the absence of workable foundational assumptions.

Notes on Individual Chapters

I will continue this study with the presentation of two legendary musical characters, Cy à Mateur and Harry Choates. Though, biographically, they are musical figures of the past, both have a strong hold on the cultural imaginary of their contemporary home communities—Acadian Nova Scotia and Cajun Louisiana, respectively. This choice is dual purposed. First, the two men serve as unifying material—a pair of motifs that I hope will contextualize the focus material of each subsequent chapter—serving as partners or foils to contemporary and historical musical happenings. Second, descriptions of Choates and Mateur introduce the reader to the combined and relative fortitude of other cultural elements that have come to define Acadians and Cajuns—exile, language, hardship, musicality, religiosity, memory, propriety. Choates is a phenomenal fiddler, Mateur an irresistible dancer. And both are serious drinkers.

The focus of the third chapter is the lyric and language of Cajun and Acadian repertoire. Both communities have an equally dynamic song repertoire with strong orientations towards the significance of French language as a form of cultural expression, and so chapter three will consider language in its performative and discursive role. As

highly regionalized languages, Cajun and Acadian French carry tremendous symbolic and emotional weight. The languages are distinct from each other and from other French speaking communities, dialectically revealing and seen as geographic and lineage-based identity markers. Acadian and Cajun French incorporates a good deal of English, but *where* these English lyrics are placed in song repertoire—in the lyrics of alcohol-related subjects and in reflections of longing and errantry—could be considered a commentary on French-English relations. Rhyming schemes are comparably intriguing.

The work of chapter three examines the presence of alcohol in Acadian and Cajun song repertoire as a mode for literal and figurative multi-vocality and asks how songs can be furnished with the capacity for communicating to several groups simultaneously, but differently. Specific musical examples will be discussed in detail and, ethnographically, the banter and performative choices of various individuals will be comparatively analysed for their linguistic features. Ethnographic investigations include performances by The Savoy Family Band, an evening at The Blue Moon Saloon, and the album *Allons Boire Un Coup: A Collection of Cajun and Creole Drinking Songs*. In Church Point and Chéticamp, “official events” include *Fête Nationale* celebrations, while the language and song of house parties and bars, as well as “standard” Acadian drinking songs are analyzed for the ways in which they contribute to personal and collective cultural narrative.

Chapter four will enter into discussions that, most recently, were presented in 2011’s “*L’apport des prêtres et religieux au patrimoine des minorités*” conference in Wolfville, Nova Scotia. There, the Cajun scholar Barry Ancelet presented a paper entitled “*L’exception Louisianaise*” (Ancelet 2011) in which he proposed that the Catholic

associations attached to Acadians are not present among Cajuns. I would like to enter into this conversation by presenting yet another alternative view. The way alcohol and music present themselves in ritual, folk religion, musical form, leadership, and social practice suggests that Cajun and Acadian music has been coloured by associations with Catholicism, but the particularities of each music's response is enlightening. Comparing Acadian and Cajun attitudes toward Catholicism's role in broader culture, I suggest a double-voicedness that reflects similar struggles in the institutionalized Catholic church.

In this fourth chapter, the changes brought about by 1965's Second Vatican Council, which addressed relations between the Roman Catholic Church and "the modern world," are continuously revisited in an effort to balance scriptural and contemporary faith issues. The attitudes that present themselves in a religious context are nearly identical to Acadian and Cajun musical attitudes in that the social acceptability of "old fashioned" and contemporary approaches to drinking, performance, abandon, control and their convergence take on moral tones and suggest that they are informed by identity politics. Recollections and demonstrations of priestly control in each community will be discussed, but the primary ethnographic work is situated in Whiskey River Landing, a Cajun dance bar in Henderson, Louisiana and in gatherings surrounding *Fête Nationale* and *Mi-Carême*²² celebrations in both Church Point and Chéticamp. All are studied for their religiously-tinged patterns of pilgrimage, community, authority and disclosure, as

²² *Mi-Carême* is a mid-lenten celebration intended to act as a reprieve from the forty days throughout which Catholics fast and abstain in preparation for Easter. This traditional practice will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter four.

well as for the embodied and symbolic meanings they impart on attendees and performers.

The fifth chapter outlines irony as an analytic angle and communicative strategy that establishes and maintains insider/outsider positions. Synthesizing the ethnographic material presented in previous chapters, it theoretically turns to the work of Linda Hutcheon and Thomas Pavel as they study irony, fiction and indirection in literature (Hutcheon 1994; Pavel 1986). Musical discussions of indirection are also employed (Elleström 2002; Davis 1998; Fox 2004; Feld et al. 2007). Using specific examples from the performed, published and recorded repertoire, I will use musical analysis to outline the ways in which performance practice and rhythmic, harmonic and structural variations create degrees of insider and outsider reference. I consider these details to be intimations of a cultural use of irony.

What You Enjoy Wasting Is Not Wasted: Alcohol's Contribution to Acadian and Cajun Cultural Relationships

Performing relationships are intricate and, like all relationships, the issues that make them meaningful can appear kind of mushed together and indistinct. Communicative connections are sometimes made that are completely accidental, other times meticulously arranged. Some relationships, despite best efforts, are more meaningful than others. Sometimes that is apparent from the outset. Sometimes not. Some participants are more resistant (or pliable) to certain wiles than others. They are more ready to entertain the idea that alcohol is constructive or destructive depending on who is making the argument, or when or within whose earshot. All this to say that musical

compositions are certainly a locus of some meaning, but the effect of the informed human medium is difficult to overstate. Musical meaning is made and remade at simultaneous individual and collective levels, emphasizing a choreographic balance that seems almost (maybe entirely) impossible to assure. At every possible unit of investigation, power balances shift, invitations are proffered, restrained, accepted, denied.

It is important, I think, to caution against compartmentalizing behaviour. Though it seems that certain categories justify the discourse, it results in a complex intermingling of ontological levels whereby the performing or listening characters attempt to calibrate themselves in the actual world by using artificial or exaggerated cultural constructions. I refer, once again, to the story that opened this chapter: Mark Falgout's son and his juice box beer. There is a sense in Falgout's delivery that there is an imagined disapprover in this story and that s/he belongs to the public, while the understanding, rational person is almost always thought to be an intimate. The comparison is somewhat uneven with the private pitted against the public, but this is a common presentational style when informants talk about their personal position towards alcohol and musical culture.

You will notice some trends in the responses of many interviewees in this dissertation. Many responses began with "Look, I know people think..." and ended with some version of "but we do it different around here." In many cases, participants seem to be in something of a swampland of deflected apprehensions and skewed self-analyses that are the direct result of the intermingling of outsider interpretations, commercial suggestions and the subject's own perception of his/her reality. A study of alcohol and music must be wary of critical plundering that ignores and destroys the idiosyncrasies of

an individual's world because of an overdeveloped and unconsidered need to view every text in terms of the dominant preoccupations of a given framework. One informant says, "The images are all messed up... A drunk jackass is just a jackass" (Falgout, personal communication). Another says, of the same "drunk jackass," "You can't be holding onto every drunk thing a person does as if it's something they do in the daytime" (LeBlanc, personal communication). These are the distinctions I would like to explore to see how they affect musical meaning in Acadian and Cajun contexts.

What follows is a rather specific argument about music, musicians and their alcohol-tinged practices in Cajun Louisiana and Acadian Nova Scotia. It illustrates that an overdeveloped sense of "the big picture" can undermine the individual's ability to perceive important specific little pictures. This is true of individual scholars, performers and listeners. In order to process a wide variety of evocative and unusual ways of making musical meaning in Acadian and Cajun musical communities, there is a need to consider the subtle and important signals that can expand our understanding of what it means to be culturally intimate. The role of alcohol in ethnographic and musical analysis, then, is much like dye is to microscopy. It highlights certain kinds of fundamental features—in the structure of the cell or in the structure of social life (Duster 1983). Alcohol highlights the structure of the smallest musical and social gesture, the smallest unit, so that analysis of the largest might be grounded in lived and communicated experience.

Chapter Two

Depictions of Deviance: Cy à Mateur and Harry Choates

This chapter presents two dominant figures in the musical folklore of Acadian Nova Scotia and Cajun Louisiana. The lingering presence of, respectively, Cy à Mateur and Harry Choates is palpable—imitated in stage banter and performing habits, relayed in conversation, oral history, academic articles and musical repertoire. It appears as if every Acadian in St. Mary's Bay knows Cy, every Cajun knows Harry, and their stories have become an essential element of my Acadian and Cajun cultural education. In spite of their biographical similarities, there are key differences in the way these figures take on the "legend" moniker in their respective communities. In Nova Scotia, the legend of the drinking, dancing Cy à Mateur is marked by an almost mystical quality. He is a legend in the same way one might refer to a fairy tale. His exceptional abilities are relayed with wonder, but in cautionary terms, suggesting moral lessons. In Louisiana, the fiddling, boozing, and singing Harry Choates is treated as somewhat of a celebrity, but he remains, in all ways including consequence, a very real ("really real" to use Pavel's term) mortal man. Choates' exceptionality comes of how extremely he represents Cajun values while Cy à Mateur's comes of his ostensible disregard for the Acadian values of his time.

These men have many things in common—a love of women, music, sociability, mobility and alcohol chief among them. They are marginalized in that they operate outside the behavioural standards of their time, but the openness with which the two men are revered or feared, seen as something to aspire to or something to be cautioned against, demonstrate the negotiation involved in establishing cultural motivations and standards. In all accounts, the men are simultaneously seen as flawed and super-powered, but this

chapter is primarily interested in the discrepant interpretations which determine whether the price of their cultural contributions is worth it. Over time, one community (Acadian) has turned their figure (Cy à Mateur) into a fairytale of magic and the supernatural who leaves the earth as mysteriously as he lived in it, while the other (Cajun) has turned their figure (Harry Choates) into an “everyday man” whose truncated life seems, in practical terms, the inevitable consequence of his debilitating decisions.

In introducing Cy à Mateur and Harry Choates, I aim to investigate the nebulous border region between the worlds these men encounter (what they actually do) and the worlds they represent (the value system suggested by their discursive surroundings). Through these two men and their musical influence I hope to illustrate the broad themes of this dissertation—that musical and social messages are not always received in the spirit that they are sent, that alcohol has the capacity to alter performances and their interpretation, and that moral estimations related to alcohol have an effect on musical production and influence. All of these distinctions reveal community values which, in turn, have musical effects and none of them occur in isolation.

Even in the earliest stages of my research, the investigation of alcohol in Cajun music almost always sent me to the story of Harry Choates. Though his habits keep good company with other Cajun and Creole musicians (Ancelet, Rinzier, and Morgan 1999),²³

²³ In *Cajun and Creole Music Makers* and other similarly biographical examinations of major musical figures, reference to alcohol is often made in terms of how musicians might be paid or the alcohol-friendly venues in which their performing careers began and were sustained. These alcohol references are, however, always cursory, making no suggestion that the alcohol has a musical effect. Instead alcohol is presented as contextual, sometimes behavioural, information—held responsible for long absences musicians sometimes took from their families and, on occasion, their performing careers. In these musical overviews, music’s association with alcohol and late nights is often presented as inevitable and the activities are often purported to be incompatible with a healthy, working, family life.

Choates is a bit of a cultural scapegoat when it comes to drinking. Cy à Mateur, on the other hand, did not surface in interviews at all until I stumbled upon Grand Dérangement's first album, *Tournons la Page* (Thibault 1998), and began to ask questions about these lyrics: "*quand je bois, je suis un vrai poisson/ quand je danse, c'est le tourbillon*"²⁴ In order to hear the details of Cy's story, I needed to ask about him specifically and gradually began to understand references made to him in performance. When speaking of Cy, informants responded in degrees appropriate to the level of information I had already gathered, while Harry's story was offered as a matter of course—intro-level music and sociability.²⁵ But once my own ears and eyes were opened to the culturally situated ways in which reference to Cy à Mateur and Harry Choates is ubiquitous, these drinking, musical men became immediate contenders for historical case studies.

²⁴ Roughly translated "When I drink, I'm like a fish/ When I dance, it's like a whirlwind"

²⁵ To reiterate the methodological differences stated in Chapter One, differences in Cajun and Acadian social behaviour have affected not only ethnomusicological investigations but the products and dissemination thereof. Although Cy à Mateur does appear in small press children's publications (Dugas 1986, 1985, 1991, 1985) and in the fiction of Antonine Maillet (Maillet and Godard 2004), in oral history collections at the Université de Sainte Anne, and in the poetry of other writers of the region (Gallant 2009), Lise Robichaud's book is the only published work dealing with Cy à Mateur in a focussed and somewhat historical/scholarly manner (Robichaud 2001). Interest in Cy à Mateur is highly regionalized (with the exception of Maillet, who is an Acadian from Bouctouche, NB every author/composer writing on Cy is from St. Mary's Bay). In contrast, Harry Choates' forthcoming biography is highly anticipated (Knight forthcoming 2012), there are several websites and blogs dedicated to his cultural contributions (Lucko n.d; Hurtt 2003; Brown 2010), extensively researched liner notes (Hurtt 2003; Brown and Choates 2002; Brown 2010), and articles/references on the subject of Choates in most of the major works on Cajun and country music (Thibodeaux 1982; Sandmel 2004; Everett 2010; Ancelet 1989; Lagarde 2003; Brasseaux and Fontenot 2006; Brasseaux 2009). Still, the reticent tone regarding Cy à Mateur as a cultural figure is in line with most of my Acadian interviews on the subject of alcohol and musicianship.

The influence of Harry Choates and Cy à Mateur demonstrates the strong presence of the past in the contemporary music making of Lafayette, Louisiana, and St. Mary's Bay, Nova Scotia. They also present a value system and a hierarchy of cultural qualities and abilities that are particular to each community. They typify the jumbled, "package deal" meetings of diverse cultural arenas (i.e, religion, propriety, language, sociability) that run through this research. Their biographies are examples of the ways these arenas meet and can be interpreted in terms of the multi-voiced, reciprocal, ricocheted and relative influence of deviance, irony, contagion, and real and unreal. The legacies of Harry Choates and Cy à Mateur concurrently contend with small and large-scale disjunctions. These exist in the deviant details of their lifestyles, but there are also disjunctive aspects to the ways their communities keep them close, among intimates, or proudly express their stories widely.

The positions these disjunctions elicit from the Acadian and Cajun collectivity—past, present, and continuing—display the reverberating aspects of cultural intimacy, the simulacra of sociability and the provisionality of the permanent (Herzfeld 2004). I ask questions about the way each cultural group portrays their figure—Cy or Choates—to understand how closeness is, in part, dependent on differing opinions within a community. Why do some aspects of these men's biographies linger while others are downplayed? As I present the discourse surrounding Choates and Cy²⁶, it will become

²⁶ I refer to Choates by his surname and Cy by his Christian name as a reflection of the way they were presented to me. Cy à Mateur's surname (Trahan), casually or officially, is almost never used. This is also a reflection of difference among Cajun and Acadian presentational strategies—the former often asserting independence as a key cultural component, while the latter almost exclusively relies on lineage for legitimacy. At first glance it may appear that I should refer to Cy by his last name to emphasize lineage,

clear that any given musical interpretation, any given story depends on the way a listener orients him/herself to the idea of Choates or Cy as an icon, that is, whether or not either man can be seen to embody the ideal traits of a Cajun or Acadian cultural ideology. Memories, recordings, and written accounts are substantiated by the way in which interpreters value Cy and Choates as part of *the process* of being Cajun or Acadian—the process by which ideas of a true Acadian or true Cajun can appear fixed. Indeed, the men themselves and the way they adjusted their behaviour (or didn't) relied heavily on their personal understandings of the way alcoholic behaviour was judged by their communities. The resultant discrepancies have made (and continue to make) their mark on each musical culture in ideologically revealing ways.

I will speak, presently, to specific happenings in each man's life, but I would first like to emphasize the permeability of private and representative worlds. Harry Choates and Cy à Mateur were, and remain, public figures. As recognized performers, each undoubtedly had senses of his public and private life, his individual and representative role, that were not always aligned. Related disjunctions exist between the mutually informative, if sometimes distant, elements of "everyday" and "official" cultural practice. Happenings effected by these men and their broader communities can demonstrate the smaller vision of the world which is bordered by each man's life-dates while this small vision relates to the grand narrative(s) that encompasses their lasting legacies and their even broader cultural history. This relationship has material, musical by-products.

but the degree of intimacy in this lineage ("à Mateur" indicating a more detailed familiarity than the more generic "Trahan") is part of the message I aim to convey.

The narratives of Harry and Cy speak of impropriety and deviance, but also of a marginality of time in cultural practice. In some ways, their actions and approaches are presented as remote and compartmentalized reflections of another time. Their drinking and musical habits are seen as outmoded and old-fashioned and, even in their own time, they were exceptional and labelled “eccentrics.” In contemporary contexts, the attitudes of Choates and Mateur have been displaced by newer approaches to music and by newer approaches to impropriety and deviance. But in many other ways, their attitudes are sustained in Cajun and Acadian cultural imagination. I would suggest that Harry Choates and Cy à Mateur had traded in the eccentric roles they held in their fixed, lived time for a centrality in ongoing, cultural time if I didn’t think these two extremes were entirely codependent—not replaced by one another, but redoubled. What was eccentric about these men in their lived time has become a central aspect, a cultural cornerstone for Acadians and Cajuns. In fact, the eccentricity of these two men is very often framed as if it were the norm of another time—as if the eccentric were actually “ex-centric,” once-upon-a-time “normal.” As archetype or exception, the cultural values of Cajuns and Acadians are transmitted through (or thrust upon) Harry Choates and Cy à Mateur—mainly, this chapter asserts, because their stories speak of ongoing, multi-voiced interactions with the values of their surrounding worlds.

The first portion of this chapter focuses on the biographical details of each man, emphasizing the discursive styles surrounding his presentation, and the manner in which each man’s cultural contributions are collected and preserved. In the section describing Cy à Mateur, I refer to the musical example of “Mon nom c’est Cy à Mateur” and for

Choates, his hit song “Jole Blon,” in order to highlight the ways in which specific tunes or performances are vehicles for community narratives that unevenly weigh the direction of influence: individual or collective, contributive or receptive, continuous or interrupted. Finally, I will discuss the implications of the biographical and musical examples relative to theories of codes, discrepancies and cultural intimacy. The intention is to show how the meaning-laden lives and legacies of Harry Choates and Cy à Mateur are part story and part reality, part enacted, part implied, part interpreted. The intention of this chapter is to show how all of these parts have a bearing on each other.

Mon Nom, C’est Cy à Mateur

Célestin Trahan, referred to in St. Mary’s Bay as Cy à Mateur,²⁷ is a long-standing legend. He endures as the subject of several songs (Saulnier 1994; Thibault 1998; Dupont 1973), a series of children’s stories (Dugas 1986, 1985, 1991, 1985), films (Comeau 1994, 1978), and the inspiration for scores of memories passed through generations (Robichaud 2001; Doucet 1977; Fraser 1976). The legend of Cy à Mateur tells the story of a man in Meteghan,²⁸ St. Mary’s Bay, Nova Scotia, who sold his soul to the devil in order to become the best dancer in the world. He possessed additional supernatural

²⁷ In Acadian tradition, individuals are often referred to in terms of their lineage (equally matrilineal or patrilineal, though rarely both). This is particularly the case in small communities where several people share identical traditional names and lineage is more informative than surname. Célestin Trahan was the son of Amateur and Rosalie Trahan and was therefore called Célestin à Mateur (Amateur’s Célestin). Cy as a version of Célestin is variously considered an abbreviation or a nickname affiliated with the English word ‘sigh’ either because of his reputation as a day dreamer in school, his life of revelry or exasperated estimations bestowed upon him by more conservative community members (archived interviews, undergraduate oral history assignments, Université Sainte Anne) .

²⁸ Meteghan is the largest of several fishing villages in Clare-home to a shipyard and the French shore’s busiest port. Its name comes from the Mi’kmaq word “mitihikan” meaning “blue rocks.” A map of the area is included in the Appendix 1.4 with Meteghan highlighted.

powers which, varying according to the teller, include his ability to transform into various animals. One story (personal communication, Marc Robichaud) tells of Cy as a bootlegger, serving drinks to some men of the community. Some of the men left at the end of the night, but one, inebriated, stayed and slept on Cy's floor. When he awoke, there was a bear behind the bar, but Cy, seeing that his friend was scared, transformed himself from his bear form back into his human form. Another (personal communication, Joseph Saulnier) tells of a horse zooming past a couple as they were walking towards a dance in the village. Annoyed, they threw rocks and hit the horse in the leg and then, upon their arrival at the dance, they noticed that Cy was limping rather badly, favouring the same leg that they had hit on the horse. The most frequent transformation story tells of Cy turning himself into an angry dog and terrifying any woman who refused to dance with him (Thibedeau, Robichaud, Theriault, Deveau). Another widely known skill of Cy's is his ability to be in two places at the same time. The same sources say Cy was often reported as being at simultaneous dances in Boston and in Meteghan, though how the simultaneity is verified in the late 1800s remains a bit mysterious. He was also highly regarded for his ability to fly on a piece of birch bark,²⁹ remembered specifically for referring to the speed of his piece of bark in mystically suggestive terms, saying "*ça va le diable!*" (translated: "it goes like the devil"). Additional impressive skills included his ability to make money, alcohol and the ace of hearts appear from nowhere.

The less mystical, but equally dramatic version of Cy's story is that of an alcoholic shoe-maker whose wife and son left for Boston citing neglect, philandering and

²⁹ The thickness of his flying apparatus varies. Some say a piece of kindling or a board rather than a piece of bark.

abuse as reason for divorce. Contributing to his outsider image, Célestin Trahan established himself as a bootlegger who would happily sell liquor on Sundays or other days of abstinence. He was also a terrific card player, a gambler, and an irresistibly good dancer who never seemed to tire. Believed to be born in 1848, he lived alongside the Catholic church in Meteghan, but he never attended—a note-worthy choice in a community that continues to be devoutly Catholic. Cy also spent some time in the poor house and a few days in a local mental institution where he was declared *fou* or crazy. Intervention efforts subjected him to an exorcism in 1919, shortly after which he died. Many say that he did not age from the time he sold his soul to the devil to his death. He was buried in an unmarked grave in the old cemetery at Meteghan (personal communication with Clifford O'Neill and Claude Godin, and Robichaud, 2001).

A story marked by an apparent interest in superstition, Catholicism, the devil, music and propriety, it houses many of the major value debates that remain of interest to the Acadians in Clare. There are legends around the world that tell a similar story (Aubry and Field 1983; Creighton 1957; Haase 2008; Kerfont, Desplanques, and Desplanques 1985), but Cy has a few extra traits. His style of dress, for example, is a focal point and noticeably unlike the style of the rest of St. Mary's Bay residents. Michel Robichaud described it this way: "*C'était comme* when you see the priest's collar just when you're cursing. You'd see the clothes before the man" (Michel Robichaud, personal communication).³⁰ More to the point, Cy's fashion does not appear to signify, for him,

³⁰ This transcribed quote, and others to follow, in which the informant switches back and forth from French to English is representative of the way both French and English were spoken throughout my fieldwork. Sometimes the oscillation is motivated by courtesy, as many of my informants knew that my French was inferior to my English. Other times, the interchangeability had to do with the untranslatability

what it signifies to the broader community. His signature bowler hat and “split” coat³¹ marked him as “*tout le temps ‘fancy’*” (Irene Thibedeau, personal communication), but the frequency of his fancy dress in a working town is curious to his neighbours. Cy à Mateur was “*...tout le temps habillé de d’même. Ils appeloient ça ein “split” comme un tuxedo... Mais il allait pas a l’église*” (Irene Thibedeau, personal communication).³² In Meteghan, a person didn’t dress up in his Sunday best if he wasn’t going to church.

Cy à Mateur lived in the United States for several years—a detail prompting many Clare residents to believe in the possibility of his participation in the American Civil War (student interviews with Jim Comeau, Jos Sullivan, M. et Mme Jules Deveau, Centre Acadien cassettes, l’Université Sainte-Anne, 1972). As a close-knit, remote, and largely self-sustaining community, the majority of Cy’s contemporaries in St. Mary’s Bay would have attached a bit of exoticism to even the smallest distances, but the American Civil War held particular significance and was a divisive one among expelled Acadians³³ as

of slang, occupation-centred vocabulary (the names of farming equipment, boats, etc.) or branded and/or trend items (like a split tuxedo). At other times it indicates the unconscious habits of a speaker who is so comfortable in both languages that s/he doesn’t realize when s/he’s switching back and forth. For the most part, informants who were equally comfortable in English and French spoke to me in English, but exclamations, verbal pauses/tics, simple yes and no responses, idioms, proverbs and several prepositional phrases would be expressed in French, regardless. In most cases, those who felt the character of a story would suffer from translation, kept the appropriate portions in French.

³¹ A tuxedo jacket with tails

³² Translation: Always dressed the same. They called that a ‘split’ like a tuxedo...but he wasn’t going to church.

³³ Of course, the Civil War was divisive among most North Americans, but many poor prairie Acadians and Cajuns considered the Civil War an elitist war which threatened the safety of their post-expulsion insularity. No small number of Acadians viewed mandatory recruitment as an unforgiveable intrusion when they had so little experience with anything resembling Constitutional rights. Other upwardly-mobile, slaveholding Acadians-come-Cajuns who were living east of the Atchafalya River as planters had a

secession issues carry an additional weight in expulsion identities (Brasseaux 1992, 58). This adds to the mystery of Cy à Mateur. Though his time in the United States is typically thought to have been in Boston (which held a fairly clear anti-slavery position), people at home in Nova Scotia openly wondered which side of the secession Cy was on. This coupled with the ambiguity of Boston as a location. “The Boston States” served as a permanent or occasional home to many Acadians expelled from St. Mary’s Bay and acted as a stand-in location for “away” among those seeking economic opportunity.³⁴ The city is still home to many social clubs oriented around Nova Scotian roots, but Cy à Mateur’s motivations for moving to Boston are routinely questioned to a degree far greater than those of others who made a similar move.

Striking, too, is the sheer abundance of Cy à Mateur’s supernatural powers. The profusion is frequently attributed to the multitudinous paths of expelled Acadians—some informants citing Cy’s story as an accumulation of legends pieced together by storytellers

significant stake in the war. These river Acadians volunteered enthusiastically for military service as officers, and were lauded for their endurance, though perhaps not for a fighting instinct (Brasseaux, 1992, 63).

³⁴ “The Boston States Migrations” is a term used by Maritime Canadians, primarily during the 20th century, to refer to the opportunities prompting circular migrations in and out of the Maritime provinces and the New England States. Boston was an international cargo port as early as 1630, and a key point in triangular trade routes between Europe, Eastern North America and the Caribbean, but it was also a shipbuilding hub—a skill set that was particularly strong among Acadians. There are circles within circles of migration among these broad areas such that genealogical research often reveals an ancestral mix of PEI, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia residents with Massachusetts “locals.” Chain migration (following other family members, political affiliations, business relationships, etc.) was also common, affected by seasonal opportunities, linguistic comfort and economic conditions, particularly in war-time (Ramirez and Otis 2001; Robinson and Watson 1991). In addition to its world of employment opportunities (somewhat like Fort McMurray is currently used to represent economic opportunities in Western Canada), many Atlantic Canadians saw Boston as a stand-in for exotic social encounters with the urban upper class in the New England states.

with varied cultural encounters while others list Cy's powers as proof of his own personal travels: "*N'oublions pas non plus que l'esprit des gens de la Baie se nourrit aussi de surnaturel, venu des Antilles comme des États, de philtres et de superstitions, sans oublier la fameuse chasse-galerie, ramenée des États ou du Québec par des hommes qui ont pu travailler dans les chantiers où cette légende a pris naissance*" (Robichaud 2001, 75).³⁵

As varied as stories of Cy à Mateur can be, the one consistent characteristic is Cy à Mateur's power to dance beautifully and tirelessly, charming all the ladies and outclassing all the men. In Cy's time (and long beyond) dancing was, in large part, ecclesiastically governed in Acadian regions of Nova Scotia. Many Acadians credit this regulation with the development of seated dance traditions (*danse assise*). Although the steps are largely the same as solo stepdancing, a by-passing and disapproving priest could look through the window of a house and see its inhabitants as seated, though, within, they would be dancing (to vocalized tunes or solely for percussive effect). Effects of Catholicism on Acadian and Cajun music are further discussed in chapter four. Barring

³⁵ Translated: "Don't forget that the spirit of people from the Bay is informed by an interest in the supernatural that comes from [people coming from] the Antilles and the States—spells and superstitions and don't forget the famous *chasse galerie* legend taken from the states and Quebec by men who were working in the places where that story comes from."

Chasse galerie is a popular French Canadian legend which, in its many variations, reveals Indigenous Canadian, Acadian and English influences. Typically the story tells of *les voyageurs*, who, drunk one New Year's Eve, make a deal with the devil so that they can fly vast distances at great speed in their canoe in order to celebrate the New Year with loved ones. One of the conditions of the deal is that there be no mention of God's name and no touching of church steeples as they go flying by them, so the passengers collectively promise to temper their drinking, keep their heads clear, and keep their promise to the devil. One boatman enjoys his New Year's party a bit too much and when the trip home becomes uncomfortable, he curses and takes the Lord's name in vain. Versions of the ending vary—some having the drunken navigators flying through the sky eternally, some allowing all but the offending boatman to escape the devil's wrath.

unusual and infrequent exceptions granted by local and exceptionally liberal priests, dancing was prohibited at all times except for weddings, Christmas and New Year's Eve, *Mi- Carême*, the feast of the epiphany and *la Chandeleur* (candlemas). But dance remains a strong aspect of Acadian musical culture. In an area that laments its irrecoverable losses in fiddle traditions, blaming the priests for prohibiting instrumental music, the expulsion for destroying the instruments that did exist, and poverty for rendering replacement impossible, a distinctly Acadian dance style endures.³⁶ The fact that dancing is the dominant element of Cy's legend associates cultural strength with a defiant resistance of social norms.

At a time in history when attitudes regarding the acceptability of drinking were murky, if not censorious, Cy à Mateur could reach his hand behind any chair and produce a bottle of rum and he was revered for it. Though many members of the community had friendly encounters with Cy, they kept them quiet as association with Cy implicated the story-teller as an accomplice to deviance. In relaying Cy à Mateur's story, there is often a good deal of reflection on the part of informants regarding attitudinal changes throughout history: Alphonse Deveau, a resident of Meteghan, said, "I think these days he [Cy à Mateur] would just be considered bipolar. People less devilish than him are getting away with that [excuse]" (Alphonse Deveau, personal communication, August 2011). Jim Comeau, another resident, reflects, "When I think of it, it could have been that he wasn't

³⁶ Though dance is not the focus of this paper, round dances, quadrilles, cotillions, swing dances and square dances—all representative of early French and British influence—remain strong in many Acadian regions. Acadian stepdancing also stands apart from the stepdancing of neighbouring communities and is characterized by wide and high steps and a clogging or battering movement of the feet which adds an audible percussive element. There is also an overall lightness/buoyancy in Acadian dance and dancers frequently travel in a circular pattern through a given dance space.

possessed at all, but just that back then in Meteghen it was crazy if you didn't care about the priests" (Jim Comeau, personal communication, August 2011). In fieldwork interviews referring to propriety, music and alcohol, Cy's lifestyle choices served as somewhat of a measuring stick for appropriate behaviour: "So he danced like the devil and drank like a fish. He got around, played cards, gambled. Better have an exorcism! Imagine if we were still doing that! We'd be some busy" (Michel Aucoin, personal communication, August 2010).

Cy à Mateur's greatest impression seems to be that his life was structured around things other than his neighbours' opinions. His life's seemingly supernatural focus, his deviant drinking and his musical expertise are distillations of many of the key identities associated with Acadians. But his position in relation to these identities is distinct, individualized. He has made his own meaning of Acadian identity markers, which contributes to the meaning-making arsenal of other individuals in his community. Simultaneously a symbol and a man, real and unreal, Cy à Mateur continues to be able to negotiate a space between ontological universes.

"Dans le corridor de l'histoire... C'est Cy à Mateur"

*"Dans le corridor de l'histoire/sur le mur de la mémoire/certaines personnes deviennent paysages/et certaines noms, les couleurs des saisons/Cy à Mateur, nous t'avons guère connu/ mais Cy à Mateur, ta légende continue!"*³⁷ This spoken introduction precedes the waltz "Mon nom, C'est Cy à Mateur" on Grand Dérangement's debut

³⁷³⁷ Translated: In the hallways of history/ on the walls of memory/. Some names become part of the landscape/ and certain people, the colour of the seasons/Cy à Mateur, we barely knew you/ But Cy à Mateur, your legend continues!

recording, *Tournons la Page* (Dérangement 1998). The reading is accompanied by the sound of thunder and rain—a large clap marking the end of the introduction and the beginning of a fairly loud, direct, and folksy waltz. The reading voice is treated in production with considerable reverberation. He speaks to the listener in an intense whisper, breathily extending the words “*l’histoire*” and “*mémoires*” on their vowel sounds. He pauses, as if searching for the word, before he decides on “*paysages*” (landscapes), and raises his pitch and tempo dramatically leading up to “*le mur de mémoires*” (the corridor/walls of memories) and again in the final line of the introduction creating a wave effect of rising and receding intensity. And then we hear the guitar. And the chorus begins, with the full ensemble singing along in full voice (see Appendix 2.1 for full lyrics and their English translation).

The chorus is sung in harmony—thirds—and the verse, which has an identical melody, but is twice as long is supported by vocal “oohs” and “ahhs” in the second half. The lead singer takes on the role of Cy à Mateur and sings theatrically, occasionally including a cackling laugh or a conspiratorial whisper. The song is marked by dramatic tempo and dynamic shifts which emphasize the lyrics. There is a huge “is it over?” pause, for example, just after the song mentions Cy’s moonlit thoughts of sad or scary messengers, but then (phew!) he resurrects, assuring listeners that you’ll see him flying over the wharves when night falls. This final verse is set apart from those previous as Grand Dérangement pauses on the word “*clochers*” (steeple) harmonizing with a major VII7 chord that’s teeming with restless anticipation. Previous verses use tonic harmony to support the same melodic point (scale degree 3).

The song of Cy à Mateur is surrounded in produced mystery. He is made into a ghost who relates to the heroes of a deck of cards, Kings and Jacks, more than his community. He is timeless, but distant and the most dramatic musical moment of the song occurs when he is placed against the steeples—a symbol representing the centrality of church in Acadian consciousness, a tonality suggestive of a collective gasp in knowing the consequences of defying traditional norms. The next track on the album begins with the unaccompanied and percussive sound of dancer's feet—Cy's specialty.

Harry Choates: Five-Time Loser and Fiddle King of Cajun Swing³⁸

Harry Choates is perhaps the best known of all Cajun fiddlers. His tragic lifestyle is often compared to that of country music's Hank Williams and, in Cajun circles, Choates' influence looms just as large. He was born in Rayne, Acadia Parish, Louisiana on December 26, 1922.³⁹ Choates' primary biographer, Tim Knight, writes that, at the time, there were no medical personnel available in the rural community, and so Choates' birth was assisted with the help of a local veterinarian (Knight 2005). The detail strikes some people as funny, others as sad and touching, which is a discrepancy representative of the ways people respond to the subsequent details of Choates' life as well. He was known from an early age to be a womanizer, a drinker, a musician and a wanderer—qualities that are met with mixed reviews.

³⁸ Both titles of albums released by Choates. *Five Time Loser* refers to a compilation album selecting works from 1940-51, subsequently re-released on compact disc (Choates 1998). *The Fiddle King of Cajun Swing* includes extensive and informative liner notes (Knight 1982). Obviously, the simultaneous monikers of "king" and "loser" contribute to the arguments presented throughout this chapter.

³⁹ Though New Iberia is the birthplace claimed by Choates himself, most accounts cite Rayne Louisiana as his birthplace, while registered documents state a rural area of Vermillion parish.

Unlike his musical contemporaries, there are no recollections of Harry Choates' "day job." In the 1930s and 40s, a time when very few Cajuns were calling music a career, Choates was playing steel guitar in Texas swing bands and fiddle with Leo Soileau⁴⁰ (Brasseaux 2009). By the end of World War II, Choates had his own ensemble and was a highly sought after entertainer. A small man with a wide grin, Choates established a trademark shout of "Ehhh...ha, haa!" (Figure 2.1). Choates would include this shout (here excerpted from his version of "Jole Blon") to mark transitions from one turn of a tune to another or from vocal to instrumental sections. Often the shout was primarily an expression of enthusiasm. The key signature, here, is an indication of a more complete transcription of Choates' "Jole Blon":

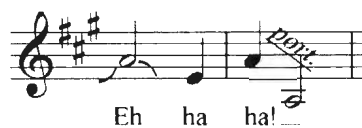


Figure 2.1

"Eh, ha ha!" with its signature scoops, slides, and falls continue to be imitated in reference to the man, his captivating music, and his freewheeling lifestyle. Choates also shouted "aieeeee!" as a punctuating element in his performances—an enduring and omnipresent expression in Cajun performances today.

Stories surrounding the tragic, eccentric or thrilling aspects of Choates' life are many. Stories that have circulated so widely as to have taken on the semblance of fact include these: the "crying fiddle" that made him famous was not his own, he "borrowed"

⁴⁰ Soileau (1904-1980), performed with The Rhythm Aces (aka The Three Aces, or, later, The Four Aces in 1934) and recorded under the Decca label. He is remembered as one of the most prolific Cajun recording artists of the 30s and 40s.

it; he refused to record unless the studio was sufficiently filled with people to create the atmosphere of a nightclub in full swing; his studio days were spent in an alcoholic daze; he sold the rights to his recorded hits for bottles of liquor and small amounts of cash; his engagements at night clubs were centered on his demands for more and more money while being in no shape to entertain (Brasseaux and Fontenot 2006; Thibodeaux 1982; Sandmel 2004; Brown and Choates 2002; Ancelet 1989). Regardless of the impossibility of verifying these stories, the fact that they are believable at all certainly contributes to Choates' legendary status.

At twenty eight, Harry Choates was a father and was in a tumultuous relationship with a wife who filed non-support charges. In 1951 he was arrested for these charges and was thrown in an Austin, Texas prison. At this stage in his life, Choates was a chronic alcoholic and he suffered through delirium tremens ("the DT's") while in his cell. These episodes were, allegedly, a disturbance to guards and fellow prisoners. Some accounts say that convulsions, seizures or delirium caused Choates to beat his own head against the wall of his cell until he went into a coma. Others say the coma was the result of a brutal beating inflicted upon him by frustrated and intolerant guards. The official report attesting to the cause of his death suggests the beating that accompanies most recollections of his death, but attributes the cause of death to liver failure, a frequent affliction of the alcoholic. The date of his death is recorded as July 17, 1951 (Brown and Choates 2002). Choates was buried in an unmarked, but well-known grave. Later, his remains were moved to Port Arthur, Texas, where his biographers and many fans contributed to a

gravestone engraved with a description of Choates as the “*parrain*” or godfather of Cajun music (Yule and Burge 2009).

While the origins of Harry’s drinking habit, like the origins of his musicianship, are unknown, his lust for the night life was well in evidence by the time he began playing with the Rayne-Bo Ramblers.⁴¹ While speaking of Choates and another band member, banjoist Pee Wee Broussard said, “They liked to drink, liked to smoke and money just burned a hole in their pockets. We’d play a dance and get back to Rayne, and they’d go find a slot machine. Before we finished eating our breakfast, which was usually three in the morning, they were already broke and trying to borrow money from somebody else” (PeeWee Broussard in Hurtt 2003). Though in countless accounts, Choates is referred to as “a no-good, wine-head son of a bitch” (Brasseaux and Fontenot 2006), Pee Wee Broussard sees things differently: “A lot of people think that he drank a lot and that he was mean, but he wasn’t.” Broussard continues, “He’d drink, raise Cain I guess like anybody else does, but it didn’t affect his playing, just his personality. Nowadays I don’t think things are quite the same as they were back in those days, it was pretty rough; a lot of drinkin’ going on” (Hurtt 2003, n.p.). It was a life that Broussard remembers Harry trying to steer him away from. “He tried to help me. At one time I remember he picked me up—me and another guy—he picked us up at a bar to go to a job and he thought I was drinkin’ and he got all over me. I wasn’t and it really made me mad. I was gonna quit!” (Hurtt 2003). Were Choates able to have the same concern for himself, his personal story

⁴¹ A string band that straddles the style of Western swing with more traditional Cajun sounds. The Rayne-Bo Ramblers counts Choates as an alumnus, but in music history, they are more generally associated with their rather unsung bandleader, Happy Fats LeBlanc.

might have ended differently. He did, however, try “to dry out” once, but the change didn’t suit: “Harry took the cure at one time. For maybe about a month and a half he didn’t drink. He was a different person...He went to “Alex” [Central State Hospital in Pineville]. When he came back he was more businesslike” (Carol Broussard in Yule and Burge 2009, 65).

“Jole Blon... Quelle Avenir Je Vais Avoir?”⁴²

Choates’ enduring legacy is inextricable from his recording of the Cajun waltz-song, “Jole Blon”⁴³ (Choates 1946 (reissue 1995)). “Jole Blon” enjoys the status of “the Cajun national anthem” and Choates’ version of the traditional song revolutionized the sound of Cajun music (Artists 2002; deVienne 1957; Seale 1991; Lomax 1990; Blank, Strachwitz, and Gosling 1989 and 2003; Brasseaux and Fontenot 2006). In vernacular belief, Choates sold the rights to “Jole Blon” for one hundred dollars and a bottle of whiskey.⁴⁴ The official contract for the Gold Star⁴⁵ recording is no more lucrative: “one

⁴² Excerpt from “Jole Blon” lyrics. The song tells the story of a pretty blonde who leaves her lover “*pour t’en aller*” (to go away). The last line of each verse exasperatedly wonders, “*quelle espoir et quelle avenir que j’peux avoir?*” (What hope and what future can I have?)

⁴³ Also rendered Jolie Blonde, Jolie Blond, Jole Blonde, Jole Blond, Joli Blonde, Joli Blon or Joli Blond

⁴⁴ This rumour, which is usually in the company of aforementioned rumours regarding the borrowed fiddle on which Harry records the tune, circulates through almost every website referencing Choates and “Jole Blon” (www.rockabilly.nl, www.tshaonline.org, and various youtube postings). It is also present in the work of Broven (Broven 1983), Malone (Malone and McCulloh 1975) Brasseaux (Brasseaux and Fontenot 2006; Brasseaux 2009), and others, though its origins are unclear.

⁴⁵ The Gold Star label was the property of Bill Quinn and began as a recording studio in Houston Texas in 1941 (the name Gold Star followed in 1950). It is the oldest registered recording studio in the southeastern United States and took “Jole Blon” to the Billboard top five—an achievement previously unheard of for the highly regionalized genre of Cajun music or Texas swing. Gold Star, which now includes Sugarhill Records (the pop label behind Beyoncé and others) is also affiliated with George Jones’ “Why

dollar and other good and valuable considerations receipt of which is hereby acknowledged” (Brown 2010). Financial negotiations aside, “Jole Blon” revolutionized the way many Gulf Coast residents felt about French music.⁴⁶ Ivy Gaspard, who often played with Choates in the 1950s, says,

My first gig was with a French band... Some of the dancers who would come to our dances were amazed; they’d never heard French music played the way I played it on tenor guitar, but really I was playing western swing. I didn’t care to play French, ‘cause the musicians weren’t that good. They’ve got some good French musicians now, but Harry’s the one who put the idea in their heads how to play that kind of music. Before that, French music, I hated to play it ‘cause it was just the same thing over and over and over. But I didn’t mind playing French music with Harry ‘cause he had that beat. (Hurt 2003)

“That beat” to which Gaspard refers is prominently displayed in Choates’ arrangement of “Jole Blon.” “That beat” is the one that takes an old and familiar tune⁴⁷

Baby Why,” The Big Bopper’s “Chantilly Lace,” Ray Price’s “Night Life” and a string of other international hits. (Bradley and Wood 2010).

⁴⁶ In 2004, Ron Yule did a survey for *My Fiddlin’ Grounds* (Yule 2007) involving a study of over seven hundred fiddlers who played from 1970-2004. “Jole Blon” was the most popular song among these fiddlers and Harry Choates was the most popular fiddler, despite the fact that he had been dead for over fifty years. In addition to myriad Cajun and Texas swing versions, “Jole Blon” has also been adapted and recorded by Buddy Holly, Roy Acuff, Bruce Springsteen, King Curtis, and Waylon Jennings—definitively “American” artists.

⁴⁷ “Jole Blon” was previously recorded by Amédée, Ophy and Cleoma Breaux (Breaux Frères) in 1928 and had “standard” status among most performers playing at the time. Its compositional origins are elusive—its lyrics attributed to a nameless 1920s prisoner in Port Arthur, its melody attributed to anyone who made a noticeable stylistic addition (i.e. Varise Conner, Harry Choates, Iry LeJeune), but otherwise considered “traditional” and without a single defined composer. Readers can compare the forthcoming transcriptions to various youtube postings, but Choates’ 1946 recording is also available on D Records’ *Jole Blon: The Original Cajun Fiddle of Harry Choates* (Choates 1946 (reissue 1995)). The Breaux Frères “Ma Blond Est Parti” is on the Old Timey Label OT 114 (Frères 1973) and on the compilation disc *Cajun Early Recordings* (Various 2004). In both cases, I have transcribed the vocal melody and, for the instrumental portions, the most prominent instruments—fiddle for Choates and accordion for the Breaux Frères. In both cases, there is a steady accompanying part that I have not transcribed. Harmonically and rhythmically

and turns it into a Cajun track by introducing many of the stylistic markers that have come to define the genre. And it is more than a rhythmic issue. I have transcribed the first verse of Choates' "Jole Blon" (Figure 2.2) and the Breaux Frères "Ma Blond est Parti" (Figure 2.3) to draw attention to these stylistic changes and will outline them in detail directly.

In Figure 2.2, Choates' sensibilities maintain the underlying regularity of waltz time, insuring its danceability, but, melodically, many beats are pushed or pulled slightly off their rhythmic centre. Though it's common for Cajun music to adjust melodic rhythms to suit word rhythms, this is not the case with Choates whose French was, really, too poor for such a sophisticated adjustment. His pushes and pulls vary from performance to performance, but they are routinely "off." Choates slides into (mm.8, 9, 26 and 29), anticipates or delays (mm.17, 19, 21, 23—depending on whether one feels the in-betweenness of these beats as "early" or "late") or creates three-against-two cross-rhythm effects (mm. 26, 28 and 45-47). Nothing happens "over and over and over." The fact that repetition is possible (feared even, according to the aforementioned Broussard quote), does not mean a performer, listener or interpreter is safe to assume teleology. In Choates' "Jole Blon," there are changes, slight and considerable, continuously.

straightforward chordal accompaniment on I, IV and V is provided by a piano in the Choates recording; guitar and fiddle drones in the Breaux recording.

“Jole Blon” (Choates 1946 (reissue 1995))

Figure 2.2

The manner in which vocal, fiddle and rhythmic/harmonic parts relate in Choates' version gives rise to a number of polyphonic moments. These moments are often the result of extending a musical idea across several bars while other motives have different durations. The “crying fiddle” series of slides beginning in measure 40 is one example. The Breaux Frères example, in contrast, has no extended melodic ideas and its component parts are always acting homophonically—different instruments but always moving together.

Melodically, it's also noticeable that mm.1, 9 and 37 of the Choates example demonstrate an affinity for “overshooting.” Choates ends a series (scalar in m.1,

arpeggiated in m.9 and m. 37) with a note just beyond where he “should” go, relative to renderings of “Jole Blon” that predate him. Choates also stylized descending melodic phrases. Beginning vocal phrases with a large leap up, individual notes then sigh and fall to their sustained resting point (mm. 17, 21, 23 and 29). The highest, most strained vocal sounds (here F sharps and most noticeably in measures 18 and 26) are sustained until Choates runs out of steam and the F#s are almost abandoned or interrupted by the next note. This couples with Harry Choates’ habit of raising the key of traditional tunes. He transposes several tunes in the Cajun repertoire, but continuing with “Jole Blon” as the primary example, Choates plays the tune in A major when performances in G major were far more common. The choice could certainly not be seen to facilitate vocal ease since, in performance, Choates’ strain was both audible and visible. He would go up on his tiptoes, apparently to help him reach the high notes, scooping up to them and then sliding down from them as if sighing or crying, exasperated. Choates is remembered as a performer and a character every bit as much as he is a musician.

As a point of comparison, the Breaux Frères version maintains a strong downbeat throughout and typically repeats chord tones in eighth notes as the accompanying pitches for beats two and three (see mm.19, 20, 22, 23, 44, 45, 47 and 48 of Figure 2.3). “Ma Blond est Parti” also follows chord tones rather strictly and moves, melodically, in small skips through a phrase (mm 26-27, mm 36-41). Rhythmically, the song moves squarely on each beat, has several repeated notes and small motifs (mm. 17 and 42, mm. 18 and 43), sustained chord tones (mm.6-8, 14-16), and though it has its share of vocal falls as

well, the descending parts arrive at defined chord tones, not to the ambiguous fades that Choates prefers.

“Ma Blond Est Parti” (Frères 1973)

Figure 2.3

There are also moments of harmonic interest that warrant comparison between the Breux Frères' and Choates' version. Choates uses a classic country harmonic progression of IV-I-V-I, while the Breux Frères continuously alternate between IV and I. If one considers that the Breux Frères approach might be in a different key or mode, then it could be heard using the harmonies I and V. The result might be a sort of diatonicism, which calls into question the “same thing over and over” accusations and suggests,

instead, that the Breaux Frères had an ambiguous, almost shape-shifting approach to harmony.

I would also like to call brief attention to the discrepant use of French between the Breaux recording and Harry Choates' version. Though this is not clear in the transcription and I have taken liberties with Choates' lyrics for the sake of clarity, The Breaux's language is more representative of a familiarity with the language while Choates' French is largely unintelligible without prior reference.⁴⁸ Choates was a barely capable French speaker, never using the language outside of his performances, but his music reveals a familiarity with, and affinity for, the grammatical structures of the language and its performative, emotive effect. Conversational Cajun is definitely on the upswing in Louisiana, but the result is that several contemporary Cajun musicians insist on performing in French, regardless of their conversational capacities. I will further discuss the poetic and performative use of Cajun French in chapter three.

Without suggesting that Choates is solely responsible for the creation of a new music, or even that he represents Cajun music in any holistic way, his musical contributions do appear to act as a barometer of change. Musicians like Carroll Broussard comment, "Harry never played over people's head. I guess that's what made him...He was just playing what people understood. That's what made him" (Yule and Burge 2009, 66).

⁴⁸ In fact, I still remain uncertain about Choates' lyrical choices from mm.28-32 and have had no success in agreement among my sources (conversational or academic). Most refer back to the standard lyrics (which is what I've chosen to use), but in performances these are often altered. Choates does distinctly use the word "*malheureuse*" at the end of the final phrase (which is not included in my transcription), but the preceding text is unintelligible to me and to several others who have suggested that this is secondary to Choates' musical effect or that his muffled delivery emphasizes the loneliness expressed in the song.

In this and comparable comments, it is made clear that Choates' role as communicator had combined with his role as entertainer.

The changes affecting Cajun America are distilled in the specific time and geographical piece of America that Choates inhabited: the Cajun Lapland.⁴⁹ Extending from Houston to Houma, the region is so named for the overlap of Texan and Louisianan influences—populations that came of a simultaneous burgeoning of the Louisiana petroleum industry and the Texas oil industry. Changes in employment and cultural contact prompted a shift in the agrarian lifestyle of Acadians that led them to more materialist Americanization (Brasseaux in Lagarde 2003, 276). Louisiana historian Shane Bernard maintains that the oil industry generated an Americanization tidal wave that swept across southern Louisiana, drowning traditional Cajun lifestyles with American values and mainstream culture “from consumerism to country and western music to various strains of Protestantism” (Bernard 2003, 38). Of course it is just as likely that these American values were not bullies, but contributors—to be credited, even, with the relative strength of Cajun music when compared to its Acadian cousin. With the end of Prohibition in 1933, Texan and Louisianan entrepreneurs rushed to open honky tonks and dancehalls which subsequently employed hundred of musicians (Olson 2003, 213). Along with many others, Choates' survival as a musician depended on these changes. He was

⁴⁹ Not to be confused with northern parts of Sweden, Finland and Norway, the term Cajun Lapland is used, by Cajuns, to refer to the area of Texas and Louisiana where state lines meant less than cultural enclaves. Because so many Cajuns were working in the Texas oil industry, the two states “overlapped” and created a region whose music displayed both Texas swing and Cajun influence. As well as being used vernacularly, and referenced regularly in dance instruction, the region is also referenced and examined academically in the works of Broven (Broven 1983), Savells (Savells 1993), Everett (Everett 2010, 2011), and Bernard (Bernard 2003).

positioned such that he could cater to this emerging clientele. He could appeal to the blue collar side of Cajuns by singing in French and using traditional tunes, while embracing the American sound of Texas swing that signified interests in upward mobility. Choates' work is a reminder that Cajuns are not an isolated group who operate independently of the America they inhabit.

Harry Choates' musical innovations were not dissimilar to his nomadic lifestyle. "He was a true bohemian, a gypsy type," notes Brown in the liner notes of *Devil in the Bayou*, "and musically he was all over the place. Harry was really more of a western swing guy who lucked out into having this hit with a traditional Cajun song and I think that kind of bent him in that direction. Had that never been recorded, or had that not been a hit for him, I think he would be remembered as a western swing fiddle player/guitar player" (Brown and Choates 2002). Neither Louisiana nor Texas could claim Choates. Or, I suggest, both could. Harry Choates freely moved between both places— physically and in musical terms (Brown & Choates, 2002, 4). Again, Choates' work is a reminder. Its component parts and its discursive surroundings resonate in ways that simultaneously look backward and forward, inward and out, personally and collectively— in ways that are simultaneously mediated and not, inebriated and not.

Because "Jole Blon's" meaning is partially made of the tune's features, Choates' changes can stand in for a culture as a whole *and* as an individualized position in relation to the whole. Choates is in *and* independent of dialogue with other performers, and the economic, geographic and historical circumstances of his time. The same set of factors proceed from his time to this, so seemingly opposed and even coincidental happenings

affect listeners individually, collectively and in culturally intimate combination. The status of "Cajun national anthem" is achieved because the song's component parts (musical, historical, social) depend on a relationship with each other. Its meaning to each listener, however, depends on the specific properties and attitudes of each and the specific manner and time in which each approaches the musical historical and social combination.

Continuity and Disruption, Real and Unreal

"Culture," writes Stuart Hall, is "the meanings and values which arise amongst distinctive social groups and classes on the basis of their given historical conditions and relationships" (Hall 1980, 63). Through these meanings and values, groups "handle" and "respond to the conditions of existence" (Hall, 1980, p.63). Hall also states that culture is the "lived traditions and practices through which those understandings are expressed and in which they are embodied" (Hall 1980, 63). Comprising *both* shared facts *and* shared feelings, Hall's concept is strongly demonstrated in the stories, influence and musical repertoire used to depict Cy à Mateur and Harry Choates. The discrepant sensibilities of each community are laid bare in the ways they distance or embrace these cultural figures and their habits. But the figurative sense of distance—whether the communities feel Choates and Cy as "one of us" or a freak exception—has a bearing on literal distance: How long ago did Cy à Mateur live and how is this expressed in the telling of his story? Where did Choates play? What identified Cy's dancing style? Choates' playing style? How and where are their graves marked? Interpretations of literal and figurative distance do not always work in tandem. I do anything but suggest that because Acadians have mystified Cy à Mateur they have an arms-length sense of their culture or Cajuns a

personal one. Instead, I suggest that the distance or tugging between literal and figurative meaning is interpretively rewarding and tells more about these cultural groups than either figure alone.

Literally, “really,” both Harry and Cy covered considerable geographic distance over the course of their lives. Harry played all over a wide geographic space, claimed two simultaneous homelands (Texas and Louisiana), and openly incorporated the musical influences of those he encountered throughout the whole region. Cy left Meteghan, too, but he is ambiguously assumed to have gone to unreal, “away” places—to a vague Boston or to the war or elsewhere where he magically arrives without intermediary positions and from which he returns bearing no specific markers of outside influence. There is some speculation, even suspicion, as to what Cy does when he’s away on his birch bark, but there are no records of inquiry. The details of Harry’s life, on the other hand, are a public-knowledge pastiche of verifiable and suggested engagements and encounters. At least as far as these legends go, the citizens of St. Mary’s Bay restrict themselves to addressing what happens in St. Mary’s Bay while Cajuns combine outside and chance happenings with those that occur closer to home.

In contemporary Cajun culture, the wide availability and distribution of sound recordings, photographs, videos and printed documents encourage the culturally engaged to connect to a generation of which they are not a part. The fill-in-the-blanks approach to musical history that is the approach of many young performers is fed—at least in part—by vast resources gathered by a rather cosmopolitan set of collectors. Contemporary performers and informants Joel & Wilson Savoy, Chris Segura, Josh Caffery and others

often reference what they know of bluegrass, country or celtic fiddling to construct- by-contrast the most likely version of their own Cajun heroes. They also regularly search through the Cajun and Creole archives at the University of Lafayette for repertoire and biographical information. Nostalgia for a time they haven't personally known combines with inexhaustible resources that have been distributed throughout America for a long time. This means that when they search for the expert on Harry Choates he is just as likely to be a Californian enthusiast as a born and bred Cajun. Those who play his tunes are as likely to have learned them from recordings as from the man himself. This is not the case when searching for material on Cy à Mateur or any other Acadian musicians where the musical line is often traceable through direct oral transmission. This is in keeping with the treatment of Cy and Harry's stories. It suggests to me that while many Acadians keep quiet about what doesn't affect them directly, many Cajuns express their positions or attitudes relative to outside happenings as culturally constitutive—equally formative to those encountered personally.

Harry's hits were songs about real places ("Allons a Lafayette," "Basile Waltz," "Grand Mamou," among others) and their themes, lyrical and musical, are full of motion. This quality is not at all exclusive to Choates' work—many Cajun songs are about leaving a familiar place, going elsewhere and coming back—and so his songs' on-the-move texts and overt lyrical meaning resonated with most of Choates' listeners. Lyrics like, "Let's go to Lafayette and change your name" ("Allons a Lafayette" François 1990, 13) or "If you'd come back with me to Grand Mamou, I'd be happy to have you for my wife" ("Grand Mamou" François 1990, 149) are typical. These lyrical tendencies may

have a figurative component, or perhaps not, but they alter a ballad-based French tradition that stands on the subjects of death, relationships and occupation. From them is created a dance music that is considered by many to be fully realized in the time following the Second World War—Harry’s time. There is no comparable continuity in Cy’s story or in his skills. The transitional holes in his biography are much like his species transformations from dog or horse or bear to man—a mystery. In terms of influences, we know none of Cy’s, and those whom he may have influenced are distanced and/or silenced by associations of irreligion or bootlegging lawlessness.

As a dancer, Cy à Mateur’s musical skill is perhaps, from the outset, more ambiguous in terms of meaning than the lyrically-supported songs of his Cajun counterpart, but dance, too, relies heavily on matters of space. Certainly choreographically, all dance is spatially related to partners, musicians, other dancers, the dance space, but these relations are not just physical.⁵⁰ Cy’s contemporaries had the additional spatial consideration of dancing in secret—in spaces removed from sanctioned

⁵⁰ Consider, for example Bartholomew’s film on Capoeira (Bartholomew 2005) and its symbolic use of relative space or Birringer’s work on “digital dance” in which interactive, collaborative and interdisciplinary techniques are used to link dance and new technologies (Birringer 2004). Foley and Harris-Walsh have done extensive work on dance as a marker of cultural identity in Irish step-dancing among native and diasporic communities (Foley 2001; Harris-Walsh 2008, 2009), while Osumare speaks of the “intercultural body” as it is displayed through the simultaneously “global” and “underground” trends in hip hop and breakdancing (Osumare 2002). Valuable ethnomusicological analyses of the dependence dance has on relational understandings can also be found in Chalfa-Ruyter’s *Musings of Folk Dance* in which she discusses the advantages and consequences of “staged” folk dance (Chalfa Ruyter 1995). Meintjes examinations of masculinity in Zulu ngoma dancing (Meintjes 2004) are similarly thorough as she discusses gender politics in post-apartheid Africa and its bearing on traditional and evolving dance forms. The range of this work is obviously vast and diverse and broader approaches to diverse analytical angles of dance and the body can be found in Thomas’ monograph, *The Body, Dance and Cultural Theory* (Thomas 2003). The references I cite here are by no means exhaustive and are chosen only to demonstrate the breadth of this research.

aspects of community life. Participation demanded insider knowledge and restricted outsider influence. Cy takes on the role of “the best dancer,” but tellingly, he has travelled more than most in his community and deviated from behavioural norms in a comparable manner. In assigning this role to “the deviant,” an insecurity among Acadian musicians is betrayed. The inferiority complex is still felt in a contemporary context. As an example, Clare county’s *fête nationale* celebrations feature a *fais do do*⁵¹ and *mardi gras* costumes⁵² when neither tradition has ever been present in Nova Scotia.⁵³ Cajun musicians like Waylon Thibodeaux, Les Malfacteurs and The Bruce Daigrepoint Band are imported to county Clare to entertain while many local Acadians dress up, dance and discuss their losses: “If it weren’t for the Cajun music,” said Emile Blinn, programme coordinator for St. Mary’s Bay’s radio station, “we would have no sense of the music we

⁵¹ “Fais do do” translates to “go to sleep” and the expression came to represent house dances where a mother with small children could attend and lay her children down in a back area (“*parc aux petits*”) if she wanted to dance. With the child’s mother nearby and other members of the community available to help and watch, the practicality of the social tradition caught on in Louisiana. To promote the family affair effect, married men were often admitted at a reduced rate (a 1937 flyer advertises Gents 25¢, Married men 15¢) and all generations attended the dances together, which also facilitated parental supervision (Comeaux in Brasseaux and Fontenot 2006, 142). At the same time in history (late 1800s until late 1930s), dancing was largely prohibited in Acadian Nova Scotia so no comparable tradition developed.

⁵² These costumes also reflect Cajun symbols more than Acadian ones. Though the rest of the celebration boasts the red, blue, white and yellow of the Acadian flag, *mardi gras* events use purple, green and gold—colours that were designated in 1872 by the Rex (king) of the New Orleans carnival (Mitchell 1995).

⁵³ It has been suggested that this is yet another example of Canadian musical interests taking a back seat to American tastes and trends, but the docility among Acadians of St. Mary’s Bay is not restricted to Canadian/American relations. Québécois pop stars have also been invited as have fiddlers from the Ottawa valley. These musicians, however, are not highlighted to the degree of Cajun musicians as the Acadian element is a priority and Cajuns are seen (at least in county Clare) as closer to the aspirations of musical NS Acadians than any other Canadian musical tradition.

lost, so of course we bring them [Cajuns] back here [for festivals]. They are teaching us to be Acadian where we forgot” (personal communication August 17, 2011).

In the absence of material describing specific features in Cy’s dance style, his soul-selling, law-breaking image emphasizes difference more than music, deviance corroborated by music, a private life so extreme as to be detrimental. In the St. Mary’s Bay of the early 20th century, people were dancing, but not openly. Cy’s proud excellence in a prohibited practice bucks the rules of his community in a way that something common, like song, might not. In the hindsight provided by the Acadian cultural revival, many even suggest that Cy’s style of defiance was perhaps a desirable alternative to Acadian docility. Perhaps the absence of a Cy-like fire is responsible for the relative weakness of instrumental aspects of the musical culture. Dance is quite strong in St. Mary’s Bay—among both casual and organized learners and in both traditional forms and stylized arrangements,⁵⁴ but fiddle styles, for example, are less distinct. What sets Cy apart from his community most, however, is that he makes his life seem so impossibly easy, unreal, supernatural, whereas we are asked to empathize with the struggle in Harry that is apparent and real.

⁵⁴ The dance troupe, *La Baie en Joie*, boasts 50 varieties of set and solo Acadian dance. The troupe choreographs traditional and derivative numbers and continues to enjoy enormous success locally and internationally. Other contemporary Acadian performers include at least one stepdancer in their ensemble and recordings—often as an additional percussion instrument. *Grand Dérangement*, for example, has a popular portion of their show dedicated to two seated dancers (*danse assise*) who alternate and orchestrate their rhythms reminiscent of a lively house party and also a sort of “dance-off” between male and female members of the band.

The responses are typical of Acadian and Cajun positions regarding continuity and disruption, or cause and effect as they are historically situated. Distinctions among Acadian and Cajun attitudes regarding the reciprocal effects of performing, personal and cultural life are epitomized in Harry Choates and Cy à Mateur. They are representative of Henry Glassie's comment in *All Silver and No Brass*: "Events in the past, held in the memory, can be as influential upon people's actions as events in their immediate contexts. Memory is a behavioural reality" (Glassie 1975, 57). The historical memory of loss is present in the behavioural reality of Acadian music. Acadians habitually say that there is no Acadian music, no contributions to the instrumental repertoire that are older than forty years or so, that they were bullied out of their music, first by the expulsion and then by the church, and that they had to begin anew when instrumental music was finally permitted, slowly re-integrating it after the Second World War. The behavioural reality, however, is not solely a matter of discourse. Contemporary Acadian groups are heavily laden with historical references—lyrically foregrounded in almost any given album or performance, but also exhibited in the names of groups declaring Acadianity (i.e., Beausoleil Broussard⁵⁵, 1755⁵⁶ and Grand Dérangement among others). Graphic

⁵⁵ A group from Caraquet, New Brunswick, their name references Joseph Broussard dit Beausoleil (1702-1765) who led the resistance against the British occupation. He was charged for his role in the Battle of Grand Pré and Beausejour and was among the first 200 Acadians to settle in Louisiana in 1765, where he died in St. Martinville.

⁵⁶ 1755's popularity in the 1970s and onward has come to represent the music revival for Acadian musicians throughout the country, but situated as they are in South Eastern New Brunswick, the other side of St. Mary's Bay, they hold particularly strong influence for musicians in County Clare.

representation and design choices are similarly historical in their colour choices and imagery (Blou, *Grand Dérangement*).⁵⁷

The choices speak of an Acadian national concept that has moved away from defined space. Once entirely French, rural and isolated, the remote society of Acadians gave way to an external set of cultures offering both advantageous and incompatible features—sometimes this is the English-speaking culture of their neighbours, often it is the musical influence of non-Acadian, but French-speaking, communities elsewhere in Canada or abroad.⁵⁸ The original, parish-based Acadian sense of place was gradually diluted by a national concept based on lineage and genealogy rather than on the development of tangible territorial awareness (Vernex in Louder and Waddell 1993). It is evident in introductions to Cy and Harry—the former always presented in terms of his genealogy (à Mateur) and the latter in terms of geography. This territorially “unreal” or ambiguous Acadian identity cannot be separated from the fact that, throughout the silent re-colonization which followed the expulsion, the Acadian minority’s strategy for

⁵⁷ Blou’s logo is in Acadian red with the yellow star of the sea perched atop of the letter “o.” Blou is also renowned for a show “designed for Acadian young people” and entitled *Voyage thru Acadie* (www.blou.ca). Grand Dérangement’s album, *Tournons la page* has an image of a burning farm on its cover in reference to the violent expulsion techniques. It is also common for contemporary Acadian groups to coordinate their dress—i.e. uniform outfits, colour schemes favouring the rich reds and blues of the Acadian flag, Nova Scotia tartan, adapted period costume for dancers. In larger venues, lighting and stage dressing are often designed to reflect Acadian symbolic imagery.

⁵⁸ This tendency is exaggerated/accelerated by the Canadian categorization of musical awards according to language or “cross-over” genres (Juno, ECMA, Canadian Folk Music Awards—the same is true of national funding agencies like SOCAN and industry events such as Nova Scotia Music Week). Especially in terms of production, Acadian popular music tends to favour a deliberate mixing of styles akin to a “neo-trad” or “world music” aesthetic (synthesized sounds, heavy production, reverb, dramatic voice-overs, samples and electronic effects) (*Canadian Encyclopedia of Music in Canada: “Quebec and French Canada”*).

survival was to give a peaceful image of itself. It follows that this sense of community could not be based on any territorial demands.

Acadian performers are incessantly talking about “bridging the gap,” leaping over all that lost time when the church or economic circumstances eradicated “real” Acadian music.⁵⁹ It demonstrates a bit of an inferiority complex that positions itself (unnecessarily, even detrimentally, in my view) against the global success of both Cajun music and neighbouring East Coast traditions.⁶⁰ If one ventures to ask what’s so unreal about the music Acadians have been making since the late 18th century, the answer reveals an interpretive reality that has come to be musically constitutive. Fox, Feld, Porcello and Samuels speak of *mediation* (Fox 2004; Feld et al. 2007) explaining the complex nature of “texts” and their creation. The ontology that has ideas becoming texts and then becoming performances, they write, overlooks the socialities that make music—or at very least make it meaningful. Mediation is what implicates all manner of social behaviour or happening in any musical “object.” The concrete domains of everyday life—the things actually “done” like working, worshipping, socializing, travelling, drinking, playing

⁵⁹ The band bios for every Acadian group mentioned in this paper uses the word “bridge” or “barrier.” The terms appear with great frequency in Nova Scotia’s tourism literature and in radio and newspaper interviews as well. Amateur performers (those without websites or less likely to be interviewed for major publications) also tend towards “a foot in both worlds” tropes.

⁶⁰ The success of Natalie MacMaster was particularly unnerving to many of my Acadian informants. Though her Scottish roots are proudly proclaimed, she routinely incorporates Ottawa Valley, Irish, Bluegrass and gypsy jazz techniques in her commercial recordings and performances. Joseph Saulnier, an amateur guitar player, said “I understood Ashley [MacIsaac]. He was playing rock or punk or whatever that is, but Natalie can say she’s Scottish no matter what she plays and we have nothing and can’t play your stuff [Scottish music] either ...If we have the next Rankin family here, to everyone we will always be imitating the Rankin family. We will not just be the Comeaus or whatever” (Saulnier, personal communication July 2010).

etc.—connect with the more abstract domains of memory, positionality, and theories of feeling.⁶¹ These connections create a style, interpersonally and musically and, what's more, they create legitimacy.

In St. Mary's Bay, continuity is a prerequisite for legitimacy. But as both colonial and ecclesiastical forces weaken in Acadian communities, this continuity is not as linear as some might like. Some aspects of Acadian culture (i.e. a reifying of lifestyles based on fishing and farming; the celebration and institutional support of French language that is incompatible with French spoken in other areas of the country) are becoming more and more visible just as they are becoming less and less plausible. A young dancer I met was learning how to mend nets in her art class while she researched compatible period dress for her dance troupe. The community with higher-than-ever numbers of non-practicing Catholics was gathering to discuss the centrality of mass and how to communicate the significance of the feast of the Assumption to the less devout. Other cultural aspects, previously suppressed if not entirely absent, are gaining force, but are ill-fitting. The same dancer was debating whether or not it was "unfaithful" to apply to universities other than Ste. Anne's, the Acadian language university in her community. The fully fused aspects of a culture are often barely visible. It's when aspects can be compartmentalized, as they increasingly are in St. Mary's Bay, that one might suspect a people are seeking out new ways of being (Swidler 2001).

⁶¹ Fox et al speak more specifically of the linguistic mediations on musical and especially timbral discourse and examine contemporary connections between the musical voice and ideas of position, class, and ethnicity.

In contrast, Cajuns don't talk about bridges and skipping over. They talk about going through and accumulating, enduring the church or their economic circumstances and having their music reflect that particular brand of resilience. Cajuns speak of stylistic changes over time, but feel quite confident in an enduring, if evolving, repertoire of core tunes. In a contemporary context of global influence, informants' relationships with music and culture take them through various forms of alienation and return. Many muse on the subject of feeling the pleasure of a prodigal child—proud of one's wandering but happy that it's over. Cajun scholar, Charles Stivale, elaborates on his own definition of being a Cajun: "I was confused by the enigma of my heritage and its significance, and flabbergasted by the thousands of accidental circumstances which propelled me into this trip and connect me still to the memory of this country that is no longer found on any world map but continues to be located in the imaginary of the descendants of the 1755 exiles" (Stivale 2003, 67).

Compositionally, the body of Cajun repertoire is constantly being renewed, but "the best" of these compositions are those that adhere to the same standards and forms as the traditional repertoire. In many cases, the greatest compliment a new composition can receive is that it has been confused with an old one written by someone else. Ray Abshire, a self-defined purist, is certainly not against new compositions, but sets boundaries: "I've got six originals on my last album and the one before that? Five. But I stay in the perimeters. You need the rhythm, the tempo, the syncopation, the story line in the lyrics and the core instruments. No drums on my recordings, no steel guitar, no saxophone, no dressing it up" (Ray Abshire, personal communication Oct.7, 2010). While watching a

younger group play later on the night of that interview, Abshire commented on “progressive,” a term that had been used to describe this collection of noticeably capable musicians. “Progressive is moving ahead and you can’t get ahead of yourself if you’re gonna play Cajun music...but they’re young and they’re good. They’ll figure that out. [I’ll] Bet you anything they’d play the sweet stuff if they weren’t playing for this crowd.” Compare this statement to Broussard’s aforementioned description of Harry Choates: “Harry never played over anyone’s head. I guess that’s what made him.” Assimilative priorities are strong.

The crowd that Abshire describes is, as far as I can gather, a pretty mixed bag: college kids from LSU; fathers dancing with their daughters; tourists with bandanas hanging out of their back pockets; overworked school teachers; dance instructors home for the festival; sons home from Baton Rouge to visit their mothers for the weekend; members of other local bands; but Ray is right that they are not all engaged in the same way. The dancers tonight are not the Southern Louisiana crowd you see at other times of the year. The same people are there, but they’re at the back of the bar, drinking, talking and, according to Ray, “not in any hurry. Our culture’s every night.” When Ray’s band gets up to play, he does use drums. And pedal steel.

What a culture is “every night” makes memory into an interpretive reality as well—one wherein the historical context of a cultural group colours estimations of what is or is not sanctioned behaviour. Cy and Harry are both the wayward sons of their communities with many similarities, but the communities’ sensibilities account, I think, for the way each is represented—musically and in terms of their relationship with alcohol.

Cy's relationship with his lifestyle does not suit the attitudes of his community, does not show the presumed relationship of action and consequence. He drinks, dances, travels, gambles, doesn't go to church—a combination which, in this community, is thought to guarantee destruction, but he shows no such signs. He doesn't seem to age, dresses well, is gregarious, dances beautifully and tirelessly, seems fine. In order to appropriately (in St. Mary's Bay terms) accept his cultural influence, Cy's life has to be framed by the supernatural, by the exceptional.

Almost as if he were a foil, Harry drinks, plays, sings, travels, and gambles, too, but it shows. Harry is framed by the common. Cy à Mateur meets his end as a result of an intervention: he is placed in an institution, an exorcism is performed in an effort to free him from alien forces, and he dies. The community is saved from him or he is saved from himself. Harry's final days are similarly brutish, but the discourse surrounding his death is that of natural consequence and self-infliction. He is a victim to himself; he is an alcoholic suffering through the unavoidable consequences of his own character, while Cy must be possessed by a supernatural other. This human distance is, I think, incredibly significant.

Again with reference to the mediation that I am about to discuss in greater detail, there is a discursive permeability in the way Cajuns and Acadians approach alcohol consumption and music making as a cultural activity. It's even apparent in the way Cy à Mateur and Harry Choates dress. Though the intentions appear similarly dapper, their susceptibility to consequence sets them apart from one another. Cy in his bowler hat and split coat is "*tout le temps fancy*" while Harry's hat is remembered as "formerly white"

and looked like “a hundred horses had stomped on it and then it had been stuck in a grease barrel” (Lucko, n.p.). Drinking and music-making, especially in combination, represent a phenomenological Cajun and Acadian life philosophy. The practices are intuitive and intimate, patterned on and patterning historical narrative, human interaction and cultural values.

Codes of Cultural Intimacy

The mediated zone between “doing” and “reflexivity” is fraught with ideas of the natural, and a tendency for leaving unmarked that which is lived-in. There is a suggestion that mediated somehow suggests inauthentic, while actions that are not reflected upon are somehow more real. This is particularly common in “folk culture” where academic interest and lived understanding are often cast as mutually exclusive. Attitudes toward drinking’s place in musicking (Small 1998), however, make clear that lived-in activities are also mediated—affected not just upon reflection but as the “doing” is being done. Deleuze’s term, “assemblages,” which is theorized in the work of Born, Bohlman, Guilbault & Grenier and, more recently, Stokes (Born 2005; Bohlman in Cook and Everist 1999, 17-34; Stokes 2010; Grenier and Guilbault 1990) refers to the various combinations of mediation—sonic, social, discursive, visual, behavioural—which constitute specific musical “objects.” The term reminds us of the complex and social nature of musical creation—a nature that is easily lost in aesthetic ideologies that assume a direct and individualized line that follows from creators to ideas to texts to performances. Though alcohol’s presence in Acadian and Cajun musical attitudes is persistent, its capacity for “doing” withers when analysis insists on linearity or when

alcohol's effects are relegated to a case-by-case, individual-by-individual basis. This chapter has addressed Harry Choates and Cy à Mateur as individuals, but, more than this, it insists that their musical and behavioural contributions are mediated, that they are contributions *because* they are mediated.

Understandings of Choates and Cy are intimate, not official. In their stories, it's clear that some cultural elements are able to manage others and that the power of these elements is enormous, even when they're lightly, insincerely, unevenly or ambivalently held. This is the code switching that sociologist Ann Swidler speaks of when she says that culture is considered a strategy of action rather than an objective, external reality (Swidler 2001). Culture is not "Jole Blon" or "Mon nom c'est Cy à Mateur," but the intimacy required to situate these pieces, their makers, their listeners. Culture comes of a "full disclosure" approach in understanding what constitutes a failing or an achievement—"what people learn by learning their limits" (Sennett 2008, 94) or the limits of others.

The Cajun cultural community, guided by the flawed humanity of performers like Harry Choates, expresses unity through divulgence. The other side of disclosure, however, is surveillance, which is expressed in the Acadian arm's-length interpretations of musicians like Cy à Mateur. There are two equally informative faces of surveillance which show themselves in attitudes towards these legendary musicians: one rooted more in care and protection and one in control and direction. And these are somewhat dated approaches. In contemporary Cajun and Acadian communities, both feel they have something to learn from an approach that is oppositely weighed. As cultural keepers, the same process of surveillance simultaneously enables and constrains (Lyon 2001).

Whether accidentally or self-consciously taking on the role of cultural keeper, Cy à Mateur and Harry Choates are protecting cultural elements while being unable to protect themselves from the consequences of devil and/or drink. Their surrounding communities appreciate their contributions while (to varying degrees) admonishing their lack of control. The result is a struggle to maintain some kind of private sphere that might establish what French historian Georges Duby calls a “zone of immunity,” a space outside the situating, omniscient impulses of the public sphere (Duby 1987, vii). The trouble (or beauty), of course, is that immunity, too, is a condition that exists relative to a collective body.

A focus on the authorized over the intimate suggests that music that has a status of collective ownership around it has few arenas for negotiation. Performers are expected to have not only musical prowess, but the broadest possible cultural competence. They come to represent a group in a way that takes little account of personal positions or the repercussions of such roles on a performer’s life. But my research suggests that this is overstated. Often the dissonance and dislocation that are valued in figures like Harry Choates and Cy à Mateur serve as cultural reminders that our loving repetitions can sometimes stamp out the unsettled chaos that actually warranted the love in the first place. A love of the whole and a love of the parts are not irreconcilable, as is so often suggested. They are, instead, co-dependent. We can love cultural stability, while loving its disruptions.

Deviant Deposits: The Cultural Contributions of Cy à Mateur and Harry Choates

Through Cy à Mateur and Harry Choates, this chapter has tried to demonstrate the ways in which publicly visible community activity is not always binding. It is just as likely to promote and strengthen division, lessen social trust and weaken democratic institutions. "When we therefore point to a practice, a distinction, a conception, an object, or an ideology as having a cultural dimension, we stress the idea of situated difference, that is, difference in relation to something local, embodied and significant...Culture is a pervasive dimension of human discourse that exploits difference to generate diverse conceptions of group identity" (Appadurai 1996, 13). Alcohol, and the activities involving it, encompass all of these things; it is at once object and ideology, a distinctive practice, a cultural concept, a means of generating difference and a means of conceiving in-group identity.

I have tried in this chapter to situate Harry Choates and Cy à Mateur such that the reader might understand the porous nature of private and public worlds, intended and received signals, though she may never understand the private and intended signals themselves. I have also attempted (as I will continue to do in the following chapters) to demonstrate the weight of interpretive principles, the contingency of a performer's personal actions and behavioural style on communal estimations of propriety, quality and how these negotiations are present in musical "texts." I have tried to show how the "texts" of "Jole Blon" and "Mon nom c'est Cy à Mateur" are used as a means of establishing identity relative to grander cultural narratives. But it is my hope that in doing so I have also made clear that defining Choates or Mateur relative to their communities is only one

possible frame—useful only insofar as it allows for a distinctly defined self (the ultimate, if difficult, goal). The value of communal identity is not to define its citizens, but to offer a surface against which each can create value for himself, to offer spaces small or big enough to accommodate individually important sensibilities, small or big enough to allow participants to know intimacy when they see it.

The fact that these cultural heroes are drinkers emphasizes the importance of unevenness when musical meaning is produced. Looking backwards and forwards, inside and out, responding physically and psychologically, leaping over and passing through, acting intentionally or accidentally, ruffling feathers or providing consolation—these are not binaries to be challenged, poisons to be picked, but behavioural realities that have musical repercussions. It appears like a big cultural clutter that needs to be teased out, and alcohol, like any other cultural element, becomes impotent when not considered relationally.

Chapter Three

A Drink and a Song: Expressing Acadian and Cajun Ideology Through Lyric & Language

The previous chapter demonstrated that the contributions and depictions of musicians Harry Choates and Cy à Mateur are representative of the way individual and collective value systems combine to create, sustain, and/or revise cultural attitudes. Extending these concerns to include the lyrical and presentational language of many Cajun and Acadian performances, this chapter unfolds in terms of three essential and interrelated foci of the study as a whole: 1) The co-presence of many musical meanings, 2) The relationship of communality and individuality in the making of musical meaning, 3) The degree to which alcohol-affected music both codes and highlights discrepant understandings of “real” musical and lyrical features. In addition to these, this chapter has particular interest in relating the social risks associated with language choice with those associated with lyrical subject matter. To demonstrate the ways in which multi-voiced concerns about alcohol and sociability are lived, I will address the relationship between composed lyrics in Cajun and Acadian song repertoire (primarily those that reference alcohol use) and the way their performance contributes to the narration of performers’ own lives.

In both Lafayette and Chéticamp, there is a dynamic song repertoire with strong orientations towards the expressive significance of Acadian and Cajun language. The regionalized and personalized inflections of the songs’ poetic tendencies are, I think, illustrations of cultural intimacy. I rely, here, on the cultural intimacy work of Herzfeld (2004), Swidler (2001) and Stokes (2010) to aid in understanding the ways Acadian and

Cajun songs are conceived in conversation with other songs, other times, other individuals. Herzfeld's work (2004) describes the paradox wherein some community members reject culturally sanctioned norms until these norms are threatened, at which time these same community members become fiercely loyal. Similarly, Swidler speaks of the "visibility" of culture in times when people are seeking out new ways of being (2001, 89) and she highlights the ways in which people are constrained (or inspired) not only by their internal motivations but by the knowledge of how one's actions are perceived by others (2001, 163). And in Stokes' *Republic of Love*, he discusses "perceived closeness, embodiment, presence and intimacy" as owing more to interpretation than the conditions of production (2010, 107).

To synthesize these theoretical understandings with the alcohol-infused repertoire in Acadian Nova Scotia and Cajun Louisiana, this chapter begins with combined ethnographies of house parties in and around Chéticamp, Nova Scotia in an effort to show "typical" sociability and song repertoire in the community. In tandem, the lyrical features of several of these songs will be highlighted. Next, I will present a series of performances involving the Savoy family, a highly-regarded group of Cajun musicians from Eunice, Louisiana. To parallel the Acadian examinations, I will discuss the Savoy family's performances in terms of cultural intimacy, beginning with *Festivals Acadiens* performances and extending to include the social circumstances surrounding Joel Savoy's work on the recording *Allons Boire Un Coup: A Collection of Cajun and Creole Drinking Songs* (Valcour 2006).⁶² Throughout the chapter, the practical, symbolic and

⁶² Though the inclusion of a recording project may seem out of place in a chapter that otherwise focuses on live performance, the recording process of *Allons Boire* was decidedly "live" and intimate. The songs on

emotional weight of language and liquor is explored for meanings that affect musical performance. This chapter's purpose is to demonstrate the way lyrical content and performative circumstances work in tandem to create musical meaning that is at once highly personal and communal. As the chapter unfolds, it will also become clear that these meanings are variable from occasion to occasion, depending, among other factors, on things as malleable as mood, degrees of cultural intimacy, estimations of cultural competence, and comfort with the company shared.

Careful attention is paid to the way drink and drinkers are described in the lyrics of "standard" songs in the aforementioned contexts, but the idea of contamination and purity is extended to examine language. Owing largely to isolation, Acadian and Cajun French have evolved in such a way that they are unlike "standard" French— vocabulary, expressions, and speech patterns representing both an older version of the language and one coloured specifically (even exclusively) by the interests of Acadian and Cajun people. The presence of English or "standard" contemporary French in lyrics and performance is noticeable and is considered by some to be an intrusion into/contamination of traditional linguistic tendencies. I will discuss drinks and drinkers, the language used to describe them, and the compositional narrative techniques in these

this recording are also predominately "standards" and are regularly performed live. I also include this recording to demonstrate an increasing comfort with the social acceptability of alcohol among young Cajun performers that demonstrates a relatively liberal and open attitude when compared either to Acadians or to previous generations of Cajun musicians. As far as I can determine, it is the only collection in Acadian or Cajun recorded history that is devoted entirely to drinking songs. Incidentally, the inspiration for this project came of a debate among its creators in which they questioned whether the Cajun song repertoire included more "drinking songs" or more "orphan songs" and which, among these, were more moving and culturally significant (personal communication, Ann and Joel Savoy October 2009).

songs as they relate to personal identification—the narration of individual lives—among Cajuns and Acadians. This analysis, which includes comparative examinations of Cajun and Acadian repertoire and performance practice, will consider literal and figurative multi-voicedness. I ask how songs are furnished with a capacity for communicating to several groups simultaneously, but differently—at once individually and collectively.

My effort to situate the use of Acadian and Cajun French in song texts and discourse is designed to demonstrate that anglicization and/or modernization are not unilaterally destructive forces operating against traditional practice. Instead, I suggest a greater degree of flexibility within and between assimilative and culturally distinct realities. In order to prove this point, it is useful to emphasize some important similarities between Cajun and Acadian approaches to lyrical and linguistic performance. By aligning them with each other, I hope also to align musical elements that are often expressed as either “fixed” or “shifting”—specifically, lyrical and performative language that changes depending on performers’ sense of what is “appropriately” Acadian or Cajun in a performance. I suggest that the fixed (variously represented by the sober and the “traditional”) is, instead of being opposed to aspects of the shifting (variously represented by the inebriated and the contemporary), actually very close—even inter-dependant.

The “fixed” and “shifting” debate, as far as it is represented in cultural theory, is often associated with ethnicity or indigeneity. A focus on comparable binaries like “centre” and “margin” analysis is often attracted *either* to straightforward visions (ones that avoid bothersome complications) or abstracted ones (visions that don’t deal with complications directly) (Ashcroft and Griffiths 2006; Grossberg, Nelson, and Treichler

1992; Pratt 1992). This is explained, in part, by a desire to avoid the difficulties of paying equally nuanced attention to *both*. The now longstanding, but ongoing, debate in postcolonial discussions of “active” and “passive” subjects⁶³ is noticeably present in the Cajun and Acadian performers I am about to present—the majority of whom juggle their identities as Cajun or Acadian musicians with several other equally demanding roles (other musical interests, priorities in terms of family, work, self-satisfaction, religion, etc.). It is my contention that the limited body of critical work on alcohol’s role in musical performance indicates the same conundrum: reductive and formulaic approaches that are largely quantitative and provide little wiggle room for personal variation and influence *or* abstracted approaches with all kinds of wiggle room for romantic ideas of alcohol’s liberating properties and very little in the way of practical applications. Such treatments overlook the complexity of an existing system (musical, cultural, behavioural) because of an overdeveloped interest in a single aspect of that system. As I turn, now, to ethnographic descriptions of such systems in Acadian and Cajun contexts, I hope to highlight the ways personal, social, cultural and musical understandings are permeable and simultaneously able to contaminate and purify one another.

⁶³ At its simplest, the argument boils down to a dispute over whether some ethnic groups are entitled to the term “ethnic” while others are not. Questions include whether or not the indigenous people of an “invaded” colony are the only “truly colonized” group—an issue discussed in Diana Brydon’s essay, “The White Inuit Speaks” (Brydon 1991). Much of the difficulty in this debate stems from conceptions of “the imperial project” as structural rather than processual (a structure that most postcolonial theorists retain only to deconstruct). By focussing on the binaries of “centre” and “margins,” the *processes* by which power is disseminated and maintained is omitted and the dynamics of change in cultures are overlooked. This centre/margin issue is addressed in Trinh T. Min-ha’s work, *When the Moon Waxes Red* (Trinh 1991). Also implicated in the argument are the political traps into which cultural groups fall when they have simultaneous concerns regarding “authenticity” and agency. For work on the question of ‘who can write as the Other?’ see Spivak’s “Can the Subaltern Speak” (Spivak 1988), Butler and Spivak’s *Who Sings the Nation State* (Butler and Spivak 2007) and pioneering work by Margery Fee (Fee 1989).

Regional language

For the sake of both lexical and contextual clarity, I begin by presenting some rationale for the orthographic choices made throughout this dissertation when presenting Acadian and Cajun French. The Acadian French spoken throughout Nova Scotia⁶⁴ has many regionally-specific variants, but several 17th–century linguistic features unite speakers, owing to the relative isolation of Chéticamp and its language since the first migrations from France. Most noticeable is an Acadian accent which, compared to other French dialects, has a tendency to make heavier use of “ch” sounds when saying words that begin with t’s, c’s and q’s. To use a common musical example, the word “spoons,” which in French is “*cuillères*” and used as a rhythmic instrument in Acadian music, sounds much more like “*tchuére*” in and around Chéticamp. In my work, and in that of various folklorists and song collectors from the region, a pronunciation-centred spelling in song lyrics and ethnographic transcriptions is sometimes used purposely to emphasize the accent and, in turn, the “Acadianity” of composers and performers.

Ancient, occupation-centred language is common in Acadian Nova Scotia. Many of these words endure in spite of the decreasing relevance of their original contexts. As an example, the word *amarre*, which translates to “mooring,” is sometimes used when Chéticamp residents are lacing up their shoes, though it references traditional fishing occupations wherein boats would be secured with ropes. Contemporary features of the

⁶⁴ There has been some debate among my informants as to whether “*chiac*” (the term most New Brunswick Acadians and several PEI Acadians use to describe their variation of French) can be used as an umbrella term for all Acadian dialects. I have decided to follow the most strongly voiced opinions among my informants in recognizing that the use of *chiac* is inappropriate for the language of Nova Scotia Acadians as it has developed in more isolated regions and is a language unto itself—Acadian French.

language, most obviously English derivations or contemporary “literate” French language use, are increasingly apparent—due largely to a concern with the transferability of skills in a population of largely seasonal workers. Although laws protecting Acadian language have supported Acadian language education, the student population is also increasingly competent in standardized French—concerned with the requirements of non-Acadian post-secondary education.

It’s typical, though by no means exclusively so, of those who speak most noticeably “in the old way,” to be the most likely to have an affinity for other traditional aspects of the culture as well. This is true regardless of age, but heavier Acadian accents are commonly held by those who also have traditional culinary tastes and attitudes toward drinking and sociability. Again, regardless of age, heavier accents are typically found in traditional occupations like fishing and logging, and the accents are most noticeably coupled with an attitude that is reluctant to move away, opposed to urban environments, and attracted to living in and maintaining ancestral properties.⁶⁵ This sometimes manifests itself as intentional and rooted in pride, but it can be connected to an isolationism beyond an individual’s control. In some, it borders on the xenophobic: “Once I get to the traffic lights, I know the place isn’t for me. Time to turn around” (Donald Larade, personal communication, December 2012).

⁶⁵ For an examination of Acadian linguistics, see Massignon’s *Les Parlers Français d’Acadie* (Massignon 1962) and Louise Péronnet, “The Situation of the French Language in Acadia” (in Daigle 1982). Anselme Chiasson also points out that many words that are suspected as English corruptions (i.e. “*vaudit la mover*” as in “to move” in a changing apartment sense) are actually *archaïsmes*—remnants of 17th century French language usage (Caplan 1991).

“Traditional” approaches to drinking and sociability do not mean “uniform,” however. While many people I interviewed talked about the incorporation of alcohol into sociability as standard Acadian fare, one of my consultants talked nostalgically about the days when “going on a tear” was more common. He described what he considered to be an old practice wherein men, who were otherwise responsible and committed to their communities and families, “would just go off for a few days. They’d go on a big drunk and you wouldn’t know where they were and you wouldn’t know what was going to start them off...[they would] come back and go in the dryer. They don’t touch the stuff until the next time. No harm done” (Alphonse Aucoin, personal communication, July 2011). As our conversation went on, it became clear that Mr. Aucoin took issue with how contemporary drinking practices made liquor more of an everyday affair: “Now you’ll see the women with beer bottles. They even take them when they’re dancing...The men? The stuff people used to drink would put these boys through their paces. [They just drink] beer now...No one gets as three sheets⁶⁶ as they used to...No one’s dry neither” (Alphonse Aucoin, personal communication, July 2011).

Cajun French has many comparable presentational qualities. Due to a general assimilationist American history of denigrating Cajun French and an overall lack of formal education among its speakers, the language is not often written down and so has presented some challenges in transcription throughout this dissertation. The following features should assist in clarifying the orthographic choices I have made throughout—

⁶⁶ An abbreviation of “three sheets to the wind,” a colloquial expression for extreme intoxication.

choices that follow the tendencies of other Cajun musical scholars, collectors and performers (Ancelet, Emoff, François, Savoy):⁶⁷

- Verb forms do not change in Cajun French as they do in standard French and some constructions are unique to Cajun French. For example, Cajuns are more likely to use only *pas* and not *ne...pas* when expressing the negative. It is also common to hear the phrase *être après...* for “to be doing [something]”.
- Cajun French is direct and informal, so polite or respectful constructions are rarely present.
- Cajun French incorporates vocabulary from a good deal of other languages as well—most noticeably English and Spanish, though Native and African American populations have contributed significantly to linguistic variation as well (Wolfram 2003; Strand, Wroblewski, and Good 2010).

In both Acadian and Cajun French, many words are almost always contracted and to write them otherwise eliminates a distinctive feature in the sound of the language. Most commonly, words like *autre* or *petit* become, *aut* ' and *'tit*. Though this sometimes presents difficulty in terms of lexical meaning, these contractions are usually essential in making the music “fit” the words (or perhaps, in chicken-egg fashion, the other way around). Translations have been provided for any extended or complex passages. In both Acadian and Cajun *English* there is frequent use of voiced stops (“t” sounds becoming “d” sounds), vowel nasalization, the dropping of “h” sounds in word initial positions, the addition of “h” sounds in vowel-initiated vocabulary. In order to avoid these English features slipping into caricatures, I have only incorporated them when they appear as

⁶⁷ Sylvie Dubois and Barbara Horvath have also done some fascinating work regarding language change, gender, class and ethnic identification among Cajuns (Dubois and Horvath 1999; Dubois and Horvath 1998). Analyzing the presence of certain distinctive features of the Cajun language across three generations they conclude that the social status of Cajuns pre and post 1970s revival efforts has made a linguistic mark, intimately linking Cajun socio-history to the conscious and subconscious linguistic behaviour of each generation.

vocal pauses (i.e. *ein* as an interrogatory expression of something akin to “don’t you agree?”) or when the informant him/herself is imitating the accent of another.

“Région de Chéticamp Toujours Chantante”⁶⁸

I have been invited to Ethel Haché’s (pseudonym) house on a warm July evening for dinner. Knowing that I’m a musician she has also invited a fiddler, two guitar players, and some singers—all friends and neighbours— and some of Ethel’s own family members. Ethel is a tremendous hostess in her late 70s. She has made delicious and generous amounts of food and makes a very strong drink. I comment on this quietly to another guest who says she doesn’t think Ethel drinks, herself, “but she wants to be generous so I don’t think she knows a couple of those will knock you flat” (personal communication, identity withheld, July 2010). When the kitchen table is cleared, her guests help her move chairs to the perimeter revealing an empty stretch of immaculate oilcloth in the middle, inviting dancers. At 7 o’clock, it’s still relatively early. The evening has not yet cooled and the additional guests she has invited have not yet arrived and so the musicians start to play to entertain themselves. They’ll “do the real Acadian stuff when the others get here” (personal communication, July 2010).

They start with some fiddle tunes: jigs and reels of mixed origin accompanied by the guitar and then the group decides to start singing. They begin with “Mercury Blues,” a KC Douglas song in which the protagonist praises the American car and laments his

⁶⁸ The official website for Chéticamp unfolds under this slogan which, translated, means “The Chéticamp Region is Always Singing” (www.cheticamp.ca).

inability to buy it (Douglas 1954).⁶⁹ Mid-song the door opens and some air-guitar playing guests dance in. Wooden spoons are taken for microphones, and Ethel is torn away from her teapot to dance. She happily obliges. The musicians shout to each other to keep going without a break as “Mercury Blues” nears its end. They turn into John Prine’s “That’s the Way the World Goes Round” (Prine 1978). When this song finishes, the fiddler takes over, accompanied by the guitar. This continues for about an hour or so as people eat and drink and dance and tease one another. It’s been made clear to everyone that this is not a party, just a get together which, as far as I can tell, is differentiated only by how late things go. As 11 o’clock nears, guests are about to leave—some for home and some for other social events. They begin to sing “Partons, la mer est belle” (Chiasson and Boudreau 2002, 6), a very popular song in the area. People join hands, begin to sway, some sing in harmony, some waltz, everyone knows the words.

The melody of “Partons, la mer est belle” is primarily chord tones set to a lilting 6/8 and the lyrics encourage all gathered to go out together to the beautiful, providing sea. The verses of the same song tell of the harsh conditions of sea life and the cruel deaths of many ancestors. Whatever message can be seen in this song’s lyrics or its pervasiveness in a community that is less and less affected by tragedies at sea might appear contradictory, but the song is also representative of a jumble of advantages and consequences, leaving behind and moving forward, concerns with the traditional and the

⁶⁹ The song was later a tremendous hit for the Steve Miller Band (1976) and for Alan Jackson (1992), whose version was incorporated into Ford television ads and became a bit of a pop-culture earworm in the late 90s and early 2000s. The song is also representative of the musical style/vintage that is played in legion halls and bars by the most popular cover bands in and around Chéticamp. Its opening lyrics read “If I had money/ tell you what I’d do/ go downtown and buy a Mercury or two.”

contemporary, a jumble that resonates with many Acadians because, in the coming together of seemingly opposed attitudes, real conflicts are addressed and made meaningful. It is with this thought in mind that I would like to move on to more detailed discussions of lyrical and presentational language in Acadian song. As I describe other house parties where the same, and additional, songs were sung, I hope to outline how the content of these songs and the manner in which they are sung reveal a co-dependent relationship among the song's composed meaning, its meaning for the individual singer and its meaning for a collective community.

From 2009-2011, I attended no small number of house parties in and around Chéticamp. They often followed a common pattern in terms of how drinks were served/consumed, when music began and ended and the arc of repertoire performed (i.e., single musicians earlier, followed by instrumental groups, followed by songs)—including the level of overall participation. Owing in part to the small size and general cohesiveness of the musical community there were, more often than not, the same local people in attendance regardless of where the party was hosted. I have therefore combined ethnographic examinations into somewhat of a composite picture. I do not wish to mislead the reader into thinking all of these moments occurred in the span of a single night, but I would also like to communicate a continuity among these gatherings that, I think, justifies the pastiche.

The interconnectedness of the community means that invitations are rarely necessary; word just gets around and a warm welcome is understood. If, on rare occasion, guests unknown to the host arrive, they will be welcome—especially if they have brought

instruments or have a reputation for being generous with their songs. Though summer parties were the most crowded, they often conflicted with a hectic schedule of several other community events. Fall and winter parties offered a different sort of intimacy that was described to me several times as the comfort of knowing that every guest was someone who could “stick it out” through less inviting winter conditions. “It’s not that there’s anything wrong with the summer crowd,” said singer and Chéticamp resident, Angela Aucoin, “It’s more like the feeling when the guests go home after you’ve had them for dinner. You have one more drink with your family before you clean up and go to bed and it’s the best drink you’ve ever had” (personal communication, March 2009). She goes on to describe how the whole town feels like one big host for about ten weeks and then, in the off-season, anyone who decides to have a party in the community knows it will be the primary source of entertainment that night. The whole community can get together for a collective “survival sigh” (Angela Aucoin, personal communication, March 2009).

Several of the homes I visited have fairly spectacular views of the Gulf of St. Lawrence where, on clear days, the outlines of Prince Edward Island and the Magdalene Islands can be seen. The hosting style varies at these parties. Some lay out cardboard to protect their hardwood floors from vigorous dancing. Some prepare elaborate meals and constantly monitor their guests’ drinks and dinner plates to make sure they’re satisfied. Others couldn’t care less about duties commonly associated with the host role. Some have houses that have barely enough room to hold a fraction of their guests and have people singing and dancing on decks, driveways and lawns and sitting on the coolers they

brought because there aren't enough chairs. Some play recordings of local artists or have tuned into CKJM, the local radio station. Some are musicians themselves. But in spite of the variations in party style, there's no small amount of overlap in the guests. It is not a "young people at young parties" sort of place. Parents are routinely at the same parties as their children. There are no apparent divisions according to class or refinement or occupation. Any given party really does give a pretty fair cross-section of the community.

There's musical predictability, too. Fiddle music and unaccompanied group singing are by far the most prevalent musical offerings. Song repertoire includes *complaintes* (laments), but they are usually a late-night, sentimental affair or reserved for exceptional singers. *Reels à bouche* are performed as a joke, a reminder, or a means of encouraging a reluctant fiddler, but in this area they are more often identified by the term *djigger* (i.e. "et toi, djigger a tune!").⁷⁰ The songs are variously in English or French, traditional or popular, but when Acadian pride is most on display, there are some songs that are definitely hits and many of them are accompanied by a lineage of singers past for whom the songs were signature "party pieces."

Michel Aucoin, who is the chairman of the Chéticamp Arts Council and a school teacher, choral director and invaluable informant, is particularly good at these mini history lessons. The first time I heard him sing "Un ivrogne à table"⁷¹ (The drunk at the table) he said, "I'll get you a recording with my great aunt singing on it, but my father's

⁷⁰ When asked about the term's origin, most connected it to the "jigging" that occurs in the *puirt a beul* (mouth music) of Gaelic neighbours and/or the jig as a tune type.

⁷¹ For musical and lyrical transcription see Appendix 3.1. The other listed songs can be found in the Chiasson collection and are cited accordingly.

cousin, Leo Aucoin, was singing it in the 80s.... As a child, I remember my great uncle, Leo's father, Pat Aucoin singing the same song. I think he recorded songs for Helen Creighton, but not that one...It's a party song, meant to entice people to drink" (personal communication, April 25, 2011). As in "Partons la mer est belle" the lyrics of "Un ivrogne à table" are meant to be jovial, inviting all present to enjoy themselves and drink together, but the song also serves as a reminder of the relationship the jovial has with the tragic: "*J'ai ni père, ni mère, ni aucun parent pour m'empêcher de boire, mon fidèle amant. Buvons tous à la ronde. Divertissons nous.*" (I have neither mother nor father, no parents to prevent me from drinking, my faithful love, so drink all you 'round the table. Let's have fun!). When Aucoin is done singing, he speaks of how important it is to have these songs "in the air" so that they are not forgotten. He refers to his children (who are musicians and also at the party), telling me how pleased he is that they will never have to look up the song (though of course they know how, he hastens to add) and that they never learned it in any kind of studious way, but know it "naturally."

Robert Deveaux, or Robert à Roy,⁷² is a multi-instrumentalist in his early 30s. He is hosting the party and is, like Michel, interested in "living Acadian" rather than "learning Acadian." He has recently decided to move home from Halifax with his wife and daughter and "raise his family Acadian" while he juggles a seasonal position as an animator for the Fortress of Louisbourg and a "real job" at the bank (Robert Deveaux, personal communication, September 2011). Michel's song has prompted a series of others

⁷² Robert Deveaux is a very common name in this region. À Roy identifies Robert according to his paternal lineage.

and as the request list gets longer it becomes clear that the night will be a late one. One guest announces he's trying to get to the liquor store before it closes and asks if anyone needs anything. People form alliances, going in on cases, spotting each other a few dollars, pulling bottles from the trunks of their cars that they had intended to bring to another party, warning each other about where they think the Mounties are tonight.⁷³ As the details of these interactions get settled, fiddlers and step-dancers are beginning to dominate the party, while I am speaking to a man in his early forties, trying to clear up a few expressions from earlier in the night that had revealed my language deficiencies in the face of a heavy use of Acadian idioms.⁷⁴ At various points in the night, he had introduced me to his mother, his brothers, his children, neighbours, people who were working alongside him in Fort McMurray, Alberta and had come home for a week (he had generously offered to buy their beer in the last liquor store run).

⁷³ The whereabouts of the Mounties (officers of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police) is an ongoing and incessantly discussed concern in this area as there are only a few officers assigned to a wide geographic region. Due to distances between houses, and an absence of mass transportation or taxi services, drunk driving has become a *cause célèbre* in recent years as people debate safety, "common sense," and sociability, and suspect the police of profiling select residents. Because driving is essential to maintaining almost every type of employment in this region, a license suspension of any duration is a serious problem in addition to being a public embarrassment. Considering the "mountie to miles" ratio in the county, being stopped for a liquor offense would seem like a highly improbable coincidence, but the intimacy of the community means that officers are familiar with the social happenings in the community and are, therefore, able to target areas where such offenses are likely. Actually, at one gathering I attended, an off-duty officer warned his friends about the details of his on-duty responsibilities so as to save them some trouble (well, one variety of trouble) in the coming days.

⁷⁴ One, embarrassingly, involves the Acadian dialect I outlined at the beginning of the chapter. Relaying to him a phrase I did not understand with the word that I now realize was *tchulottes*, he told me I had missed the punch line of a joke involving *culottes* (bloomers/panties) and I was probably better off not understanding anyway.

While we talk, people are beginning to sing and talk about “Un Acadien Errant,” an Acadian version of “Un Canadien Errant.” Several wonder aloud as to how the song came to be familiar with so many present.⁷⁵ He stops our conversation saying, “now *this* is a beautiful song” and he was singing, quietly, along when I noticed that he had begun to cry. It certainly wasn’t noticeable to most gathered there, but his mother noticed and said to me (but really to him *through* me), “Aw, now! See this will you, now? He’s had too much to drink.” Later, when the emotionality of the moment had subsided, and the conversation had drifted to other things, he and I were discussing how convincingly one can speak a given language without the surrounding culture—talking about the selective nature of Acadian language schools, “dated” languages and whether or not one could expect a contemporary “revival” of a language that was so rooted in the 17th century. He also spoke about contemporary behaviour. Like Alphonse Aucoin’s position on “traditional drinking,” this man spoke about the language associated with things like “going on a tear” or “being on a bender,”⁷⁶ but “nobody drinks in that way anymore” (identity withheld, personal communication December 2010).

As we, and those around us, discussed whether or not cultural elements were necessarily lost as a language accommodated contemporary concerns, he asked me if I

⁷⁵ The song was written in 1842 by Antoine Gerin-Lajoie after the Lower Canada rebellion had forced many rebels into American exile, but the version of “Un Canadien Errant” that is familiar to most North Americans was recorded by Ian and Sylvia Tyson in 1962 (Tyson and Tyson 1962) (for lyrics and translation see Appendix 3.2). The song is exceedingly popular throughout French-speaking Canada and was recently recorded by pop musicians, Luke Doucet and Melissa McClelland (2009). Its cover versions represent rather diverse musical sensibilities, contributing to the song’s impact.

⁷⁶ Local terminology for extended inebriation where the drinker would typically not come home for days at a time.

knew the translation of “Un Canadien Errant,” “The Wandering Canadian.” I do, and I told him as much. He said, “It doesn’t work, though, does it? The translation [is] fine and English, of course your people, too, y’know, did not have it easy always, but it don’t make my nose run in English. Don’t make mimmy⁷⁷ worry ‘bout me (*he laughs*).”

The night is getting late, many people here have had a few drinks, some are drunk and conversations are getting louder. This is exaggerated further when, for example, people are mock-playing musical instruments, and making jokes about how “anyone who is that bad on the spoons (*chuères*) should be given forks instead.” One man, whose departure has been interrupted several times tonight is insisting that he really does have to go and he begins to justify his departure by singing, “L’ivrogne grondé par sa femme jalouse” (A drunk scolded by his wife) (Chiasson and Boudreau 2002, vol.4, p.3). His wife has not come to the party tonight and so his song selection gets a laugh out of most people present. Noticing that some people had altered their singing style for this song, it was explained to me that Leo Boudreau, a local singer who had recently passed away, used to sing this song often, and a few people were imitating his style as they joined in intermittently. As Boudreau was renowned as a gregarious imitator himself, the versions of his song were highly dramatic with postures and voices changed to represent the characters in the song. Everyone sang in full voice, incorporating numerous grace notes and slides. Some made dramatic use of breaths or gesture; others waltzed with imaginary partners around the room as they sang.

⁷⁷ An abbreviation of the word *mémère* or grandmother. He is referring to his mother, but using the terms he uses around his children.

“L’ivrogne grondé par sa femme jalouse” tells the story of a man who cluelessly toasts beautiful women, despite his wife’s jealousy. The man singing at this party gets his jacket and shoes on, getting ready to go as he relays each verse. He has yet to finish the drink in his hand and so as he sings he is looking around the room for every woman to whom he can raise his glass, mimicking the role of the song’s philandering primary character. When he’s at the doorway, he is blocked by two of his friends who impede his departure and encourage everyone to sing another popular song, “Les ivrognes” (Chiasson and Boudreau 2002, vol.4, p.46). This song imitates the sound of a drunken hiccup or stutter in lyrics that read, “*en vi-, en vi-, en vidant la bouteille. En bu-, en bu-, en buvant du bon vin...*” (We’ll empty the bottle. We’ll drink the good wine). The verses of the song acknowledge the nagging awareness of wives at home or spies in the corner (monks⁷⁸ in this case), but the message is to have a good time, now, for tomorrow we’ll go (“*nous partons demain*”). Eventually, he’s allowed to go, good wishes are sent home to “*vot’ femme jalouse*” and the party continues without him.

The secular song tradition in this Acadian community is vast. Elsewhere in Acadian Nova Scotia, many songs are feared lost and scholars blame this on a relative absence of recordings (Pitre 2002)⁷⁹ or on the sanitized nature of published transcriptions

⁷⁸ Songs referencing monks are particular favourites of those who come from nearby Saint Joseph du Moine, a region named for a coastal rock formation that resembles the profile of a hooded monk.

⁷⁹ Commercial recordings are a very recent interest in Acadian Nova Scotia and, with no established local record label, most recordings are self-published and have limited circulation. This contrasts with the huge commercial and archival interest in southern Louisiana, most notably the 1930s collections of John and Alan Lomax.

(Barry Ancelet, personal communication Nov. 12, 2011),⁸⁰ but memory runs deep in Chéticamp and the advantages of extreme isolation were recognized by Chéticamp natives, Father Anselme Chiasson and Father Daniel Boudreau. They collected, recorded, transcribed and published hundreds of folksongs which affirm direct connections to the Poitou region of Western France as well as celebrating local compositions. The songs they collected demonstrate that folksongs representing a distinct Acadian aesthetic often work within an oppositional cultural frame of reference. The opposition is sometimes a matter of minority status or a reflection on a tumultuous history, but opposition is also written into the mundane issues presented in these songs as well. Contrasting aspects of a given situation are routinely given in a single Acadian song and this cultural comfort with the pull of opposing views can then be used to further new conceptions of Acadian culture and identity that are appropriate on an individual level. The drinking songs, and many others that are sung while under alcohol's influence, are sometimes comical, sometimes mystical, sometimes morbid, sometimes moral, and, more often than not, several of these at once. In addition to the scenes I've just described, lyrical examples I've collected from songbooks and recorded archives foreground the same sort of tugging. The song's meaning depends on being pulled by several seemingly opposed approaches at once.

In the song "Le penitent et l'ivrogne" (Chiasson and Boudreau 2002, vol.4, p.40) two alcoholics—one active and one reformed— argue over the value of drink. Agreeing

⁸⁰ Barry Ancelet refers to clerical control and the role of Abbé Gadbois' "Cahier de la Bonne Chansons" in the education system as a vehicle for the preservation of "appropriate" language and culture. Though this collection is familiar to Acadians, it is far more relevant to French Canadians in Québec and other non-Acadian regions of French-speaking Canada.

that excessive drinking might send a person to hell, the penitent says his wine will boil there, while the drinker remains quite certain that, even in hell, a drink is hard to consider as anything but refreshing. In “J’ai vu tout cela dans mon verre” (Chiasson and Boudreau 2002, vol.1, p.21) the protagonist endures great family tragedy, but remains confident that his glass of wine will support him in his human frailty. More comical songs tell the story of a wife tricking her drunk husband into paying her as ‘the other woman’ as in “L’ivrogne trompé” (Chiasson and Boudreau 2002, vol.4, p.17) or a drunkard deciding that the best way to take care of his children is by putting two in the convent, one in the seminary and keeping one around to keep his glass full as in “Quatre Enfants”(see Appendix 3.3). As the guests of Robert’s party sing the lyric of “Les ivrognes” and warn “*nous partons demain*,” the variability of the warning is clear, even if the message itself cannot be. All of the situations and lyrics described in the aforementioned songs are interpretively fruitful precisely because of their ambiguity. In this song and in this performance context, when a singer sings “*nous partons demain*” perhaps it means that tomorrow the drunk will go home, or “back on the wagon,” back to a responsible life. Maybe he’s speaking of leaving home for work and wants to relish the last moments of leisure. Maybe he’s speaking existentially, thinks life is short and is wrestling with a fear of death. Maybe the singer is singing as a character or maybe he sympathizes with aspects of the character himself.

It is not uncommon to see this multiplicity in drinking songs, where the possibilities of the next world are just as often presented as consolations as they are sources of fear (Gammon 2008; Studwell 1996). “L’Ivrogne” (Chiasson and Boudreau

2002, vol. 4, p.37) sings “*boira-t-il dans l’autre monde comme il buvait avec nous!*” (drink in the next world as you have with us) while in “l’Ivrogne converti” (Chiasson and Boudreau 2002, vol. 2, p.38) a husband comes home ‘dead drunk’ and his wife creates a mock wake with his unconscious body. When he wakes up, confused and scared, he is converted, terrified of judgement, but whether it is final judgment, his wife’s judgment, or the judgment of his community is never clear. It is the disagreement, the opposing understandings (implied and overt), that make the songs entertaining and engaging.

Many Acadian drinking songs encourage all present to join in the drunkard’s activity, but they also encourage highly individualized interpretations of the same practice. As an example, I heard the song, “La femme de l’ivrogne” (Chiasson and Boudreau 2002, vol.4, p.18) on several occasions while in Chéticamp. The song is told from the point of view of a woman whose drunken husband stays away and spends all their money as she struggles to take care of their home and children. In it, the husband comes home and wakes the baby who begins to cry, rendering the wife furious. The song often prompted conversations about David Boudreau, a local singer in his late eighties who was described as knowing not only the song, but the social conditions of the time that inspired it. It also motivated comments regarding the strength and resourcefulness of Acadian women.⁸¹ It was most often sung by a collection of people, helping each other

⁸¹ The gendered aspects of Acadian music are also worthy of extensive discussion. For the purposes of this dissertation, suffice to say that Acadian women are typically depicted as patient but disapproving wives who occasionally lose their husbands for days at a time to the irresponsibility associated with drinking. I have seen/heard no songs that refer to women drinking in either traditional or contemporary repertoire though attitudes toward women drinking have evolved to accept their alcohol consumption in contemporary social settings. For the most part, it is still less acceptable for women to be intoxicated than men. Traditionally, complete abstention was expected of women, though many informants relay stories of drinking small amounts in private.

remember the words, but on one memorable occasion, a man sang “La femme de l’ivrogne” to his wife as a clear and rather tender gesture of apology. I avoided the indelicacies of follow-up questions in this case, and assumptions about alcohol-related offenses are founded only tenuously by suggestion and surrounding gossip, but the moment does demonstrate the multiple meanings present in the song. The meaning communicated through this performer’s highly personal rendering depends on, but is in no way identical to, the meanings and associations of his community.

Philip Bohlman has labelled this phenomenon “the minority of one,” meaning a term for an individual who acts as an agent to give voice to, and consolidate, a minority community (Bohlman 2006). Bohlman’s “one” builds upon the anthropological work of Lila Abu-Lughod, who proposed “writing against culture” in the form of ethnographies of the particular, and Clifford Geertz’s earlier urging that anthropologists should descend into detail, moving away from essentialist studies of peoples and cultures toward the study of individuals in particular cultures (Abu-Lughod 1991; Geertz 1973). “The road to the general,” Geertz writes, “lies through a concern with the particular” (Geertz 1973, 53). Lyrical references have social repercussions in particular, individual cases. It is through the cultural marker of a song that the Chéticamp community is informed about social practice and it is in reference to these lyrics that those attending these gatherings can develop understandings of what Acadians “have always been.” More importantly, performers and listeners have (or make) their own positions relative to these songs—creating, receiving and performing their possible meanings; highlighting tensions, exchanges, alliances, networks (Diamond 2007; Latour 2005; Law and Hassard 1999).

I present this seemingly jumbled repertoire and contextual information in order to recognize the value of the liminal space between the song, its singer(s), and its listeners. Rather than focussing solely on the sung story, my analysis suggests that the contextual conditions of their singing demonstrate how constructed artistic signals can begin to rule reality. The characters who live and perform all the way inside a culture can sometimes be unable to separate a song from its personal significance. That may not even be a desirable goal. From an unlived distance, one might be able to view these songs according to poetic, thematic, musical or lyrical tendencies, but when they are sung it is more difficult to tease apart "the song itself" from the jumble of other equally present things that are also significant to the singer. The struggles of lyrical subjects are, of course, significant in terms of cultural expression, but these struggles can also be viewed as a performer's effort to escape the status of "character" or, worse, "caricature" inside a broad cultural narrative. In gaining the ability to narrate one's own life through singing a familiar song, performers can express an individualized sympathy or connection with the songs they are performing. When a guest tries to leave the party and sings about "*la femme jalouse*," other guests share an understanding of the song. Even when jokingly delivered, the feeling of "oh, we all know what happens in the next verse" speaks to the potency of a mode of communication that depends on both the shared (the song) and the personal (the way the singer and each individual listener feels about one's obligation to go home, the subject matter). Similarly, an apologetic husband singing the song of an infuriated wife demonstrates multi-voicedness in that he has considered her position to the point of temporarily taking it on himself.

I will discuss the prominence of these narrative elements further as the poetic tendencies of this repertoire are considered. For now, I turn to comparable events in Lafayette to suggest that the same sort of discrepant understandings are at play. In highlighting the similarities in compositional and performative practice, differences become increasingly obvious and the relationship of musical meaning to individual meaning is revealed for its capacity to create a third, meaning-laden space. This space comes of the friction between individual and collective understandings and is enacted in culturally specific ways.

Captivating Cajun Audiences: The Savoy Family Band

Cajun song repertoire is highly localized and includes a healthy dose of place and family names in titles and lyrics. Similarly, Cajun performers construct biographies with respect to their geographical and genealogical origins. They are introduced at concerts, festivals and the smallest jam sessions in the same way. On a scorching hot Sunday morning in October, 2010, my fieldwork has taken me to the front of one of three outdoor concert stages at the *Festivals Acadiens et Créoles* in Lafayette. The Savoy Family Band is playing, comprising some of Cajun music's living legends: husband and wife Marc and Ann Savoy, on accordion and guitar and their sons Wilson (accordion, fiddle and piano) and Joel (fiddle). They are from nearby Eunice, a rural area where they operate a music store and host weekend jams. Marc makes highly sought after accordions and is very particular about who he sells them to, demanding that his buyers are culturally knowledgeable and not just collectors. He has produced a series of instructional books and videos and has also been known to post essays online describing what "true" Cajun

music is, what/who threatens it, how he has earned his “keeper of the flame” status (Savoy 2010, 2005, 2010). Ann, in addition to singing and playing guitar, is a writer and historian. She collects songs and stories, writes and speaks on the subject of tradition bearers and, in public performance, typically formulates introductions in a manner akin to programme notes. She provides historical and musical details and outlines lyrics in a way that is decidedly rare in Louisiana—offering brief translations and anecdotes in a very pedagogical fashion. Both Wilson and Joel play with several other ensembles, have made film and television appearances on shows with Cajun themes and have musically-oriented business interests in recording labels and tour management. Though all of the Savoy Family Band is clearly interested in historically situated, “authentic” Cajun music.

The Savoy Family Band are aware of each other and of their audience. As they play, Wilson gives a knowing nod to someone in the crowd, Ann shouts out a friend’s name as he dances by, Joel raises his beer bottle as if he’s clinking “cheers” with a listener three hundred meters away. As each song finishes, there’s a fair bit of commentary as to how the audience is doing and whether or not they enjoyed other acts, but they amount to real and sometimes detailed exchanges. Recognizing certain dancers, Ann will congratulate them saying “They sure know how to dance in Mamou.” Aware of some more current information—that the person whom Ann refers has recently married and moved—Joel joins in, correcting her: “They know how to dance in Eunice now. Eunice is the new Mamou.” On festival grounds that seem so expansive, the Savoy performance has created palpable intimacy.

Marc says next to nothing onstage and none of it into a microphone, but he is the most intensely observant of the four, watching his sons play and smiling when he approves. Stage banter routinely takes on an "in good fun" tone. The family calls out to the audience to "rescue" Gabi, their sister and daughter, who is among the listeners: "Clap for her to make her like Cajun music," jokes Ann. And people do. They also look for Gabi, knowing which one she is, and pat her on the back, making intimate comments regarding her own interests as if they are all family. In like fashion, when Ann asks "How d'y'all like this LA 31 beer?" her question is genuine and she waits for an honest, involved response. It's a friendly question of taste, a supportive gesture for a local brewery to which she has no known ties, and an unabashed acknowledgement that she's drinking. So are her sons. They are onstage, performing professionally, but the stage suggests no behavioural barrier and neither does the fact that it's before noon on a Sunday. The impression conveyed by the Savoy family is that they are among friends, saying and doing things they might do in their own back yard. Audience requests exhibit this familiarity, too. Teasingly, Savoy responds to a request for the tune, "Sam's Big Rooster" by suggesting that the audience shares some qualities with the aggressive and self-assured bird. The song itself is not necessarily bawdy, but Ann Savoy's commentary suggests it could be.⁸²

⁸² Ray Abshire, an esteemed Cajun accordionist who is also playing at the festival (and who appears elsewhere in this dissertation), takes requests as occasions of intimacy: "I always play requests. I think it's very rude not to." He goes on to say that if listeners know enough to ask for a tune by name, they know enough that he should oblige. But he is quick to point out that he knows who's doing the asking, too. When I ask if there are limits to his generosity, certain songs that are off-limits, he says, "It's not just musicians who drink and you can figure that out in a hurry." He goes on to say it's not the song that is off-limits but its timing, its appropriateness to the mood of the event. Drunk participants, says Abshire, have a

Cajun performances are well-known for including frequent interjections which display support, accordance, or affection, and all of the most common expressions are heavily inflected by this same direct simplicity. This show is no exception. Fans or fellow performers shout “*Yé Y’aïlle*” or a Choates-esque “Eh... ha haaaa!” both for comic effect, exaggerating a stereotype of themselves, and as an expression of genuine enthusiasm. As stage acts change, there are distinctly Cajun exchanges of affection. For example, when *The Malfacteurs* take the stage, lead singer Ryan Brunet turns to his bandmates as they settle in, but he speaks into the microphone saying, “Holy *vache*! Those guys are good!”⁸³ It’s a fairly common occurrence in live performances in any genre—using the microphone to let listeners in on the inner workings of onstage relationships. Here, however, implied intimacy increases when bands share members or when the sequence of festival acts makes no hierarchical suggestion. There appears to be no headliner and among bands there is a palpable familiarity. “Those guys” who are so good often come back on stage to join the next band for a few numbers. They date each other, they’re roommates, they shared teachers. The closeness of these relationships is also on display when, as I will describe directly, performers like Wilson Savoy say, “play it, *ma ’tit*

tendency to request their favourite song whether or not it “works” at that moment in the night and it is up to Abshire as the hired entertainer to decide when and how to place it. If people requesting songs are, in their inebriation, impatient and insistent, he interprets that as second-guessing his ability to structure a good show and, insulted, he’s less likely to accommodate those requests.

⁸³ In performance *Holy Vache*! (which translates to “Holy Cow”) sounds suspiciously like an English expletive. The comedy, of course, is found in precisely that uncertainty—choosing to risk sounding crass while actually saying something completely innocuous.

*negresse*⁸⁴ to Anna Laura Edmiston. Over time, it seems as if there is a direct relationship between the degree of affection shown and the amount of Cajun French used. Singers regularly personalize the songs to include their fellow performers and familiar audience members and personal intimacy comes to signal musical comfort and/or mutual understanding

As part of the festival performance, Anna Laura Edmiston of the young Cajun band, *Feufollet*, joins Wilson Savoy in singing "Pine Grove Blues" (for complete lyrics and translation see Appendix 3.4), a kind of call and response song throughout which a man calls out, "Oh, *negresse*" and proceeds to ask, "Where were you? What were you doing? Where did you sleep?" His *negresse* answers most of the questions vaguely: "*Ma neg'* I went out to get drunk," "It's none of your business" etc. But when Wilson Savoy personalizes the song by substituting the word *negresse* with his fellow performer's

⁸⁴ This literally translates to "little black woman," but is used more as "sweetheart," "baby," or "honey." Similarly, the word *neg'* which literally translates to "negro" is used affectionately as something like "buddy," "my man," "pal," or "brother." Further, "P'tit Negresse" (an alternate title for "Pine Grove Blues") was a signature hit for accordionist and singer, Nathan Abshire, one of Cajun music's most prominent figures (and, incidentally, a cousin to Ray Abshire) so the term makes *both* linguistic and musical reference.

Obviously, issues of both race and gender emerge with the use of the term *negresse* and both are significant aspects of Cajun musical development. There is an emerging, but still small, body of work regarding the evolution of gendered aspects of Cajun music-making. Most of it centers on *mardi gras* activities that are traditionally segregated according to gender (Ware 2001; Sexton and Oster 2001). Scholarly examinations of race in Cajun music are more extensive. See Stivale and Walton's "Louisiana Coonasses" in Ray & Lassiter's *Signifying Serpents* (Stivale 2003; Ray and Lassiter 2003). For a fascinating discussion of the way the Cajun cultural revival has affected race relations among Cajun and Creole populations, see Mark Mattern's "Let the Good Times Unroll" (Mattern 1997). Historically, Cajun and Creole people shared an ethnic stigma that was associated with impoverished, uneducated and culturally assimilative conditions, but the Cajun cultural revival of the 1970s succeeded in helping many Cajuns to partially overcome this status in a way that has yet to have noticeable effects on Creole populations. Mark Mattern's article outlines the subsequent tension in musical environments.

proper name—narrative elements change. Savoy asks, “with whom did you sleep last night, Anna Laura?” and she responds by interrupting the song’s repeated line (“you came in with your robe torn”). She cuts the song off, talking and laughing, “*no, no, j’veux pas entendre ce que t’as à dire là!*” If Anna Laura is, herself, taking on the role of *negresse*, and not just telling the story of an anonymous woman, then her response changes: “No, no I don’t want to hear what you’re saying now!”

Instrumental elements also take on a linguistic quality that demonstrates an exchange among fields of meaning and adds a further element of confusion as to who “the speaker” is. When the sounds of fiddles and accordions are referred to in terms of “crying,” “speaking” or “moaning,” they take on a voice that is often presented as if it could be independent of (or in addition to) the intentioned voice of the instrumentalist. Often as nights wear on in Cajun performances, instrumental interludes take on more and more of a gruff and intense vocal quality, and are prefaced by an invitation to conversation. As an example, Wilson Savoy frequently turns to his fellow band mates saying, “*Parlez nous!*” (speak to us) before an extended instrumental break. In so doing, not only is he asking an instrument to “speak,” but he is conjuring the legendary Balfa Brothers⁸⁵ through reference to their hit song, “*Parlez Nous a Boire.*” This expands the conversational field far beyond what is happening on the stage at any given moment. The conjuring of past performers and the sculpting of an engaged audience is also present in

⁸⁵ The Balfa Brothers are likely the most famous Cajun ensemble in history. There were five members, the most legendary being Dewey Balfa, who performed at the Newport Folk Festival and is credited with reintroducing Cajun music to Americans as a formative element of the country’s musical history. They recorded and performed throughout the 1950s and into the 1980s.

recorded materials. The same processes allow many Cajun recordings to “feel live” even in cases where they have been extensively modified.

Broad networks of exchange are implicated in the recording process of *Allons Boire Un Coup*, a collection of Cajun and Creole drinking songs. The extremes of the “drinking song” genre are represented on the compact disc—spanning from the archival offering of “Table Ronde” to the dance- hall- inflected “Whiskey, c’est mon ami” and through to the appropriated top forty hit, “One Scotch, One Bourbon, One Beer.” Performed primarily by “the young set” of Cajun musicians, most of the recording took place at the house of *Feufollet* band members, Chris Segura and Chris Stafford. Valcour Records’ Joel Savoy was the recording engineer, Joshua Clegg Caffery was the producer, and there were over thirty contributing artists, including Ann and Wilson Savoy. Because of age, sociability, the various ways these bands intersect or happenstance, these sessions involved a lot of “extra” people, too. Visitors, roommates, girlfriends, boyfriends and relatives walked in and out of sessions, cooked meals between a booth and the control room, played, listened, commented, wrote their university papers,⁸⁶ and drank a not insignificant amount of moonshine and other alcohol. The mood was decidedly good. Producer, Joshua Clegg Caffery described their efforts this way: “We tried to set up the sessions so everyone would be loose and feel comfortable, and I think we really got such

⁸⁶ Of these musicians a good number were/are Louisiana State University students in culturally-centred fields of Francophone Studies, French Education, Folklore, French, Communications and Performing Arts. This speaks to an upward mobility among Cajuns since the Cajun cultural revival. Due in part to the lucrative career opportunities which stem from this revival, students with Cajun-centred study areas are typically better off economically than their counterparts and certainly (ironically) better off than the Cajun lives on which their work relies.

great natural performances on this CD because of this" (personal communication, May 6, 2012). According to Caffery, the extra input of random attendants, though not designed, captured the spirit of musicians, poets, artists and "inspired people" in Lafayette.

Though other recording studios exist in and around Lafayette, the features of this physical space (awkward, crowded, messy, etc.) were presumed to have a bearing on participants' internal spaces. The familiar physical conditions of the small, stable and familiar room made intimate the entire lineage of Cajun song. The chaotic enormity of the repertoire could be combated with the smallness of personal relationships. The complexity of singers' positions relative to each other and the songs' subject matter could be made manageable. Though the awkward, crowded space was perhaps contrived, the intentions were to simulate a sense of "having to deal with it" that performers felt was inherent in the music. When I asked if it was necessary to design inconvenience and distraction in order to perform the songs well, Granger referred to the biographical details of a few legendary composers and performers who were manual labourers and lived in crowded conditions. He then said that the emotional effects of struggle are cumulative and hinted at the fact that struggle of that variety was outside of the experience of many of the performers present on this day. If the composers had to deal with years of interruptions and interference, it was important that these performers have some sense of that too, albeit artificially.

The motivations for the recording are expressed in the liner notes of *Allons Boire Un Coup*:

We can see that Cajun and Creoles do far more than just get wasted. In these songs, drunk people dream. They waltz. They get their guns and go out in the middle of the night and kill raccoons. When their bottles are empty, they stomp their feet and play furious, driving dirges on the fiddle. People all over the world get drunk on Saturday night and have hangovers on Sunday, but Cajuns drink a glass of lemonade and then write a song about it.

It's not particularly interesting or important that people in Southern Louisiana like to drink. Of utter importance, however, are the wild and sometimes strange things they do when they drink and party together, and the soulful, brilliant way they transform these activities into song. (liner notes, Valcour 2006)

In this statement, composed by Joshua Clegg Caffery, there is a sense that only Cajuns could turn the activity of drinking into precisely this sort of "wild and sometimes strange...brilliant and soulful" singing. In singing them, then, something is learned about how to be Cajun. His expression brings to mind the work of literary critic, Michael Hanne, who asserts that exceptional fiction can enact "real life" political change. In *The Power of the Story*, he writes that "people don't tell stories, rather stories tell people" (Hanne 1994, 12). Cajun performances suggest to me that this is exactly the way people drink or orient performances around alcohol. In the subject matter of *Allons Boire un Coup*'s songs, there is a scattered set of disjointed efforts in which some kind of real world project (getting married, moving to Texas, hunting raccoons for dinner) is a way of closing the gap between the world in which singers live and the culturally loaded (pun intended) world they imagine (the way to court, dance, work, hunt like a Cajun—with a bottle in hand).

Contamination, Assimilation and Lyrical Codes

I would like to turn, now, to *what* is being sung in order that it might be placed with the "where" and "by whom" that I've already begun to outline. Ethnomusicologist,

Ron Emoff, has already contributed to this discussion as he writes of the language's sound as a "Cajun Poetics of Loss and Longing" (Emoff 1998, 284). Emoff analyzes Louisiana's state-imagined connection to Nova Scotia as it developed in conjunction with French language laws. As a result of these laws, he writes, a need to navigate the area between spoken Cajun French and the literate French deemed acceptable for Louisiana schools emerged. The alleged intention was to support the French-speaking population of Louisiana, but in the process Cajun French was actually eclipsed, and displaced by a version of the language that was lexically, phonetically, grammatically and accentually foreign. Emoff considered these language distinctions to be class distinctions. Those speaking Cajun French were predominately working class and felt connected to the harsher rural realities of Louisiana experience far more than the stories of an ancient and pristine Acadie which informed upwardly mobile Cajuns. These crude and simple "coonasses" (Dormon 1983, 43) who were unable to connect to their distant homeland then became doubly lost, since they could neither consider Louisiana as a homeland nor connect, own, or know the homeland suggested to them by language policy and state-imposed cultural narrative. Though conditions have changed for many Cajuns since the cultural revival, 19th and early 20th century French in Louisiana had an element of aesthetic evaluation which sometimes placed greater value on the sound sense of the words than the semantic sense. The choices made in pronunciation and in combining French and English lyrics identified the speaker as to the *kind* of Cajun he was which, in turn, contributed to the kind of message he was composing and sending.

In most of the traditional Cajun song repertoire, the text is based on line-final rhymes or slant rhymes. There are also smaller-scale features which are typically based on similar-sounding vowels occurring throughout the phrase. Many of the rhymes are made most apparent when English words or phrases are included in a predominately French text. The resulting phonemic tension comes of an exaggerated French pronunciation which intensifies the contrast felt with English pronunciation. In “Blues de Soulard” the singer laments, “*Quand le blues me prend, moi j’suis gone.*” In “La Rêve des Soulards” this tension is highlighted even further:

*J’arrivais hier au soir a la maison
m ‘tite femme, mais oui, apres quereller
j’ai d’mande, “pourquoi donc, toi t’es comme ca?”
elle a repondu, “cherie, t’es gone too long.”⁸⁷*

Certain vocabulary pairings appear quite frequently, so much so that they belie any interpretation that could see them as coincidental. The English words “long” and “gone” are regularly paired with the French *prends, maison, attends, abandonnons*—the vocabulary of waiting, wandering and home. Of course, other French and English words share the same vowel sounds, but they do not appear in these rhyming relationships because they do not serve the same poetic purpose. Lyrical choices like these communicate, at once, the struggles of language, displacement and multiple identities. Through use of the contradiction, the incompatible made compatible by forced vowel sounds, these choices in vocabulary enact parallelism by difference. The linguistic parallelism is similar to that discussed in work by Fox, Feld, Porcello and Samuels (Fox

⁸⁷ I came home last night/My wife wanted a fight/ I asked “Why do you have to be like that?”/She replied “Honey, you’re gone too long”

2004, 326; Feld et al. 2007, 341) and to Roman Jakobson's assertion that parallelism is as often based on difference as it is on the purely replicative.⁸⁸ Parallel structures are often used to identify what is irreconcilably different (Jakobson and Halle 1971). By using vowel sounds that are only similar and not identical, the Cajun song repertoire micro-poetically replays the displacement of Cajun French by English in southwest Louisiana.

Parallelism of this variety is not used to suggest commonalities, but to attract attention to difference. A favourite party trick of musician Chase Dugas was to sing a popular Cajun song (I most remember him singing "Quoi faire" but there were others) and have others present shout out a different community between verses. He'd then take on the accent particular to that region for the next verse. This game would reverse as a sort of quiz as the song went on. Dugas would make alterations to his pronunciation and people would shout out "You're from Mamou," "You're from Breaux Bridge." When one responder made an error in accent identification, Chase laughed and jokingly said something to the effect of, "I can't sing in that accent. I try not to associate with those people long enough to pick it up." I use this example to highlight how the use of Cajun French in these song texts is as much phatic as it is semantic. The sound of the language, regardless of its lexical meaning, takes on significance for its audience and remains memorable even to those who sing these songs phonetically. "Song words are always

⁸⁸ This relationship also calls to mind the work of Stanley Fish in *How to Write a Sentence* (Fish 2011). In dissecting a sentence's component parts and calling on the work of some of history's most highly-regarded writers, Fish asserts that an effective sentence depends on large-scale relationships. By emphasizing form over content, he highlights the same things that are present in Cajun lyrical style—that it is not the meaning of any individual words in a song that bring lyrical meaning, but what the relationship among words is able to communicate.

spoken out, heard in someone's accent. Songs are more like plays than poems...direct signs of emotion and marks of character" (Frith 1989, 90). By musically coupling French language with strained vocal production and effusive arrangements, the highly emotive musical quality of Cajun music is transferred such that the language itself comes to be seen as highly emotive. The pleasure of understanding and sonically reconciling both languages is culturally specific, then, and contributes to its communicative satisfaction.

The primacy of place in Cajun lyrics achieves a similar cultural intimacy. Contemporary French scholar Charles Stivale uses the term *(géo)graphies* to refer to the inscriptions of place names and lyrics in Cajun repertoire that translate distinct thematic processes of dislocation and unsettling. There are forms of *(dé)paysement* (literally "un-countryping"), he says, that have characterized Cajun social history and, in turn, their music (Stivale 2003). "Un-countryping" is an interesting terminological choice, since the way Cajuns nurture "rough" or "unrefined" images is demonstrably distinct from the agrarian, "good ol' days when times were bad" approach embraced by their neighbours in the country music industry (Malone 2002; Peterson 1997; Parton 1969). In multiple lyrical and musical examples, Cajun music turns the temporal approach used in country music into a positional one, routinely making periphery into its centre.

The places about which Cajuns sing— Mamou, Breaux Bridge, Opelousas, Ville Platte, etc.— are hardly central locales. The themes, too, are of marginality, wandering, exile, rejection, longing and homelessness. This amounts to a sort of rooted errantry. It is a unique combination of being a "have- not" culture and being very clear about what it is that one does not have, very clear about why it is culturally important not to have it.

When the *Savoy Family Band* performs, they project an interest in the music's roots which insists that performers and compositions bear the mark of their place of origin and that isolation, remoteness can be credited with quality. In performance, Ann introduces each tune by exactly these affiliations: "They sing this song in Marksville," or "Peewee Broussard played with Marc a lot, so this one is to honour him."⁸⁹

Structurally, the characteristic impulse of feeling at home with being homeless is represented in the verse chorus relationship that often uses affirmation as refrain—underscoring the significance of staying—the fixity of home, family, *pays*. The lyrics allow one to travel in the verse or express doubt, but thematically and structurally the recurring lines stress a primacy of place, scold people for leaving, beg people to return. Return, the idea that starting points are ideal and progress questionable, is an unflinching element of Cajun and Acadian lyrical presence. Cajun and Acadian lyrics are, with very, very few exceptions, focused on rambling and travelling, leaving and returning, missing people, waiting, being lonesome, having to go away but keeping certain places on one's mind. Even in the songs where love figures fairly prominently, it is love *at home* that is desired—not just the object of one's affection but its placement. "Evangeline Waltz" cries, "*J'ai p'us personne à la maison mais pour m'aimer!*" (I have no one at home to love me); "Grand Mamou": "*Si tu voudrais mais t'en r'venir avec moi à Grand Mamou, j'serais content de t'avoir pour ma femme*" (If you'd want to come back with me to Grand Mamou, I'd be happy to have you for my wife) (François 1990). Many Cajun songs dwell on going away to such a degree that synonyms for leaving come in rapid

⁸⁹ Chester Isaac "Pee Wee" Broussard (1920-) is a Cajun accordionist from Henderson, Louisiana (www.acadianmuseum.com/legends).

succession. In the Cajun treasures, “Jolie Blonde” or “Grand Texas,” (“*Tu m’as quitté pour t’en aller*” you left to go away), repetition is not considered redundant, but emphatic. And the question as to how exactly someone can be “leaving all the time” in songs like “Blues de Soulard” (François 1990) rarely appears problematic to its singer.⁹⁰

If uncertainty can be resolute, this is what Cajun and Acadian music captures, but I caution against the all-too-quick carnivalistic conclusions. Although drinking and wandering and loss are common lyrical themes, they are neither unfettering nor reversals. There are particular ways of drinking, wandering, losing, recalling—poetic ways—that affect one another and are not at all ambiguous to those performing it. Again, I refer to comments Joshua Clegg Caffery had regarding *Allons Boire un Coup*:

People in Southern Louisiana don’t just drink, they create powerful artistic expressions about drinking, songs and stories that place drinking within the currents of a vital, dynamic culture, visions of the bottle weaving in with the pain of lost love, the turning cycles of death and rebirth and the rituals of celebration and mourning that order and nurture our spiritual and social lives. Yes, Cajun and Creole musicians do get drunk. In fact, as I write this, there is a drunk Cajun sitting right next to me, playing the accordion, but this is not the point. (liner notes Valcour 2006)

Stranger Talk

To be truthful, in any but the most intimate performances of Cajun songs, a person can barely decipher the lyrics, but this is not to say that there is no lyrical resonance. On the contrary, most of the performed repertoire is familiar and the texts which revolve around a single theme of loss, poor treatment or being left behind, are communicated to listeners and dancers, regardless of their intelligibility. In the early stages of this work, I

⁹⁰ “Je te vois tout le temps parti” (I see you leaving all the time)

often turned to the person next to me to clarify something that had just been sung. Aside from performers, the people I spoke to rarely knew the exact lyrics, but were quite familiar with “the gist of it” and could tell me quite a bit about where the song was most popular, who recorded it, why a region had claimed it as a sort of anthem. The interpretive prioritizing of general themes over specific linguistic details is a reminder that textual meaning relies heavily on familiarity, on shared repertoire that suggests or recalls a song as much as it communicates its message directly. Ann Savoy’s expressed position is that the words themselves are packed with sentiment, that the use of Cajun French has power beyond semantics and that the song texts are primarily used to incite Cajuns to dance. Cajun fiddle legend, Dennis McGee said he used “words for rhythm and sound more than to present a story. The voice sound is important in Cajun music because the music is used to move to [dance], not to sit and contemplate the story” (Savoy 1984, 56).

As Cajun music’s appeal to wider, largely English-speaking audiences grows, however, the de-emphasized semantic sense of Cajun lyrics risks moving from the sublime to the ridiculous, with some performers mimicking phonetic sounds and others discarding the language altogether. Resenting being made into a cultural caricature, Wilson Savoy is as straight a talker as his father.⁹¹ He describes the role of Cajun

⁹¹ As previously suggested, Marc Savoy is adamant in his writings about a “complete culture” approach to Cajun music. He scathingly expresses the opinions he has of those who diminish Cajun music and culture by seeking quick answers and oversimplifying the complexities of its component parts. He blames this “Cajun corruption” primarily on mass markets, skewed priorities, and quick-fixes, but he also speaks in rather moralistic terms on the shallowness of the American public and its general lack of discipline, commitment and regard for history.

language in performance as a duty much more than an aesthetic choice and laments the contamination of Cajun language in contemporary performances:

There is nothing more hokey and dissatisfying than hearing a Cajun song being sung in English. It's even worse than someone singing in faux-French who doesn't make any sense whatsoever to the point where, if translated, one would understand, 'You left yourself, for my going away, going away to join you. Eat my heart, baby. I'm going to bury you, come see me, you're going to go far to me.' I have no problem with the English language, of course, but I think if you take a good old song like, "J'ai été au bal"⁹² and sing it in English you sound stupid and should be slapped, or at least beaten with a big stick. And if you're going to sing it in French, do a favour to all your ancestors and at least sing some words that make sense to all the people who still speak French. Don't go to *La Poussière*⁹³ and sing that shit to the old timers. They will punch you in the face. (personal communication, April 2009. Also posted online (Savoy 2009)

The same struggle that Wilson describes as a personal affront is a long-standing one. Harry Choates, himself, was one of these "faux French" singers, but he managed to maintain his status as a Cajun performer. Was his incompetence with the language simply overlooked? Was this linguistic inability less visible because of his popularity in Texas? Had he compensated in other ways? Is the French aspect of Cajun culture overplayed? The same struggles are also enacted in the compatibility issues Acadians have with standardized French. In order to dissociate the language's cultural use from the stigma of linguistic inadequacy, singers often emphasize that they sing in Acadian or

⁹² "J'ai été au bal" is an Iry LeJeune composition from the 1940s. LeJeune is one of the most influential, best-selling, and beloved Cajun accordionists and singers of all time. His dance hall influence is matched closely by a cultural legacy that speaks of a man proud to be Cajun before Cajun was cool (Savoy 1984).

⁹³ *La Poussière* is a dance hall in Breaux Bridge, Louisiana established in 1955. It is open most Saturday nights and Sunday afternoons and is known for being an "old school" dance hall, with traditionally-minded clientele. Its name, meaning dust, comes from a description of the air in the hall when the dance floor is full.

Cajun French by choice rather than ignorance, but any demonstration of such a resolute decision succumbs to suggestions of inferiority. Recording and transcribing Acadian and Cajun songs in their vernacular forms acknowledges that meaning “resides at the limits of what is intelligible” (Paré 1994, 14), even when singers are using their own language. In order to be understood by those outside their cultural group, performers must translate their experiences into a more widely-recognized code that has no tradition of expressing Acadian or Cajun sentiments. This has often been described as a choice between assimilation, which causes Acadians and Cajuns to disappear into a standardized norm, and differentiation, by which they are defined and ultimately reduced to their differences (Hymes 1996; Heller 1999).

The choice invokes Derrida’s “rendering” wherein he wonders how anything written in several languages at a time can be translated (Derrida 1985, 176), but also James Clifford’s “stranger talk”—the term coined in order to describe the language that is often used with outsiders (Clifford in Grossberg, Nelson, and Treichler 1992). One famous example tells the story of Choates’ double booking himself and looking to find someone to perform in his place. Fiddler George Uptmor was approached but said that he didn’t speak a whole lot of Cajun, so perhaps he wasn’t the best suited to the job. Harry Choates responded “Oh, hell, there are no real Cajuns out here anyway, just say anything. They won’t know the difference” (Brown and Choates 2002, 85). The aforementioned “accent game” effectively highlights the same focus on in and out groups. Stranger talk is sometimes considered to be what outsiders want to hear or what will encourage them to stay. Indeed, there’s a whole souvenir market based on things that say “Mon pays c’est

l'acadie" or "Laissez les bons temps rouler" not to mention the frequent use of French word play—a subject I take up in chapter five. Sometimes stranger talk is employed in order to alienate, in order to keep groups separate, and sometimes it is what "insiders" wish for outsiders to believe, but it is rarely wholly honest. In Chéticamp and Lafayette the idea of "strangers" might inspire too quick a leap to tourists, but stranger talk is any talk involving discrepant groups of meaning makers and these clearly exist within a cultural group, too. With strangers, it is difficult to gauge both capacity and interest, and the result is a sometimes loaded dissimulation wherein it is not always clear who has been victimized by "stranger talk."

Although Wilson Savoy is infuriated by the faux French of other performers, surely they themselves do not think of their performance as a sham. They have simply prioritized aspects of a Cajun performance differently than Wilson would like. Janson Lohmeyer, keyboardist with Waylon Thibodeaux's band, regularly introduces a Cajun song with a reference to his faux French: "I'll sing it and then y'all can correct me" (January 2013). When asked what the motivations are for singing in French when he doesn't speak it, Lohmeyer first draws my attention to his fellow bandmate, the enthusiastic washboard player Timmy Molinere. While we are speaking, Timmy is across the room, putting a second washboard on a dancing girl. He is using the bottle openers that he typically uses on his own board to rub the rhythm up and down her front. He's dancing and getting as many people involved as possible. "It's the same as that," says Lohmeyer, gesturing towards Timmy, "Some things just say Cajun to people...It's all about throwing your stress in the garbage can and, of course, the tip jar" (January,

2013).⁹⁴ The fact that “real” people have sincere and (for them) un-ironic exchanges with a “pretend” narrative construction might well demonstrate what sociologist Zygmunt Bauman calls the “weak, slack and underpowered institutionalization of differences” produced by post-modernity (Bauman 2001, 123). This is a condition affecting both Cajuns and Acadians as they create musical meaning through a negotiation of cultural stereotypes, audience awareness, personal sentiment, and historical reference. For many Cajuns and Acadians, meaning is made of *both* historically and culturally specific conditions *and* the post-modern conditions that are out of time, out of place and out of self.

When Cajuns are speaking about drinking—socially and in performance—their references are predominately unimpeded by language barriers, no matter how “good” their French is. They refer to people going to “*le bar*,” people who are drinking “*un jogue*” or “*un coup*,” a “*demi-gallon*” or “*un fifth de whiskey*,” “*rum*,” “*bière*,” or moonshine/*couche couche*. In contrast, there is a rather nuanced and less translatable Cajun vocabulary for the drunk himself. He is a wanderer or a dawdler as in Paul Junius Malveaux and Ernest Lafitte’s “Tous les samedis” (“*on m’appelle un trainailleur...*”). He is a rounder/rambler in Dewey Balfa’s “Valse du Bambocheur” (“*Gardez-la le bon a rien, le rouleur et bambocheur...*”); a pig in Nathan Abshire’s “Chanson de lemonade” (“*Samedi au soir, j’ai été-z-au bal, et je m’ai saoulé comme un gros cochon...*”). The

⁹⁴ Waylon Thibodeaux and Timmy Molinere also advertise themselves as a “Cajun Party in a Box.” Their website, www.waylont.com, sells an event where Waylon and Timmy perform, tell “authentic Cajun stories and jokes,” involve their guests, and serve your choice of the Cajun standards, chicken and sausage jambalaya or chicken and sausage gumbo. The website reads in a phoneticized imitation of a Cajun accent “Mae’ sha’, I neaux U dun heered how dem’ Cajuns luv to pass a good time.”

subject of these songs is variously a soak ("Blues du Saoulard"), a good for nothing (as in Louis Michot and Ethel Mae Bourque's "La Bouteille a Ruiné Ma Vie:" "*Mon j'suis un bon a rien...* ") or he is the best drinker in the land, as he is sarcastically portrayed in Bee and Ed Deshotel's "Mon Bon Vieux Mari" ("*le meilleur buveur du pays...* "). He drinks to avoid commitment (Dewey Balfa's "Parlez-Nous a Boire:" "*Oh parlez nous a boire, non pas du mariage...* "), to forget the blues—or "the greys" as in Davous Berard's "Mes amis, je suis gris" ("*Mes amis, je suis gris. Remplissez mon verre*"). His worries need to be forgotten (Steve Riley and the Mamou Playboys' "Katherine:" "*Moi, j'ai été au village hier au soir, après boire pour oublier tous mes tracas...* ") or it's his duty to drink (Mardi Gras Song in Grand Marais: "*Les Acadiens sont pas si fous de se laisser sans boire un coup...Boire et boire, il faut...*").

The lyrical variants suggest that it is not the alcohol that is particularly Cajun or Acadian, nor the amount of it consumed, but the manner—hence the interchangeability of English and French for varieties and quantities of alcohol, but the presence of a sophisticated vocabulary describing the drinker. Thus, the frequent melding and substitution of English and French becomes yet another example of the rubbing together, the edge, that creates a "third meaning" space.

When analyzing the lyrics of drinking songs more generally, there are several poetic similarities among them. Drink is often seen as a means of refuge, a means of escape. It is sometimes an opportunity to be with like-minded brothers, other times an isolator and a mark of marginality. Alcohol is both the cause for wandering and the wanderer's solace, a contributor and consoler in exile, longing, and homelessness

(Gammon 2008; West 2001; Connors and Alpher 1989). It aligns with the conundrum of Cajun and Acadian cultural memory. Strength, culturally, is attributed to weakness, historically—their role as victim. These are co-dependent attributes so in order to renew in-group solidarity, past suffering must maintain its position of prominence. This suffering can be conjured through drink and so it is often paired with ideas of comfort or understanding. If you're going to get drunk with a group, it's best to do so with those who understand where you're coming from.

Alcohol's Expressive Forms: Narrative Mobility

Drinking songs tell stories and the use of a narrative voice in these songs is not always self-contained. The songs tell stories about the characters in it, but in performance they also express a broader position relative to the song's subject matter and thus place the singer's own narrative voice in dialogue with the narrative voice within the song. Recall the previous description of "La femme de l'ivrogne" in which the performer deeply sympathizes with, but can't possibly take on, the narrative position of the song's protagonist. Through the song he affirms a story about his "real life" self and suggests a story about his "real life" wife, but the presence of this alternate narrative is only available to those who know something of the singer's life. The rest of the listeners will only hear the narration that is in the neatly packaged unit of the song itself.

Like any group, Acadians and Cajuns are subject to different types of narratives—stories they tell about themselves and stories that are compilations of historical events and stereotypes. But thinking of "a narrative voice" is, in itself, somewhat suspect. This is what is intended by my use of the term "narrative mobility." Depending on the links

which connect a composer, a performer and a listener, the expressive effect is changeable, mobile. A message is relayed using narration that supports or contradicts or has nothing to do with the true position of a singer. The songs that surface in the aforementioned contexts reveal both a devotion to narrative disjunctions and an imprisonment at its hands. The English popular songs that appear in house parties are no less significant. Performers singing of living and dying at the hands of the sea, just like their ancestors did in “Partons la mer est belle” are not without the contemporary preoccupations of “Mercury Blues”⁹⁵ There is no gain, poetically or personally, in clearly separating the part of oneself that is aware that the fishing is good today, but the life can be dangerous for the one that is “crazy ‘bout a Mercury” but can’t afford it. Those singing at Ethel Haché’s house have both the “common” sense that “That’s the way the world goes round/ You’re up one day, the next you’re down” (Prine 1978) and the unsettled Acadian sense of “*mon pays malheureux...je ne la verrai plus*” (my unhappy homeland...I’ll never see you again) (Tyson and Tyson 1962).

In almost every case, singers have managed to be both the song’s protagonist by virtue of their cultural history while carving out a meaningful distance between their own personal positions and that of a standardized cultural narrative. Audiences receive musical messages through a similar process, though this does not at all ensure identical, or even

⁹⁵ In the lyrics of the country song, “Mercury Blues,” the singer wishes he had the money to buy a Ford Mercury so that he could “cruise it up and down the road” and impress his girl (who is also “crazy ‘bout a Mercury”). Although this contemporary interest may seem at odds with the sea-faring men depicted in “Partons, la mer est belle,” the concerns expressed in each maintain relevance to most of the people singing. The time-honoured occupation of fishing remains the primary source of employment in and around Cheticamp, but this doesn’t mean that fishermen don’t want nice cars, too.

similar, effects. To a drunk man home from Fort McMurray, Alberta for a few days, “Un Acadien Errant” simultaneously speaks of his individual life—the one he’s personally left for opportunity— and his collective life—the one in which he feels partially responsible for a disappearing traditional Acadian lifestyle. In both versions, the themes of wandering to places where he is not able to speak his native language or sending messages home to those he loves resonate. One man in his late thirties told me he had vowed never to go “out west” but that he changed his mind when the winter job hunt became increasingly hopeless at home. Telling me about how he prioritized his interest in having a family raised in Cheticamp he said, with resignation, “If I didn’t go, we couldn’t stay.” His wife told me about how she and their children try to have skype conversations with him but are unsure as to whether this makes him feel closer or further away. And both of them spoke of the work camps being “dry,” discussing whether or not the combination of being away from both sociability and alcohol amplifies its emotional effects when they are both reintroduced. But “Un Acadien Errant” didn’t speak to everyone present in that way. It couldn’t possibly. Other people spoke of working “away” as simply practical, with none of the sentimental trappings. One woman in her fifties told me she thought it was ridiculous to get tied up in “home” if the job prospects were so miserable that you’d grow to resent it. “I’m going to be Acadian in Calgary, too. And I’ll just come home in the summer and enjoy it. Everyone likes to sing these songs and cry as if they didn’t have a choice about whether or not they go... I don’t think I should apologize for wanting to be comfortable somewhere” (identity withheld, personal communication July 2011).

The vulnerability of these positions is exaggerated by the presence of alcohol, sometimes compromising an individual's narrative agency. If each individual's narrative agency is compromised, structures and approaches are perpetuated that seem, in the songs at least, to do a great deal of harm. "La femme de l'ivrogne" offers no solutions for a drunk husband's misbehaviour, so a man singing it sincerely suggests resignation to the conditions plaguing the character in the song, perhaps even despair. The qualities one experiences inside oneself are confused with the self one projects onto the song or absorbs from his surroundings. This makes it possible to be both a character (insofar as each singer and listener is a direct descendent of the fabled expulsion) and a real person (insofar as he is rustling through his wallet looking for money to contribute to the liquor store run and dealing with his mother's half-disapproving, half-empathetic reaction). Locked in an intense struggle with narrative and failing in this struggle, the result can be an abdication of self and the installation of some fictional voice as the primary directive force in real life. The choices can seem binary: one submits to, or contends with, existing cultural constructions. Contention suggests the possibility of permanent change in the system of relations that govern exterior and interior realities, but the slippage between real and musically/culturally composed worlds has become so pronounced as to have reached the point where real-life musicians suffer from the selfsame maladies that trouble the characters about which they sing. When Anna Laura Edmiston and Wilson Savoy are singing "Pine Grove Blues," "taking it personally" is what prompts Wilson to include Anna Laura's name in the next verse—bring the song closer. But the same gesture prompts her to stop singing the song altogether.

Cultural identity, especially when dealing with alcohol, has too-often been considered an all or nothing construction, making it both impossible to fulfill and impossible to contest. One of the more important features of these songs—shared by both Acadians and Cajuns, teetotallers and drinkers—is intolerance. While the abstainer's reputation for disapproving judgment is widely understood, the intolerance drinkers have is a much more subtle and sly creature, often expressed as a doubt that the sober performer can achieve the same cultural "soul" or intimacy. A guitarist (name withheld) who had somewhat of a "party" reputation and was fairly reluctant to speak to me throughout my fieldwork gave me an invaluable and pithy description of his position: "I know what it's like to be high and they don't. I stay out all night and even when I'm not out, I'm up [late] so I know what that is. Same with drinking. Some of it's stupid, yeah, but I don't think they [sober people] want to do the same things I want to do. It's not that they're being good or steering clear of something they want to do. They're not drawn to it. And it's not that I'm doing it for anybody but myself. That's the way I live. We don't know the same worlds."

It cannot be overstated that the effectiveness of either extreme is largely dependent on the tension between them. The cultural potency of alcohol is that it is a shape shifter. Alcohol, sometimes considered compensation for material shortcomings, is used, by others, as a means of apologizing for material and social comforts. When visiting with very poor people in these communities, I have almost always been offered a drink. And I've been generously supplied with liquor when playing for parties, weddings and other events where a standard fee would be difficult to afford. Alcohol seems to be

outside the realm of other budgetary concerns so people with nothing arrive at parties with twenty-four beer or forty-ouncers. On the other end of the spectrum (and equally generous), when in the company of those who are economically more secure, alcohol is often used as an equalizing gesture. Aside from supplying liquor, buying rounds, or making house alcohol available, a well-off host drinking with his/her "lesser" guests is an indication that s/he is more concerned with sociability than finery. Nervous about a level of dress and decorum expected at one home and the appropriateness of hostess gifts, I was told not to worry by a mutual friend (name withheld): "She'll be on the rum and cokes,"⁹⁶ too. She's totally down to earth." As has been discussed in nearly every anthropological examination of alcohol, drink is considered a great social leveller—relieving those of humble status and humbling those of elevated status (Gefou-Madianou 1992; Wilson 2005; Pittman and White 1991; Marshall 1979; Mandelbaum 1965; MacAndrew and Edgerton 1969; Heath 1995, 2000; Douglas 1987).

My approach to narrative in this section has been one which highlights the ways in which certain songs are integrated into the daily lives of individuals, variously elevating or humbling existing attitudes. Inside this approach, narrative is not so much encoded in a song's lyrics as it is enacted in the lives of the individuals, communities, and cultures that sing them. It is not so much about composing and playing as it is about receiving and sending signals that are actualized in real life. My research shows that lyrics about torment and interference arise out of the insistent and competing demands of various

⁹⁶ Rum and coke, at least in Nova Scotia, is referred to a bit like an "of the people" drink. The same is true of certain brands of beer.

narrative voices inside an Acadian and Cajun psyche *and* inside their material reality. Therefore, the many renderings of these songs are not just about the politically and sociologically compelling experiences of a marginalized people, but the emotionally and psychologically compelling elements as well. In the contained compartment of a song, there is a brief interlude in the singer's "real" life wherein he can experience some narrative mobility.

The strategies presented in a song are often too singular to have much success in a lived life, but the element of control in lyrical language, whether or not it can be wielded in real life, can still amount to a compelling pattern of valuable signals. Selection narration—what one leaves out when telling a story, what one has chosen by singing or not singing a given song in a given way—allows composers and singers to momentarily put aside the massive quantities of "really real" stuff that does not belong in songs, but *does* belong in people's lives. As much as this song repertoire serves as a reminder of cultural values and happenings, it is equally (and significantly) a "mechanism...for forgetting" (Lyotard 1984, xii).

The Cajun and Acadian song repertoire, lyrically and performatively, combines drinking with a palpable fear of loss. Though the communities I've presented here seem anything but fragmented, an acceptance of fragmentation, life's tenuousness, is regularly credited with community solidarity. Communal order is valued in a necessary tension with its fragility, and this *communal* order is achieved as a result of the conversion undertaken by individual *disorder* (Donner 1994). The immediacy of drinking songs is a cultural strategy that appears to serve as a means of ritualizing memory. Through

performance of these songs, the historically distant can be kept philosophically close and vibrant. The in-group Acadian and Cajun identity is based on struggle and loss and it is appropriate that the activities used when strengthening this in-group identity also have threatening elements. It is undesirable to eliminate consequence and indeterminacy from Acadian and Cajun cultural displays. Without it, their formative story is obliterated.

As I move, in the next chapter, into discussions of Cajun and Acadian Catholicism, it becomes ever clearer that identity is conjunctural rather than essential. A musically, culturally competent Acadian or Cajun relies on integrated knowledge systems to create personal meaning. There is a polyphonic conversation happening where alternate paths of understanding are sometimes available and sometimes not, sometimes taken and sometimes impossible to access. Above all, interpretive analyses must remember that attentional and emotional energy is often divided. There is never one performer and one interpreter and, therefore, a liminal ground is created between data and narrative, fact and myth, performer and performed. In performance, unsettled intersections are revealed as important in establishing a fluid relationship between the arenas of meaning they involve.

Chapter Four

Sacrilege as Sacrament: Cultural Catholicism in Acadian and Cajun Music

As historians of the Expulsion have regularly observed, the Acadians were intensely scrutinized by English and Anglo American commentators who questioned their loyalty to the British Crown based on their Catholicism and semi-feudal society (Cabajsky 2009; Louder and Waddell 1993; Ross and Deveau 1992; Daigle 1982).⁹⁷ Though in many ways Acadians and Cajuns are now distinct cultural groups, their common ancestry is often claimed through a relationship with Catholicism—one that reflects identity politics and social solidarity every bit as much as religious devotion. This chapter addresses the intersections of tacit and overt religious practice, recognizing that the social use of music and alcohol in Acadian and Cajun communities is informed by the philosophies and strategies of the Catholic church.

Catholic approaches to tradition, symbolic ritual, authority, and embodiment are apparent in the way alcohol and music present themselves in Acadian and Cajun musical practice, discourse, leadership, and sociability. And just as the changes brought about by 1965's Second Vatican Council are continuously revisited in efforts to balance scriptural and contemporary faith issues, so too is there a struggle among Acadians and Cajuns as they negotiate the space between traditional preservation and contemporary cultural relevance and rejuvenation. This chapter explores the social acceptability of old fashioned

⁹⁷ A 1760 issue of *Gentleman's Monthly Intelligencer* is typical of Acadian and Cajun descriptors which place Catholicism above all other cultural characteristics: "As the Acadians were all bigoted papists, it was therefore deemed impossible to expect any fidelity from them, whilst they remained so near their countrymen in Canada" (Anonymous 1760).

and contemporary approaches to drinking, performance, abandon, and control, asking questions as to how their convergence takes on moral tones informed by Catholic practices.

In order for this chapter to address Catholicism's cultural role, this section begins with an historical overview of Catholic traditions in Acadian and Cajun society. It is then divided into three primary sections: pilgrimage, symbolism and embodiment, and the authoritative relationship of the priest and his congregation. As ethnographic examples I refer to the religiously-tinged patterns of Whiskey River Landing, a Cajun dance bar in Henderson, Louisiana, *Fête Nationale* celebrations in Church Point, Nova Scotia, and *Mi-Carême* traditions in Chéticamp, Nova Scotia.⁹⁸ I discuss these in terms of the bodily and symbolic ways in which Cajuns and Acadians describe cultural competence. I also examine ideas of authority and deviance by examining secular performance practice in reference to Catholic understandings of leadership, congregations, and confession.

The sacramental foundations of Catholicism rely on gestures always meaning multiple things at the same time. In keeping with the "god made man" origins of Christianity, the religion also depends on the interdependence of seeming opposites, the human and the divine. As this chapter unfolds, I will outline the Catholic sense of continuity that prompts music and alcohol to link an individual to her religious and lay community, connect scriptural to practical understandings, and demonstrate the

⁹⁸ I chose these events because they represent comparable but distinct approaches to combining the secular and the sacred. Whiskey River is a secular gathering place that is tinged with elements of religious ritual, *Fête Nationale* melds nationalistic and religious identities into one and the same, and *Mi-Carême* is a religious occasion that, much like, *mardi gras*, has come to take on extra-religious, secular meaning which borders on trading in the religious for the irreligious.

codependence of “sacred” and “profane” traditions. It will also highlight the struggle and compatibility of traditional to rejuvenated presentational styles.

“Good Catholic”: A Brief History of the Church in Acadian and Cajun Communities

The core arguments for Acadians’ “good Catholic” associations are traditionally these: the Acadians are thought to have left the Poitou region of France in response to famine and plague, but also as a result of a series of ugly religious wars born of the Counter-Reformation and the holy crusades that it generated. Those who felt their Catholic faith was stifled came to Samuel Champlain’s l’Acadie believing they would be free to practice their faith in this new colony. Subsequently, the expulsion which forced many Acadians to move elsewhere in North America or the West Indies temporarily forced many others to go back to France, but, it is argued, their religious displeasure persisted and, after 1763, they re-emigrated, settling in Nova Scotia, Québec, and Louisiana (Brasseaux 1992; Hero 1995; Nostrand and Estaville 2001).

Catholic associations also stem from the Acadian tendency to orient many major social practices—most famously *Mi-Carême*, *Fête Nationale*, and *Mardi Gras*—around the liturgical calendar (Arsenault and Ross 2009; Lindahl 1996; Sexton 2001). Further, the documented history of Acadians and Cajuns portrays a people who often found themselves without the guidance of priests, but whose religious rituals endured despite their isolated conditions. In historical portrayals, sacramental commitment is regularly cited as the motivation behind documented instances of lay baptism and marriages

sanctioned by “jumping over the broom” type rituals.⁹⁹ In numerous letters that date well into the early 1800s, historians have also found written requests for priests and reference to their scarcity in Acadia (Louder and Waddell 1993). The most enduring of all Catholic Acadian images, however, is the devout Evangeline, the fictional good Catholic girl, who becomes a care-giving nun, and is the subject of Longfellow’s legendary, if historically questionable, poem (Longfellow, Ross, and Le Blanc 2003). She quickly found her way into scholarly literature and cultural imagery, burrowed deeply, and shows very few signs of moving on.

Although it is difficult to deny the influence of Catholicism on Acadian and Cajun cultural practice, what remains curious is the dominating image of an institutionalized church. Until the very end of the 18th century, there were very few churches at all in l’Acadie. Louisianans were similarly slow to organize around any official sense of Catholicism, focussing instead on systems of kinship and family loyalties (Ancelet 2011; Roof 2011; Neville 1987). The question that surfaces asks how history could allow an *absence* of priests to reinforce the claim that Acadians and Cajuns were devout when one might also wonder why, at that time, these allegedly committed communities produced so few priests themselves. What is to be said about the lethargy with which churches were

⁹⁹ The widest body of “jumping the broom” literature speaks of it as an African American ritual validating the marriage of slaves, although the practice’s origins are typically credited to the Welsh. The activity goes like this: a couple wishing to express their serious commitment to each other jump over a broom that is placed on the ground or at the threshold of their new home in order to profess that love before their community. Because the practice was relegated mainly to groups whose rights to marry were denied, “jumping the broom” is often referenced in somewhat derogatory ways, as in Dickens’ *Great Expectations*: “They both led tramping lives and ...had been married very young, over the broomstick (as we say) to a tramping man” (Dickens 1999, 293). For further reading on the subject, refer to Alan Dundes “Jumping the Broom: On the Origin and Meaning of an African American Custom” (Dundes 1996).

erected? Or the letters from disgusted Québécois priests who wrote of Acadians who were more interested in drinking together on Sundays than making the trek to the nearest priest for mass (Carroll 2007, 2002)? Moreover, if we examine Acadian correspondence for its religious content, letters and activities quickly reveal that a dominant quality is as cagey as it is Catholic.

Without casting religious devotion into doubt, Acadian settlers, as a primarily illiterate population, needed the church to ensure the presence of an archival apparatus and relied on priests to keep records. Among the Acadians, religion and the church were not necessarily synonymous and, as historian Naomi Griffiths has suggested, the early Acadian Catholics “looked upon ecclesiastical authority with as critical an eye as they viewed the secular” (Griffiths 1973, 22).¹⁰⁰ In other words, they adjusted responses and behaviour according to what was most likely to fulfil the needs of their settling ethnic community. Seeking only minimal services, Acadians tolerated only minimal interference in return. The Acadians viewed the church as a sort of civil government and any action that deviated from their mental image of these institutions elicited a prompt negative response (Brasseaux 1987; Young 1988).

It's a position that continued through the expulsions and into early settlement in Louisiana. In need of external support, Acadians solicited help from both French and Spanish colonial powers. Correspondence with Catholic French authorities had Acadians

¹⁰⁰ For discussions of the relationship between political authority and the Catholic church in Counter-Reformation France, see W.J. Stankiewicz's *Politics and Religion in Seventeenth Century France* (1960). Examinations of the sustained approach to Catholicism—from colonial conflict among French Catholics and English Protestants to Spanish authority's role in the construction of Cajun Catholicism, see Brasseaux's *Acadian to Cajun: Transformation of a people* (1992).

claiming that their expulsion came as a result of a loyalty to the French crown and a refusal to pledge allegiance to British authority. But when writing to Spanish authorities (who governed Louisiana from 1766 to 1803) Acadians attribute the expulsion to their deep attachment to the Catholic tradition (one conveniently shared by the Spanish) and discrimination at the hands of the British Protestants (Brasseaux 1989, xiv-xv). In other words, they adjusted responses according to what was most likely to garner institutional support.

This *could* suggest the absence of any true religiosity, but, I suggest instead that the conditional loyalty reveals the extent to which varied approaches to religiosity are embedded in all Acadian and Cajun cultural practices—especially those often deemed sacrilegious by organized religion, like drinking and dancing. Though Acadian and Cajun approaches diverge, positions on vulnerability, pilgrimage, symbol and communal relationships are similarly significant and religiously revealing. It's another examination that calls the nature of evidence into question. Though records regarding institutional order and clerical control are plentiful, anyone who searches for *evidence* of the lived experience of Catholicism among Acadians and their Cajun descendants will encounter disappointment. The details of piety, devotion or a deep attachment to Catholicism expressed in family and community relations are real, but they are more difficult to record and verify than are relations with the institutional church (Carroll 2002, 325)

In the first three decades of Cajun settlement in Louisiana, clerics encountered a remarkable lack of enthusiasm among the colonists for church construction. Numerous cabarets and billiard halls had been erected before churches were completed and they

flourished to such an extent that the bulk of the town's population assembled at these establishments instead of the church services held in makeshift quarters (Brasseaux 2009, 34-35). These attributes, which blend Catholicism with more secular sociability, have provided some impetus for a repulsive reaction to a particular brand of Cajun Catholicism—from non-Cajun areas of a largely Catholic southern Louisiana as well as from the predominately Protestant Northern Louisiana. Also, because, historically, the institutional church had such a small presence in Cajun communities, religiosity was centered in the home and many indicators of “good Catholic” became enmeshed in parental instruction and community mindedness—ultimately inseparable from being a “good Cajun.”

A Cajun comfort with priests as administrators eventually developed, but it was accompanied by strong resistance when priests tried to exercise anything more than the loosest control over daily life. Cajun culture highly values the idea that no one rises above anyone else,¹⁰¹ so the “common man” aspect of the priesthood is held more strongly than the elitist structures of the institutional church. Instead, the family and the community had become the leaders of the church and though family activities may have borrowed structural and symbolic components from religious life, they were in no way its servant. The priestly themes of sacrifice and atonement translate readily into family values and, in

¹⁰¹ I will discuss this attitude in further detail in Chapter Five quoting David Greely and Steve Riley as they say “everyone’s number one,” “we’re humble and prideful at the same time” and “You can’t be Cajun and think you’re rising above” (personal communication, October 2010). This attitude is also discussed in a scholarly fashion in Henry & Bankston’s ethnic self-identification article (Henry and Bankston 2001) and Henry’s independent work on the use and meaning of *cadien/Cajun* and its close espousal of social and cultural change (Henry 1998). In it he discusses Cajun ethnic identification in terms of “steadfastness” and a general disinterest in progress that is sometimes mistaken, derogatorily and by “outsiders,” for laziness.

time, these played out not just in church, but throughout Southern culture. As the Southern Gothic writer Flannery O'Connor claims, there is a particular sense in the Southern United States of being "Christ haunted" and to understand what that means, one must grasp how folk and official culture are drawn together through innumerable symbols and rituals (O'Connor 1972). The greater the cultural integration, the greater the chances that what happens in one ritual system will bear upon the other.¹⁰²

In Atlantic Canadian history, the role of the Catholic priest was a role inseparable from higher education, material affluence, elevated social status and overall elitism. The shepherd, in post-expulsion history, was typically quite well-off while his flock of Acadians typically were not. As a result, French language, higher education and Catholicism began to go hand in hand in Moncton, Wolfville, Arichat and other Acadian areas of Atlantic Canada where seminaries educating young Acadian men were established. Throughout the Maritimes, French universities were founded squarely on Catholicism, and in many cases the connections remain strong to this day (Pilote and Ratel 2007). The complex links between language and religion have made the history of

¹⁰² Culinary traditions, for example, are particularly revealing where a *cochon de lait*, or pig roast, takes on a vigil-like atmosphere of careful preparation, a communion-like aura of collective enjoyment, and an emphasis on kinfolk. A *cochon de lait* (as an object rather than an event) is a suckling pig that has roasted in a metal box/barrel (also jokingly referred to as a Cajun microwave). Cooking responsibilities signal an enduring male authority—a ritual reversal and a hangover from Christian religious authority. Part work, part performance, and surrounded by lore, music and beer, both cultural and religious love is expressed in feasts and underscores something of what cultural anthropologist Mary Douglas argues about food categories encoding social realities (Douglas 2002). With reference to Barthes and Levi-Strauss, Douglas sees food categories as encoding a micro-scale social system and examines the many instances when food/drink are made to stand-in for social happenings (i.e. "Come for tea," "come for coffee" or "come for cocktails" suggest a time, a mood and a level of intimacy). Drinks, says Douglas in "Deciphering a Meal" (Douglas 1972) are for everyone—strangers, workmen, your date, your family—while meals are for intimates and honoured guests (1972, 66).

Acadian education in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century particularly intricate. There is no doubt that until the mid-twentieth century most Acadians considered language and religion inseparable and the phrase “he who loses the language, loses the faith” is an oft-repeated expression of this belief (Griffiths 2011).

In her study of folk music and Acadian nationalism, Jeanette Gallant characterises the period from 1880 to 1960 as a period of clerico-nationalism influenced by an ideology that emphasized the prerogatives and powers of the Pope. Brought to Québec and Acadie by Catholic missionaries from France, Gallant explains a philosophy that

placed the church at the centre of society, promoting the idea of an insulated community which idealized the past while extolling the virtues of faith, ancestry, language, heritage, and tradition. With national repertoires becoming synonymous with the advancement of French Catholicism in Canada, all forms of national song – Gregorian chant, patriotic songs, national anthems, folk song, and even locally composed lyrics set to borrowed European classical melodies – were used to maintain boundaries between the French and English, acting as cultural symbols to create a sense of belonging, teach Christian values, and build Acadian society. (Gallant 2009, 179)

The same type of connections were considered anti-patriotic in Louisiana, where English was adopted rapidly and French, institutionally invisible, grew in short order to be considered a mark of the lower class. The result is that the strongest line of Cajun speakers in Louisiana have predominately poor and uneducated backgrounds¹⁰³ and represent a population not afforded the opportunity to have their language eradicated in

¹⁰³ As discussed in chapter three’s description of the recording sessions that gave rise to *Allons Boire un Coup*, contemporary enthusiasm for Cajun culture is having a noticeable effect on this demographic description, creating a new generation of somewhat gentrified Cajun culture. Fluency in Cajun language today is no longer a signal of poverty or poor education, but, increasingly, privilege. Uninterrupted generational lines of fluency, however, are generally indicative of past associations with inferior cultural and socio-economic status.

school or church—the complete opposite of Acadian realities and a direct consequence of differing styles in clerical involvement. Recent generations of culturally-proud Cajuns have begun to turn this trend around, but a palpable resentment towards Catholicism remains.

Throughout post-expulsion history, Acadians as often credit deep religious devotion for facilitating cultural focus and encouraging kinship bonds as they blame the institutionalized church for eradicating or demonizing musical traditions. In contrast, the Cajuns of Louisiana blame Catholicism for eradicating linguistic practice and often describe their comparably lax relationship with Catholicism as being “able to escape” institutionalized order (Ancelet 2011). These attitudinal differences to a central descriptor raise “cafeteria Catholic”¹⁰⁴ suspicions which extend to the broader cultural narrative. Catholicism is welcome, but when communities seek a culprit for cultural weakening, blame is readily placed on priests, Catholic traditions, superstitions and institutionalized power. Furthermore, a morally-tinged thread of “tradition” runs through many Acadian and Cajun practices—a cyclical warring of the old and new, conservative and liberal,

¹⁰⁴ This term is used for people who claim Catholicism as their faith, but are selective about the elements of its doctrine they apply to their own life. A precursor term “communal Catholic” was coined in 1976 by Andrew Greeley. In contrast with Institutional Catholics who obeyed all the rules, Greeley wrote that “communal Catholics” attached themselves to the church but more to the community of members rather than the rules laid down by church authorities (Greeley 1976). In popular use the “cafeteria Catholic” term has been in use since Pope Paul VI’s encyclical “On the Regulation of Birth” (VI 1968) which reaffirms the traditional teaching of the Catholic Church’s prohibiting all forms of artificial contraception. Because the position is controversial, many Catholics who otherwise consider themselves faithful to the laws of the church choose to ignore this particular edict. People who frown on this approach feel that its cafeteria Catholics lack the discipline required of a devoted faith. People who support this approach feel it allows for a customized faith that is more meaningful to the practitioner and discards aspects that do not resonate (hierarchical traditions of power are another often used example).

purist and permissive that mirrors Catholicism's struggle with the changes of the second Vatican Council.

In this chapter, I present research that examines the reciprocal roles of alcohol and musical practices as they are affected by Catholicism. In so doing, I will follow four key threads that hold comparable prominence in musical, Catholic and alcohol studies: authority, deviance, ritual, and the transcendent. By examining the influence of the institutionalized church on Acadian and Cajun music, I hope to consider the ways musical practices are or are not engrained with a sort of cultural Catholicism. While questioning the relevance of a cultural narrative bound in Catholicism, I stress the ideas that Christian teaching reflects ritual experience—the intersubjective, multi-vocal meeting of physical, emotional, spiritual, musical, and gestural understandings—as much as it is reflected by it (Douglas 2002; Meeks 1982; Grainger 1988).

The reflection is disputed by Cajun scholar, Barry Ancelet, who sees Cajun Louisiana as an exception to the Acadian rule of clerical cultural control (Ancelet 2011). Though I appreciate the “set the record straight” motivations underlying Ancelet's dismissal of Catholicism as a musical player, I consider the intersections of Catholicism and social life somewhat differently. People needn't self-identify as “religious” in order to be informed by the same sensibilities as the institutionalized Catholic church and exhibit behaviour that is religious in its tendencies. There needn't be an expression of any type of conventional religious faith to be participating in the sense of the ceremonial that religious faith can provide.¹⁰⁵ The most profane of things, as Emile Durkheim and several

¹⁰⁵ Though I've done no serious research on the subject, my impressions also lead me to suspect that the contemporary religious climate of the American South causes the less charismatic of practitioners to be

of his followers reminds us, has the capacity to evoke the presence of the sacred; and conversely, that which is regarded as sacred mingles freely in and around the profane (Roof 2011; Eliade 1961; Gusfield 1996; Durkheim, Thompson, and Thompson 2005).

To address the presence of the sacred, I turn, first, to what makes a “good Catholic” in any kind of traditional sense. Modern religious cynicism aside, ideas of a good Catholic are fairly unified (Hoge 2002; Williams and Davidson 1996) and marked not only by the regular prayer featured in most religions, but also a belief in a sacramental outlook which looks for “the more in the midst of the ordinary” (Groome 2004). To complement engagement with scripture, the Catholic faith is highly ritualized and depends on miraculous imagery and its physical representations (shrines, rosaries, statues, and relics along with other physical gestures like veneration, adornment, kneeling). There is a devotion to Mary, a commitment to justice and an embrace of holistic faith in which all levels of existence (personal, interpersonal, political, physical and spiritual) revolve around the idea that “faith without works is dead” (James 2:17). This holistic approach means that embodied expressions of devotion such as pilgrimage are informed by a sacramental system that is rooted in nature and revolves around the simultaneous sense of being in a world that is good, but fallen. The prominent Christian scenes of the nativity and the crucifixion are rooted in the idea that the divine and the human are in one and the

somewhat closeted about practices of faith, for fear of association with more evangelical branches of Christianity. Not to be overlooked, but beyond the scope of this study, is a conflation of American nationalism with charismatic Christianity that also sits uncomfortably with several Cajuns. For further discussion of the subject see, among others, Bohlman, Blumhofer and Chow's *Music in American Religious Experience* (Bohlman, Blumhofer, and Chow 2006), particularly chapters 2,5,7,10 and 14; Morris' *American Catholic* (Morris 1997) and Budde's article on American Catholic Nationalism (Budde 1992).

same place at the same time—depending on each other. Viewing Catholicism as a holistic faith highlights the integration of faith with everyday life.

Catholicism is also organized according to a hierarchical institutional and spiritual system with a prominent role afforded to symbolism (Williams and Davidson 1996; Stiltner 1999). The result of a devotion to these tenets is that “a good Catholic” typically has reciprocal, inter-dependent understandings of the real and unreal (extending, on occasion, to the hyper-real or simulacra). Though it is impossible and inconsequential to separate these elements by degree of prominence, they are all evident elements, not only of Catholicism, but, as I will demonstrate, also of Acadian and Cajun musical traditions.

Symbol and Code Switching: Catholic Musical Development

Alcohol-affected musical practices in both Louisiana and Nova Scotia demonstrate an intuitive transference of meaning between cultural fields. The engrained methods and meanings that have marked liturgical music through the ages have informed secular practice as well and, again, binaries are revealed as co-dependent—sacred and secular habits among Cajuns and Acadians rely on one another to make meaning. The following analysis will demonstrate that secular music and associated practice, even at its most irreverent, is routinely revealed as existing in reference to Catholic systems.

Discussions of the role of liturgical music in the Catholic church contain several generalizations. What appears to be a fundamental aspect of liturgical music is that it is seen as both formative and expressive. It is rooted in the same intrinsic tension that is present in prayer and faith—that the ritual is simultaneously an expression of who participants are and who they aspire to be (Schaefer 2008, 20; Schechner 2005; 1993,

257). According to the church's institutional directives, again very generally and vaguely described, there is an emphasis on liturgical context. Some music is considered to be holier than other music. Music in the church increases in holiness the more closely it aligns with significant days in the liturgical calendar or with scriptural readings. High value is also placed on "liveness." If music is to be considered a meaningful sign expressed by living human beings it should be live, not recorded, and music is meant to heighten without dominating—the idea being that music symbolizes a God active in creation *and* history. Music's effective but seemingly insubstantial nature symbolizes a God who is both present and hidden. Its dynamism symbolizes a God who calls, but does not force, people into dialogue, and music's ability to unify symbolizes a union with God and others (Kubicki 2002; Spink 2005; Predmore 1950).

As in the Catholic liturgy, music in Acadian and Cajun circles heightens without dominating, is both present and hidden, and unifies participants with one another. There are very few Acadian and Cajun gatherings that don't involve music, but it is rarely the sole focal point. Instead, it is a necessary backdrop to sociability, a reason to gather, but it is often placed in and among several other meaningful social activities. Musicians play and/or drink while others drink, talk, play, cook, dance and pay un-sustained and uneven attention to musical and alcoholic happenings. Music seems at once essential and subservient. In terms of liveness, "in person" is by far the dominant way for Cajun and Acadian music to be consumed and this, as has been outlined in the ethnographic descriptions of previous chapters, is exaggerated by extensive interaction between listeners, dancers and performers. Though interest in commercial recordings is steadily

growing in both Louisiana and Nova Scotia, the aesthetic intention is almost always to appear unmediated, and so recordings typically have a “live off the floor” feel and the presence of produced studio effects is usually minimal.¹⁰⁶ Editing is nominal and the sense of an album’s flow generally aspires to replicate a live environment, with tracks organized according to the way they would most likely appear in a live context. The recording process is often aided through drink, and there are few efforts at keeping this a secret so that recordings often allow you to hear artists conversing between tracks, laughing at themselves, telling stories, talking to listeners (who are, of course, not the same listeners at the point of recording as they are at the point of listening) or making spontaneous adjustments as they play.¹⁰⁷ Beginnings and endings are rarely “clean.” The incorporation of alcohol is also a factor in the collection of field recordings and is therefore more easily evidenced in Cajun recordings (where the interests of American collectors are palpable) than Acadian ones.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ I refer, here, back to chapter two and Grand Dérangement’s recording of “Mon nom, c’est Cy a Mateur.” The other-worldly effect of this track’s production is exaggerated further by its placement against the dominant tendency toward “dry” production values.

¹⁰⁷ *Balfa Toujours’* “Live at Whiskey River Landing” album, for example, includes the sounds of raucous patrons, clinking bottles and the sound of bartenders ringing bells when they receive a generous tip (Toujours 2008).

¹⁰⁸ The practice of bringing alcohol as a gesture of kindness, friendship or appreciation in exchange for the opportunity to record amateur artists is in no way exclusive to Cajun music. The general practices of some of American music’s most renowned collectors is quite open about the incorporation of alcohol where appropriate. Alan Lomax, for example, who, along with John Lomax, is responsible for assembling some of the essential recordings in traditional Cajun and Creole music (Various 1999) regularly offered alcohol to his informants. John Lomax’s daughter, Anna Lomax Chairetakis, described her father’s approach this way: “He just got down to where the people were...he drank with them, he sat with them, he went in their boats and recorded them” (qtd. in Hoffman n.d.). Peter Hoover, a similarly valuable collector of several American genres, including Cajun music, described the partnership of alcohol and field recordings as common as well. Though he does not cite Cajun examples in particular, he does describe sharing soda

The details of music-making are assembled liturgically, with alcohol playing a similar role in Catholic as musical ritual—an aid, a symbol, a punctuation point, something shared. Rooted in ideas of poverty and hard work, Cajuns and Acadians refer to alcohol in religious terms. Though it's rarely wine that is consumed, community and "the work of human hands" effect is strongly communicated when sharing local beer or homemade moonshine. By extension, Catholic interests in Exodus, and "acts in remembrance," combine well for Acadians and Cajuns with Wedding at Cana themes, where alcohol and faith in one another make something from nothing. Throughout the Bible, but particularly in Luke 22:17-18 and Corinthians 11:24 (the scriptural source material for the celebration of the mass), references to wine are oriented around sacrifice, memory and communality. Similarly, the story of Jesus' miracle at the Wedding at Cana (John 2:1) is oriented around family, having miracles occur at a desperate hour, and being humble (saving the best wine until last, when hosts would not necessarily be celebrated for their generosity). Both are associated with unlikely or challenged occasions for celebration. In terms of "union with others" the effects of Catholicism are most noticeable when discussing tradition and preservation. In the Catholic mass, musical portions are routinely introduced with phrases that invite living participants to "blend their voices"

crackers and moonshine during sessions with North Carolinian fiddler, Marcus Martin's or delivering Garrett's Strong Scotch Snuff to Virginian banjoist Wade Ward (Hoffman n.d.). It is well documented, as well, that early recordings of Cajun accordion icons Iry Lejeune and Nathan Abshire came about as a result of disc jockey Eddie Schuler's alcohol-centred bribe with the sound engineer (Yule 2007; Broven 1983; Ancelet and Morgan 1984). As a final example of this alcohol-affected recording technique, Chris Strachwitz's Arhoolie recordings of the early 1960s capture Cajun and Zydeco music primarily at house parties and beer joints (Frères 1973; Blank, Strachwitz, and Gosling 1989 and 2003) and the liner notes of "Cajun Honky Tonk," a compilation of 1950s artists, describes it as "raw, rough and inebriated with emotion" (Various 2009) while reviews of the recording say Abshire's performance "manages to sound like a drunken whoop and a poignant lament all at the same time" (Ray Templeton, *Blues & Rhythm*).

with those who have passed on, with “the angels” and “all the saints” in a way entirely aligned with Cajun and Acadian approaches to musical evolution and indebtedness.¹⁰⁹

To refer back to chapter three’s discussions of cultural narrative and musical lineage, it is very rare for an Acadian or Cajun performance not to reference past musicians, more in gesture than in word. Chéticamp area fiddler, Robert Deveau, uses ornamentation reflective of his teachers or arranges a medley of tunes in a way that suggests Acadian fiddle legends Arthur Muise or Joseph Cormier.¹¹⁰ Indebtedness or reference may appear as singers introduce or imitate the styles of others whose performances have become inseparable from the song itself, as demonstrated in the Loubie Chiasson imitations described in the previous chapter. Some Mardi Gras runs in Louisiana go so far as to include a visit to the graves of significant musicians. There, symbolically meaningful tunes are played and a bottle of the deceased’s favourite liquor is left behind. In the spring of 2009, fiddlers Chris Stafford and Joel Savoy and singer Linzay Young led the Faquetigue Mardi Gras run to the grave of Dennis McGee, one of

¹⁰⁹ Invitations such as “In union with the whole church...” and “we ask some share in the fellowship of the apostles” prefaces the (sung) concluding doxology of the Eucharistic Prayer. Similarly “Through Christ, the choirs of angels and all the saints praise and worship your glory. May our voices blend with theirs as we join in their unending hymn of praise” prefaces the Sanctus (Church 2005).

¹¹⁰ Deveau’s fiddling does not exclusively represent Acadian influences, but these gestures rely on shared knowledge. Arranging sets of tunes in an individualized fashion is part of “putting your stamp” on a style and because the musical circle is fairly small, intimate and knowledgeable, listeners recognize when you play a set in the same order as another popular performer—a flattering gesture. A style of ornamentation, use of vibrato, or bowing style however, is more permanent in a person’s playing style (i.e. not usually repertoire specific) and is thought to reveal who you commonly play with, listen to, admire, learned from, etc. Generally, performers would not speak about their choices onstage or in any public way but Robert, for example, might expect some listeners to notice if he had played an Arthur Muise set and comment on it during a break.

the earliest recorded Cajun fiddlers, and did exactly that.¹¹¹ The underlying idea is that the audible, visible, tangible playing of the lived-in world is blending with the perceived “spirit” of Acadian and Cajun culture represented by the names, graves, and musical stylings of select cultural figures.

The communal similarities of Catholicism and Acadian and Cajun musical practice are strong, but hierarchical aspects of Catholic musical tradition are also noticeable. Unlike, for example, the musical practices associated with Protestant hymns, Catholic liturgical music has had a long performance history associated with trained specialists—not the common lay person. The status of musicians in Acadian and Cajun communities—simultaneously elevated and one of service—is not unlike the structures of Catholic hierarchical principles. Performers demonstrate a responsibility to audiences by taking requests or abbreviating and extending selections according to the dancers’ expressed preferences, but musicians are schooled in a more intensely cultural way than are the majority of their listeners and take on the (albeit restricted) star status of, again, Cajun musicians Dennis McGee, the Savoys, or *Feufollet* or Acadian musicians like Loubie Chiasson, the Aucoin or Comeau family, and *Grand Dérangement*. Though several musical choices are personal, an overwhelming majority are governed (or at least measured) by cultural expectations and saddled with responsibilities of cultural representation. With this responsibility comes privilege, however, and so activities like

¹¹¹ This *mardi gras* run takes place just outside of Eunice, Louisiana and is among the more musical of Louisiana’s *mardi gras* traditions. It was initiated by Joel and Wilson Savoy in 2006. There are rules in place in order to separate this run from others that the brothers felt were losing sight of traditional origins. For example, all music must be live (no radios), no beads are thrown (a sexually suggestive development with New Orleans origins), and all participants must fully participate by chasing chickens, singing and dressing in costume. The playing of Dennis McGee (1893-1989) influenced a great number of local musicians.

drinking, that might otherwise be considered behaviourally questionable, are more permissible among musicians because they are seen as facilitators of religiously-tinged cultural experiences.

The word “religion” comes from the Latin “binding” or “being careful.” Doing something religiously is to do it scrupulously, faithfully, conscientiously. Though these terms would never be used to describe intense moments of enlightenment, they have everything to do with preparedness—a very particular and culturally-situated sort of “priming situation” (James 2002). The Acadian and Cajun use of alcohol shares these qualities. I’ve discussed the temporal and evanescent similarities of music and alcohol in previous chapters, but they respond equally well to a Catholic analysis. Because participants feel the effects of music and alcohol differently each time, even when they are meticulous about the ways they consume, engage or participate, its personal and non-transferable effects benefit from a religious understanding that sees them as a preparatory gesture (Marshall 1979; Douglas 1987). Though drinking and music-making sometimes suggests abandon, they frequently present themselves in Acadian and Cajun contexts as preparedness for more complete cultural availability. They are part of a religiously assembled relationship with other Cajun and Acadian cultural players: community, history, religion, labour, and cultural responsibility.

The particularities of this assembly are present in the compositional tendencies of Catholic music as it designs congregational participation in much the same way as Acadian and Cajun music places a primacy on accessibility. Catholic music scholars write that songs should “remain accessible to the sensibility and capacities of *all* the members

of a community or of the people of God" (Faure 1995, 85). Although, in contemporary practice, this is not always apparent, all official documents regarding Catholic liturgical music encourage composers to retain "the character" of choral music. Don't choose keys that are too high or too low; keep soloistic moments to a minimum; avoid theatrical stylings (Schaefer 2008). Since Vatican II, this has presented itself in the "you either love it or hate it" form of the folk mass. "New" instruments (usually reduced to the presence of guitars) and vernacular styles are increasingly present (though unevenly welcome) in music ministry. Throughout these changes, however, Catholic musical history remains partial to responsorial structures, text-based rhythms and rhythmic malleability.¹¹² At first glance, this may seem to be at odds with the hierarchical order described earlier, but I think the situation might benefit from analysis that sees the tension between these alternate, evolving approaches to the same faith. The Catholic conservatism of the past is present in more liberal contemporary approaches to music.

To draw parallels, recall the "boundaries" and "perimeters" that Cajun accordionist Ray Abshire outlined in chapter two. They are informed by exactly this sense of faithfulness to tradition. He doesn't want electric instruments or drums, doesn't want songs to stray too far from traditional story lines of love and loss, doesn't want to deviate from "the sweet stuff" of syncopated rhythms into "that flashy, progressive sound" that combines traditional Cajun music with other musical genres. Abshire feels that the musical tradition is representative of something larger and he expresses it in a way that

¹¹² For discussions on the complex rhythmic controversy surrounding analyses of Gregorian Chant see Rayburn's *Gregorian Chant: A History of the Controversy Concerning Its Rhythm* (Rayburn 1964) and Apel's *Gregorian Chant* (Apel 1958).

suggests to me “turning back to the Lord” discourse¹¹³: “It’s a maturity thing. They’ll learn to twist off without making a fool out of themselves and they’ll come around to the sweet stuff at the same time. Eventually everyone comes around to playing the real sweet music right if they’re Cajun in their hearts.” (Ray Abshire, personal communication October 11, 2010).

I spoke to Thomas Neil, musical director, organist and choirmaster of St. John the Evangelist Cathedral in Lafayette about the cross pollination of religious and secular music as well. When asked about the mutual influence of Cajun and Catholic musicality, he expressed the following:

I thought about ‘preservation’ and I think it has some merit with regard to our music program here. Our cathedral parish is firmly rooted in tradition, much like the ancient oak tree that sits proudly beside the church with its deep tap root. When I first arrived here nearly twenty years ago it seemed to me that the parish had sidestepped or even bypassed altogether much of the silliness that followed the Second Vatican Council in terms of music. That just never happened here and it’s probably a result of the parish’s deep commitment to maintaining its traditions. That is very important to Cajun people. So I would say a Cajun respect for tradition may be partly why we have enjoyed support for our music program, both from the clergy and the laity alike. (Thomas Neil, personal communication November 7, 2011)

Although each of these excerpts and several of those to follow do not equally emphasize tradition, ritual, music and alcohol in every example, it is clear that informants treat each of these aspects of their cultural life with similar patterns and standards. The ritual symbol of music and alcohol bears the characteristics of condensation or multi-vocality wherein many things and actions are represented in a single formation. The symbol of

¹¹³ Admittedly, this is my suggestion and not his. I did not have occasion to draw these parallels with Abshire.

musical, religious or behavioural practice acts as a stand-in for many things, unifying disparate meanings in a single symbolic formation. The different meanings are connected by virtue of their common possession of analogous qualities or by association in fact or thought. The same strategy has been applied to cultural activities here. Like sacramental meanings, music and alcohol are not considered the media of communion, but instances of it (Kubicki 2002, 54).

Pilgrimage and Diaspora

Because disruption, travel, fresh starts, and feelings of being unsettled are fundamental to the Cajun and Acadian narrative, the Catholic images of faith through exodus, trials, and voices in the wilderness translate readily into arguments for the Acadians' status as similar to a kind of Biblical "chosen people." Through pilgrimage, the paradox of Acadians' simultaneous representation as a foundational and diasporic culture can be addressed (Cabajsky 2009), and because practice is the ultimate parable of Christian life, cultural tradition and religious devotion can easily conflate. Pilgrimage, for Christians, is part of a long tradition by which some embodied, physical journey is used both to signify spiritual dislocation and to hint at the possibility of some kind of rebirth or reintegration (Smolarski 1982, 1995). It is the going forth and retirement from the world which gives it a rite of passage character, but because pilgrims come back to the familiar place (rather than passing to a new one) awareness of belonging to a larger whole is heightened while strengthening in-group solidarity (Kubicki 2002; Despres 2009; Basu 2004). This adherence to cyclical metaphors acts as a code for Acadian and Cajun understandings of renewal that is present musically, historically, socially and spiritually.

The social events that I am about to describe—Sunday afternoons at Whiskey River Landing in Louisiana, *Fête nationale* in Church Point, Nova Scotia and *Mi-carême* festivities in Chéticamp, Nova Scotia—are all religious in either origin or tone. They are all demonstrative in terms of cultural display, musically marked, and behaviourally permissive relative to the surrounding periods of reservation. These events are particularly Catholic *and* particularly Acadian/Cajun: foregrounding pilgrimage, breaking away from surrounding structures at regular intervals—simultaneously coming, going and dwelling.

In many culturally situated practices, Acadian and Cajun populations emphasize travelling, calling to mind James Clifford's work on travelling cultures, wherein practitioners are not so much involved in nomadology but dwelling *and* travelling and dwelling *in* travelling (Clifford in Grossberg, Nelson, and Treichler 1992, 96-117). In the case of Acadians and Cajuns, it appears that they also dwell *on* travelling. The traditions rely on travel and see generosity as an inseparable component. In *Mi-Carême* Acadians are encouraged to travel from house to house drinking, singing, dancing and enjoying themselves as a relief from the penitent Lenten season of fasting it divides in two.¹¹⁴ The Whiskey River Landing regulars will be at the same bar every Sunday afternoon. And

¹¹⁴ *Mi-Carême* is a movable feast day, much like the Cajun *mardi gras* in that the celebration depends on the liturgical calendar which in turn depends on the lunar calendar. I mention the bearing that the natural world has on the institutional one because it is significant in understanding the ways these experiences rely on a cooperation of physical and social and religious understandings. Altered states of consciousness are often referred to as "out-of-self" experiences, but the Cajun and Acadian religious experiences I am about to describe are, by necessity, "out-of-self" and "in-self" as well as being very much "in others" (Aldridge and Fachner 2006; Becker 2004; James 2002; Rouget 1985; Kubicki 2002).

August 15th is reserved for *Fête nationale* celebrations for the foreseeable future, organizing the summer vacations of an entire diasporic community.

Whiskey River Landing in Henderson, Louisiana

Welcome to Whiskey River Landing. If you're a Cajun or a wannabe, on Sunday afternoons you head out to Henderson Bridge from anywhere within two hours of it, park on the levee and navigate your way through some pretty big trucks with *fleur de lis* bumper stickers or ones that say "Don't Blame Me, I voted American." You walk towards the rather beautiful (if buggy) Atchafalaya Basin and there's a dance hall there on the bayou: plywood floors, white Christmas lights spelling out the name of the bar, two bars with a busy mother-daughter team of bartenders; it's jammed with dancers, several cowboy booted and tight-jeaned—some of them amazing, some less so, all enthusiastic—and there's a whole lot of Budweiser beer. There are nets hung from the ceiling. Some people are tossing their empties in there so there's a steady din of clinking bottles and cans and, once inside the bar, a person isn't going to stand around for very long before someone starts to talk to you—likely because everyone will know you're a visitor. If, like me, you say you're from Nova Scotia, most will say "That's where Cajuns come from y'know" though it's often immediately clear that where Nova Scotia actually is remains a mystery. "I'm a Breaux," "... Bouchard," "...Dugas," "... Cormier." You might go on to discuss differences in spelling between the Robichauds of New Brunswick and the Robicheauxs here, and then you're off to the conversational races.

At Whiskey River there's no shortage of topics that seem to get filed under "we agree." I have never been there or referred to it when people haven't spoken about how

great it is to be able to get drunk in the day and have things end at a decent enough time that you can still get to work in the morning. Talking about Whiskey River Landing prompts people to say things like “I drank ‘til I couldn’t feel feelings” or “You know you’re Cajun if you’ve been drunk at Whiskey River twenty-one times before you’re twenty-one.” There also seems to be an agreed upon set of tropes describing the scenery, the pretty girls, the oil, the fishing, and all the ladies (really, almost all of them) jump without hesitation onto the bar so they can dance up there for the last tune of the day. Every Sunday. “It’s tradition.”

Listening to the music (which hardly ever attentively happens without dancing to it) is very much like trying to have a conversation in Whiskey River Landing. Parts emerge and recede as the lead is passed around. It is not always clear if a phrase was intended to be picked up by another lead player, dropped accidentally or meant to fade away. Dancers often urge the performers into playing one more verse when they feel the song’s end is near. Phrase length is short, harmony is straightforward with a preference for polyphony rather than chordal accompaniment, form is cyclical and all of this plays into the participatory “liturgy” I’d like to highlight.

Though, of course the Whiskey River Landing faithful are not all religious, let alone Catholic, a fair number of the people I spoke to there had gone to mass that morning. But, often thinking of my question as strange, they were quick to qualify their attendance or change the subject in the way that many do when they think of church as “just what you do” or “it means a lot to my grandmother”; quick to make sure that I didn’t see them as some kind of “holy roller.” “I’m not *that* kind of church-goer...I know what

y'all think about the South," going on to describe "bible thumpers" and "fits." "It's not all like that" (varied personal communications April-October, 2010). Having been to mass in Lafayette and its environs on several Sunday mornings, I note that the feeling varies from church to church, due in large part, to musical selections, and, as with going to church just about anywhere, it's true that "it's not all like that." I discuss the role of institutionalized religion throughout this chapter, but for now am only drawing attention to the fact that a Sunday morning church-goer and a Sunday afternoon bar-goer are often one and the same.

In religious pilgrimage, faith involves coming together to acknowledge strength while also acknowledging a need for further strengthening. So, too, in coming to Whiskey River. Those who are "regulars" believe in being a good Cajun—a person wouldn't know this remote place existed without seeking it out—but knowing that Whiskey River exists is not enough. The group wouldn't be so good at being "good Cajuns" if it didn't come together regularly to collectively profess it. Again, faith is expressed in deeds. Laurence Paul Hemming's research deals with the relationship between ancient philosophies and contemporary life. In his essay "After Heidegger: Transubstantiation," Hemming's focus on Christianity recognizes that religious ritual can ultimately work only in terms of the individual subject's orientation. With regard to the changes rituals institute, he says, "I have to 'know' to know what transubstantiation makes to be known [;] this redeemed cosmos is understood to exist entirely in consequence of my intellection: I am the proper locus of its existence" (Hemming 2001, 301). That is, inasmuch as religious experience is a matter of what the subject feels (or knows) to be happening, it cannot be explained in

terms of some external structure. Although the subject cannot “do” the work of transubstantiation on his or her own (it occurs in consequence of God’s power), the event takes place inside the consciousness of the prepared and ready believer (Marshall 1979; Hemming 2001; Eek 2001).

In Cajun terms, this means that when Whiskey River landing attendants visit conventional contemplative spaces, like Sunday Mass at St. John the Evangelist, they might not always feel the same type of sacramental unity with other attendants. Their reports as “not that kind of Catholic” suggest a failed sense of sacramental *communitas* because they don’t “know” enough to know, they feel that they are not experiencing what other people (those who “know,” those who, presumably, *are* that kind of Catholic) are experiencing. By coming to Whiskey River Landing, drinking, dancing and playing music on a holy day, many Cajuns feel they are acting in defiance of religion—that they are disrupting traditional religious order—a practice that is taken in varying degrees of personal seriousness. This is Ancelet’s argument in his discussion of clerical control among Louisianan musicians (Ancelet 2011). This “wrong way,” in my view, does not compromise an ability to feel any sort of religious impact; instead it both facilitates it and is informed by it.

To perform the faithful role, one needs to indicate not only ability, but familiarity. Officially, anyone can come to Whiskey River and, once there, a person can play any part that fits, but you wouldn’t know what fits (or what other possibilities there are or aren’t) if you weren’t a regular member, regularly engaged, aware of the parts other people play as well. This embodies Victor Turner’s suggestion that what is socially anti-structural is

often protected or enclosed by other cultural structures (Turner 2002). Seemingly irreligious activities like drinking on a Sunday are informed by religious understandings of togetherness and mutual strengthening. This is not to suggest that drinking, alone, is the marker of religiosity at Whiskey River Landing, but that its placement in an assembly of other cultural activities is. What's religious about a Whiskey River Landing pilgrimage is drinking *and* dancing *and* getting to work tomorrow *and* coming from mass with your grandmother *and* knowing the default activity for a Sunday afternoon. What's religious about it is knowing that you can't be there on any other day of the week, knowing that you need to be there often enough to intimately know the company you keep, and knowing that what happens here is both separate and informed by the happenings of "the real world." To again refer to Hemming's work, transcendence, as an event, interrupts and disturbs the ongoing, everyday narrative, challenging the narrative to open itself to the heterogeneity which breaks through in that event. "The religiously experienced and interpreted relationship to the transcendent can thus no longer be conceived as premodern "participation" in salvific presence, or as modern "anticipation" of the ultimate identity. The Christian narrative which has become conscious of its own particularity and contingency can only adequately relate to the transcendent when it (1) opens itself up, cultivating a sort of contemplative openness into which the transcendent as interruptive event can enter and (2) bears witness in a non-hegemonic way to the transcendent with the help of its own, always fragmentary words, images, stories, symbols and rituals" (Hemming 2001, 21).

Pilgrimage in L'Acadie: Chéticamp Mi-Carême

Acadian approaches to pilgrimage are more overtly Catholic. The major events of the year that I am about to describe—*Mi-carême* and *Le fête nationale des Acadies*— are both based on the Catholic liturgical calendar: *Mi- Carême* as a mid-Lenten break from the surrounding days of fasting and abstinence and August 15th's *Fête nationale* as a date chosen by the Acadian religious elite for its coincidence with the feast of the Assumption of Mary.¹¹⁵ Though both Church Point and Chéticamp, Nova Scotia, share in these calendrical celebrations, the relative attention paid to each is significant. It is important to keep in mind that, in terms of population, the tiny fieldwork sites that inform this dissertation¹¹⁶ explode with interest for select weeks of the year—so much so that brief summers with strangers inform the development initiatives for the bulk of each community's long-term projects. Winter in these small Acadian villages is a different scene. After Thanksgiving, which in Canada is the second Monday in October, many bars and restaurants close for the winter or have reduced hours. The population dwindles and

¹¹⁵ The feast of the Assumption celebrates a Catholic belief that Mary, as the mother of Jesus and free from sin, was assumed, body and soul, into heaven. It was deemed National Acadian Day at the first National Convention of the Acadians held at Memramcook, New Brunswick in 1881. It was consciously chosen, despite arguments urging Acadians to share Saint Jean Baptiste Day (June 24) with the rest of French Canada—a heritage-celebrating tradition that extends back to 1834. Acadians wanted to emphasize that, though they did not wish to promote any ill will between French Canadians and Acadians, the French speaking communities remained distinct groups and the feast of the Assumption held special significance for those Acadians who wanted to conserve the customs of pre-revolutionary France. This position is, of course, compromised by the choice made three years later at the second convention in Miscouche, PEI, to adopt the tri-colour flag.

¹¹⁶ Church Point has a winter population barely above 1,000 (the entire county of Clare is barely 9,000). The most generous Chéticamp count (including outlying communities) is just over 3,000.

even among those who continue to call Chéticamp or Church Point their permanent home, many are away for work or school for months at a time.

The “larger than life” aspect of pilgrimage becomes quite literal as the tiny communities take on responsibilities for summer operations far larger than their year-round population could reasonably handle. Always factoring in a seasonal population, local development associations continue to hold meetings through the winter which prepare for a homecoming set of sometime-residents and summer tourists. Decimated volunteer numbers leave these decisions to a loyal, over-extended, and often interconnected few, but communities can count on the return of several summer visitors, so special events comprise a good number of out-of-province volunteers—many of whom are not considered to have moved, but are only “working away” (despite their absence for, in some cases, decades). Board members hire entertainment and plan events based, in part, on the perceived tastes of those they hope to draw and, in part, on the image they wish to cast. Parallels can be drawn to the Catholic Church in that many lapsed Catholics are still interested in the traditions surrounding the major Christian holidays of Christmas and Easter or on the ritualistic aspects of baptism, marriage in a church or funerals. On these isolated and significant days, mass and associated religious rituals become important, though the accompanying life is perhaps less attractive for the rest of the year. The generalities common to both Nova Scotian communities is that visitors (or pilgrims) depend on the dedication of those who plan for the influx and year-round residents wish to appear inviting while also trying to maintain their own integrity.

The specifics of *Mi-Carême*, however, are enmeshed in the fact that it takes place in the dead of winter. It's a movable holiday, but March in Nova Scotia fairly guarantees cold winter weather and inhospitable wind. Though the Chéticamp population does feel a slight swell for the celebration (almost exclusively people with roots in the community who have planned to come home for the celebrations), many residents of Church Point claim that there are too many "strangers" living in the county now for *Mi-Carême* to be much of an event. I say this to highlight two sides of religious pilgrimage that are presented in the following ethnographic descriptions—one that is primarily an act of seeking, a faithful effort to fill a void, and another that is meant to reaffirm, strengthen and profess that which is already felt to be true.

The roots of *Mi-Carême* mark it as a one-day reprieve from Lenten suffering, but celebrations have exploded into a weeklong affair in and around Chéticamp, Nova Scotia. In 2009, *Le Centre de la Mi-Carême* was opened in nearby Grand Étang, which has further boosted residents' interest in the tradition. The centre offers interactive exhibits, rug-hooking and mask-making workshops, musical and theatrical performances, interpretive guides and, most importantly, a gathering place for events bookending *le courir de Mi-Carême* (the mid-Lenten run). At these events, the centre awards prizes for best costume, hosts a dance, hires musicians and advertises a list of host homes that welcome runners as they visit throughout the community.¹¹⁷ *Le Centre de la Mi-Carême*

¹¹⁷ "The community" is broadly stated as host homes are in distinct regions along the same coastal road. Cap Le Moine, St. Joseph du Moine, Point Cross, Grand Étang and Chéticamp span a distance of about 20 km (see regional map Appendix 1.4). On other occasions throughout the year, these smaller communities (particularly Le Moine, which has its own church and annual concert) might distinguish themselves from one another more strongly, but there is one overarching run for *Mi-Carême* week.

was created and is managed by the LeMoine Development Association (LDA),¹¹⁸ a community-operated volunteer organization dedicated to support local initiatives built on “Acadian values of co-operation and self-sufficiency.” The centre has a vision of building “awareness and sensitivity about *Mi-Carême* and related aspects of Acadian culture” (LeMoine 2012, www.micareme.com). In addition to work with artisans and researchers, there is a strong interest in maintaining traditions through a focus on youth. The centre ensures that their activities occur at child-friendly times of the day or in conjunction with school field trips, and, as a result, prohibitive choices are sometimes made about accompanying activities—namely the availability of alcohol— in order to encourage the greatest number of participants.

Those interested in participating in *Mi-Carême* are divided into “runners” (those who dress up in costume, act as foolishly and unlike themselves as they can, and travel from house to house) and “watchers” (those who welcome runners into their homes with music, alcohol, traditional *fricots*, meat pies, fudge and other sweets, and try to guess who the runners are) (Arsenault and Ross 2009). A common joke/guessing strategy among hosts is to confidently tell their guests that they will soon have no choice but to give up their identity: “*Ohhh, c’est dommage q’vous mangerez/buvez pas. Pouvez pas manger/à boire avec le masque sur la face*” (Too bad you won’t be eating/drinking, ‘cause you can’t with that mask on your face) (Evelyne LeBlanc & Leon LeBlanc, personal communication March, 2007). Some hosts encourage runners to come all week.

¹¹⁸ LeMoine, an area very near to the village of Chéticamp and mentioned in earlier chapters, translates to “the monk.” The community is named for a rock formation on the coast which resembles the silhouette of a hooded monk.

Others specify days or times to suit their family or work schedule. In the past several years, a person “running” could visit certain convenience stores, many private homes, the senior citizens’ residence, or the local radio station from Sunday to Friday. But from Wednesday to Friday (the more traditional *Mi Carême* days), private homes eager to receive guests became more numerous. According to written histories, runners are supposed to ask “*Laissez-vous rentrer les Mi-Carêmes?* (will you let the Mi-Carêmes [runners] in?)” before entering, but I’ve rarely seen anyone hesitate before letting themselves into a neighbour’s home, usually enthusiastically dancing. In contrast to the family-centred activities at *Le Centre de la Mi-Carême*, the community *courir* is slightly more adult. It is not uncommon to see children at a host’s home, particularly early in the week and at the earlier end of the evening, but “the run” can often turn into a late night and somewhat raucous affair and houses are a considerable distance apart from one another, demanding that participants drive.

Though mask-making workshops take place at the centre throughout the year, most adult runners wear some kind of rubber Hallowe’en mask and, through the help of some strategically placed pillows and baggy clothes, arrive appearing overweight and elderly, but incredibly lively. There are some similarities to Hallowe’en costumes—it’s not uncommon to see Fred Flintstone or Stephen Harper or various farm animal costumes— but by far the most common costume is religious in nature. People “run” dressed as nuns and priests, blessing people, as if with holy water, by dunking whisks into mixing bowls, performing mock confessions, offering pretend communion or insisting that some “watchers” trade their bottle of beer for the Bible (a real one) offered by the

“runner.” Those dressed as *vielle femmes* (old women) often have rosaries, missalettes, and prayer books that they kiss and/or bless themselves with. There are several people dressed as popes and bishops with staffs and elaborate hats and several faux-nuns with severe-looking habits who discipline other guests with rulers. There is always music and when guests begin to dance there are several warnings regarding “leaving room for the holy ghost” that are reminiscent of days when local schools were religiously operated.

Runners speak as little as they can or alter their voices to keep from being identified. When they do speak, there is a tendency to make highly personal, sometimes embarrassing, references to the host—emphasizing the fact that the runner knows the watcher, but not the other way around. Imitations of other people in the community are fairly common, too. There are recurring targets, “characters” from a community that is small enough for all residents to be familiar, so these imitations border, as a good deal of comedy does, on the insulting, though intentions are predominately good-natured.

When the identity of the runners is revealed to all present, masks generally come off, but the rest of a costume stays, so the end of the night can often amount to a fairly tipsy collection of religious figures—most of whom exaggerate the way they typically drink because of its comical incongruity with their costumes and the traditional attitudes of the clerical community. Despite the irreverence, what is abundantly clear in these *Mi-Carême* runs is that this community knows Catholic ritual intimately. The details of their jokes—the precise way in which they bless one another, mimic prayers or sing hymns—demonstrates an intimate knowledge of Catholic traditions. These are not people making

fun of “the other.” These are people making fun of themselves while reinforcing every ritual they mock.

There is an arc to the liveliness of this music on most *Mi-Carême* runs. It’s very rare that someone begins to play, dance, or sing without being coaxed and typically this coaxing involves the offer of a drink or a certainty that listeners are drinking enough that it is not an attention-grabbing occasion when a musician begins to play. Often it is the sound of a musician (rather than any visible action) that prompts guests to notice that the performing body of musicians has changed. There are several who never play or sing without a drink nearby—regardless of whether they are actually drinking very much—and modesty plays a strong role in how the music develops. When groups are playing or singing, there are rarely pre-determined sets, so people’s comfort with leading is, in several cases, directly related to how much they’ve had to drink. Longer and livelier sets depend on a larger number of people having reduced inhibitions. The same is true of repertoire that is performed less often. Because the people gathered are familiar with one another, fellow musicians know when a musician has added a “new” song or tune to their repertoire. At earlier points in a night, new material or one’s own composition might be construed as arrogant or uninviting to a slowly gathering group, but later on in the evening the same activity is considered exciting and generous. Regardless of how familiar other players and singers might be, they are more likely to try and join in on a “new” piece later in the evening, learning fragments as they go. This flurry of musical activity is a limited time offer, however. Inevitably, someone has too much to drink and can no longer keep up or simply loses interest in playing or singing. More and more listeners,

similarly, start to consider a sober ride home or become too drunk to pay much attention to the music. For a while there is a bit of a rotation—one person whose enthusiasm is waning is replaced by another who is gearing up—but eventually the liveliness is replaced by sentimental songs and laments until the night winds down and people go home.

Pilgrimage in l'Acadie: Fête Nationale in Church Point

The population of Church Point, Nova Scotia, is slightly more self-conscious about their Catholicism. This attitude is historically contextualized by developments of The Acadian World Congress or *Le Congrès Mondial Acadien*. *Le Congrès* originated in 1994 and is held every five years as a reunion of all people of Acadian descent. The first host community was Moncton, New Brunswick, but it has been held in Louisiana as well. Acadian communities in Nova Scotia are too small and isolated to have the infrastructure required to host such a large-scale event and so, in 2004, the 400th anniversary of French settlement in Acadia, the responsibilities and celebrations of *Le Congrès* were shared among several small Nova Scotian communities—Church Point and Chéticamp among them. Church Point has continued to celebrate with an Acadian Festival that runs even on the years when Nova Scotia is not hosting. Chéticamp celebrates at this time of the year with *Festivals Escaouette*.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ The World Congress has inspired several other ongoing projects throughout Nova Scotia—among them the musical theatre production *Le Grand Cercle* which runs in Chéticamp seasonally and *Le Petit Cercle*, an architectural and theatrical project that was also inspired by renewed Acadian interest as a result of the Congress. *Le Grand Cercle* was created by Scott MacMillan and Paul Gallant and is comprised of a series of tableaux telling the story of the Acadians beginning with their arrival in the New World and following through the expulsion, fishing and agricultural occupations, World War casualties and proceeding (bizarrely) into an imagined vision of the role of Acadians in a futuristic, post World War Three global

Since the 2004 Acadian World Congress, Church Point has celebrated *le fête nationale des Acadies* with an evening *tintamarre* which basically translates to “a ruckus.” The *tintamarre* is a noisy parade that marks the culminating point of *Festivals Acadiens de Clare* and in this naturally stunning part of the world, August 15th is generally a perfect evening for a walk or ride along the coast of St. Mary’s Bay. This is more boisterous, more joyful, more sustained a parade than one might expect from such a small community. You can hear the parade long before you see it, as *tintamarre* runs its way down Highway 1, the main (ok, only) street. It winds from Meteghan, Salmon River and Saint Bernard to Le Club Social de Clare, a central social spot and the only bar for several kilometers. It is also the site of the festival’s closing concert. The point of *tintamarre* is to make as much noise as possible, and so there are horns and drums and pots and pans, megaphones and rattles, maracas and bells—a huge din “to let them know we’re here, to draw attention to Acadian pride” (Lisette Gaudet, personal communication, August 2011). Decorated cars are parked at Le Club and their brightly dressed, face-

government. Interspersed with pan-Acadian images are more localized historical elements which include the stone church that was built in Chéticamp in 1893, the history of the co-operative movement, the creation of the National Park and the expropriation of Acadian land at Cap Rouge, and struggles over French language schools. Threaded throughout are reminders of Chéticamp’s famous hooked rugs and its musical prowess in fiddle, song and dance.

Le Petit Cercle, also created for 2004’s celebrations, is an outdoor theatre with an award-winning design meant to withstand Cheticamp’s gale-force *suête* winds described in chapter three. It is also symbolically rich as described by Richard Kroeker, head of the theatre’s architectural team: “[*Le Petit Cercle* is] anchored to a playground slide which acts as a mooring post from which the form of the theatre swings downwind in a curving shape like a fishing boat. It is wind transparent, breaking the wind down but at the same time offering as little wind resistance as possible. The walls are more porous at the top than the bottom. The double walls are diagonally braced and the lower part of the wall cavity is filled with stone ballast—like the ballast of local lobster traps and crab pots. The seating, made of salvaged bleachers, is also held against the wind by fishing nets filled with stones. The form of the theatre positions the audience near the action, creates shelter, and contains the sound.” (www.richardkroekerdesign.com).

painted inhabitants join the honorary Evangeline and Gabriel and other walking participants with their oversized masks, tri-colour grass skirts, balloons and flags. It appears as if every single resident is either in the parade or cheering it on, including all the summer visitors who come from Louisiana, Quebec and other parts of Acadian Canada (Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia).

As it's the final day of a two-week long celebration, many people who have come home for the festivities will be going back in the next few days. *Tintamarre* is an early evening affair and there are typically no official daytime events on this final day. Many families who are not directly involved in setting up the final concert host pre-parade barbecues in the day that have a "last hurrah" mood for people who will be leaving family and friends and going back to their "real life" tomorrow. They eat and drink, have sing-songs and collectively prepare for *tintamarre* by getting dressed up, preparing floats, or decorating their cars. The slight inebriation contributes to the requisite chaos. People are laughing at themselves and there are very few signs of inhibition. One parader plucks a little boy from his mother, dances with him for a while and then hands him off to another smiling neighbour about a hundred meters down the road. Other children can't believe this costumed alter-ego of their teacher, grandmother, babysitter as they holler and dance down the street. People who are watching from in front of their homes run out to parading friends to share a cold beer and though this is officially "against the law" no one seems to mind. Familiarity is obvious.

Le Club Social de Clare will be hosting the closing concert tonight, as they do every year, with the help of a substantial Nova Scotia Liquor Commission (NSLC)

sponsorship, and so there is a tent extended from the back of the club and a ticket booth set up in the field where those nineteen and over get a wristband and are allowed in. By the time evening falls, it's cold and wet so you can tell who's been committed to the whole day's festivities and who came just for the concert by the variety in their dress. There are just as many twenty-something girls in tank tops, short shorts and flip flops as there are grandmothers bundled in raingear with extra blankets and lawn chairs. Some folks are ready for a night out and dressed to the nines; others have fatigue written all over them, their face-painted Acadian flags now running to their chin. Many who have organized the events of the past two weeks are out with fellow volunteers for a "what a relief" beer. Beer tents are set up along one side of the concert space and there's a crowd of people talking about the festival's success and drinking there. When it's busy, a couple of patrons go behind the bar to help the scheduled servers for a little while. Plywood has been laid down for dancing in front of a substantial stage. An enormous NSLC sign provides the backdrop and the stage is lit in red, blue and yellow for the lively Acadian band, *Grand Dérangement*, the main event. The opening act is a local dance troupe dressed uniformly and performing precisely to recorded music. It's highly organized and professional. This is the event of the year.

The idea of movement, passing or returning from one place to another is an essential element of Acadian entertainment. Homecoming permeates every decision in Church Point's *fête nationale*. When discussing the entertainment selection for Clare's *Festival Acadiens*, board members spoke of a sense of obligation that comes from prioritizing kinship, while acknowledging geographical distance:

They might live wherever, but they're from Nova Scotia...so they come back here year after year and when they come to Nova Scotia from Louisiana or wherever, they're coming home. We treat them that way and then we become friends over the years and their music helps us out. (Emile Blinn, personal communication, August 2011)

In initiating this “homeland” discussion, there must be some acknowledgement as to the somewhat arbitrary nature of its selection.¹²⁰ Bound for a homeland that can only exist in approximations, there can be a conflict among Acadians when they consider that they could be trying to preserve something that isn't there, seeking something that can't be found. The reunions and re-enactments, therefore, occur before the backdrop of verifiable history and social politics, but the site itself is in large part a selection rather than a fact—a choice which facilitates the “seeking” side of religious pilgrimage. The smallness of the part of the world inhabited for these meaningful moments is indeed part of the point. The designed feelings of homecoming continuously remind expat Acadians (Cajun and otherwise) that they're encouraged to “come home” two hundred and fifty years after the expulsion, but these homes are not necessarily pre-expulsion origins.

Like religious pilgrimage, the homecoming sense of *fête nationale* relies on a feeling that something is missing or, more to the point, that there is something missing in the believer. But the believers are not just the travellers in search of the missing parts of their genealogical history. Permanent residents of Church Point and the rest of the county respond to what's missing in themselves, too, often suggesting that travellers look down

¹²⁰ Due to 1755 expulsion and resettlement in the 1760s and later, even the families that stayed intact returned to land other than that which they had originally settled. This also meant that groups of families were rarely able to stay together and when coupled with subsequent injustices regarding land allocation, minority status and a confederating Canada, ideas of homeland that are geographically specific are quite complicated. Both Church Point and Chéticamp were officially established in the 1780s.

on them and consider their day-to-day lives as subordinate or incomplete. Whether they agree with this assessment or not, “regulars” react as if their position could be seen as the result of an ineffective approach and judged harshly by incomers. Sometimes this is as basic as wondering if “people from away” will be willing to sit on the same benches and drink the same drinks as “people from here”¹²¹ and sometimes it amounts to decisions to hire entertainers who come from the same region as the bulk of the tourists, as demonstrated in the *Festival Acadien de Clare* habit of hiring Louisianans Waylon Thibodeaux, Les Malfecteurs, Cedric Watson, and others (*Festival Acadien de Clare* entertainment schedule, 2004-2012).

Although expulsion history hovers year round, the dealings individuals have with each other in Chéticamp or Church Point—individuals for whom the place is not exceptional but regular—are not normally pitted against a larger socio-political backdrop. Instead, larger discourses are subsumed into the complex, small-scale network of alliances and betrayals that constitute a personal history together. The consequences of insularity are made abundantly clear, perhaps even exaggerated, when permanent residents are asked to accommodate a believing population for whom the romanticized sites of l’Acadie take on special significance. Many “regulars” or “locals” may feel they

¹²¹ One memorable board meeting I attended included an argument about whether the locally popular Keith’s, Keith’s Light, Schooner and Olands beer selection needed to be augmented by vodka and wine coolers, which led into a discussion of whether or not the expression “Schoons and tunes” was a local one or not. Schooner beer (branded by an image of the Bluenose, a source of great pride to many Nova Scotians) is now a Labatt product, but it is popularly associated with the Oland family of Saint John, New Brunswick who own and operate Moosehead Breweries, a decidedly Maritime Canadian business. Some present at this meeting thought the “Schoons and tunes” expression was the ultimate indicator of a good time and described the exact atmosphere desired, but it was vetoed when the majority of those present prioritized an interest in people who were not from the area and would not understand the reference.

receive only the sort of limited redemption the narrowness of their circumstance permits. They wonder how they measure up to the romanticized Acadian or they resent the evaluation at all.

To illustrate this, I use the example of a musical gathering I was once invited to in the Chéticamp area. I was told highly regarded musicians Peter Poirier (guitar) and Arthur Muise (fiddle) would be there and when I arrived, chairs were arranged in rows and there was a note on the door saying "No smoking. No alcohol. No talking through the music." This would not fit into the stereotypical image of Acadian social practice, but people don't come "more Acadian" than these two. It was somewhat of a selective group and the music was fantastic, the effect exaggerated by the exceptionality of the performance context.¹²² To continue with the biblical comparisons, permanent residents become the son who has fetched the fattened calf for his prodigal brother. And, as in that parable, the lack of attention afforded the stay-at-home son, prompts questions about who is afforded the greater religious experience and at whose expense. Others are more secure and can risk mocking themselves because they can assume a certain level of mutual understanding. *Mi-Carême* in Chéticamp is overtly and unabashedly religious, even in its irreverence. But recourse to what I consider secularized religious rituals, like *tintamarre* day or weekends at Whiskey River Landing, can be read not so much as a backward-gazing effort to restore the structures of a previous, overtly religious era, but as a re-contextualization or re-deployment of religious-like longing toward their particular ends.

¹²² Again, the indelicacies of this dissertation's subject surface. Arthur Muise used to have a very active performance schedule but has fallen into relative obscurity in the past several years. His decision to avoid places serving alcohol and perform less frequently is commonly attributed to a religious conversion, the details of which are too murky to describe with any verifiability here.

The re-deployment is especially inviting through the temporal element shared in pilgrimage, alcohol's effects and music's power which is why I believe they are natural companions in these instances. Being culturally or religiously demonstrative is not just a matter of place, but of a particular time at this place: Sunday afternoons at Whiskey River Landing, August 15th celebrations of *le fête nationale des Acadiens*, *Mi-Carême*, weekly mass attendance. All of these places—bars, fields, churches, communities—are all-but-deserted in the off-time, but they are brimming with people and with meaning when they're "on." The events studied are indicators of cultural and social unity as much as they are indications of religiosity, but it is crucial that, though we give appropriate credit to mutual influence, we do not confuse society and religion (Grainger 1988). Religion, but not society, is at one and the same time hyper-personal and meta-social. It is not simply learned from others, but exceeds it. Reach exceeding one's grasp—to paraphrase Robert Browning—this is what a heaven's for (Browning, Jack, and Smith 1984). Or, to use the terminology of phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty, the experience of religion is something of an "interworld"—a world partially drawn into the subject's experience and partially shared between subjects (Merleau-Ponty [1945] 1989). The exceeding and contained aspect of religiously infused practice is as real as it is incomplete. Religious experiences are, by necessity, only partially shared.

The discomfort that is expressed by several organizers in Church Point that perhaps they are not Acadian enough in their musical and alcoholic choices is a parallel to the attempts men and women repeatedly make to order and stabilize a society that is necessarily vulnerable, shifting, and transient while they ultimately maintain a belief in

the presence of eternal changelessness in conceptions of God, mortality and/or natural order. One needn't be overtly religious to acknowledge a religious dimension in human experiences (Heimbrock and Boudewijnse 1990; Jung 1938).

Embodiment

What brings Acadian history, music, alcohol, and Catholicism together is a shared interest in the body as discourse rather than object (Despres 2009). The reconciliation of culture, corporeality and cognition are essential to each area independently and strengthened in combination. Climbing mountains barefoot, or ascending church steps on one's knees and, less dramatically, kneeling, passing the beads of the rosary through one's hands, adorning statues and wearing religious medals are public acts visible to both performers and witnesses (Caponi 1999; Klass and Weisgrau 1999; Glazier and Flowerday 2003; Bastide 2003). Travelling and preparing for travellers by drinking, dancing, parading and playing with your community—these are physical representations of what is felt to be true in socio-religious space—a space that will pass away but represents one that cannot. It is clear that this Catholic religious approach has affected Cajun and Acadian socio-musical practice.

The fundamentally Catholic aspect to all of this is sacramentality—the idea that actions are not sacred or profane, but both. Catholic approaches to nature and the body are rooted in the idea that it is a good, but fallen, world, a flawed body that has potential for good, a “nature” that is at once the arena of creation and redemption (Morrill, Rodgers, and Ziegler 2006). The central sacraments of baptism and communion depend on natural things—water, bread, wine—to communicate a simultaneous and co-dependent

need for physical and spiritual sustenance. To highlight the physicality of Acadian musical experience, a fabulous dancer from the Chéticamp area told me about his routine of finishing his work day and then practicing a few steps on the barn floor so that he could hear his feet and feel the vibrations of the boards: "If you feel them bouncing back at you, you can tell where you've missed something. If you do it right, the boards'll just push you right into the next step." When I later told him I was interested in alcohol's role in the music he said, "Oh well, that's even better. If you're half cut, you'll definitely fall over if you're doing a step wrong, but you'll be flying if you get it right... The only people who can't dance drunk, can't dance sober" (Marc Robichaud, personal communication, May 2010).

Anthropologist Philippe Descola maintains that in every society there is a structural similarity between the treatment of nature and the way in which people treat each other. Following the Durkheimian tradition, Descola builds his argument on the idea that "nature is always construed with reference to the human domain" (Descola 1992, 111). Thus, schemes that organize the socialization of human ecosystems are "ultimately informed by ideas and practices concerning 'self' and 'otherness'" (Descola 1992, 111). In Cajun terms, the Whiskey River crowd is quick to align itself with Nova Scotians, and quick to associate itself with fellow Cajuns—hard-working labourers who have to get up tomorrow and go to work, who know the physical consequences of too much drink and a day of physical labour and are therefore entitled to an early day's drinking and dancing binge. They are not so eager to associate themselves with organized religion, because they say that's "just something you do." Presumably "just something you do" is not what

Whiskey River Landing is about. When a self-described “regular,” Chase Dugas, talked me through an afternoon at Whiskey River, he pointed out countless things that I would never have considered to be particularly Cajun saying “That’s how we do it here.” For Chase, enthusiastic dancing, talking to strangers in a bar, being able to distinguish between show-boat dancers and those who are more subtly competent, having all age groups socialize together or having patrons help the bartenders move cases of empties out of the way was something I wasn’t going to find anywhere else in the world. We had been talking off and on about Nova Scotia and I had been describing it in very complimentary terms, to the point, I think, of annoying him when I suggested that there were many social similarities between rural Nova Scotia and Louisiana. When, later, I asked him why he came to Whiskey River with such faithfulness, he said, “I know why I came. I’m Cajun. Why’d you come? Cause you wish you were?” Going to Whiskey River Landing is less about “something to do” for people like Chase, and more about what many people feel they naturally *are*.

Conceptions of social structure, which have been formed by patterns of interaction, are also generated in the way a “natural” world is represented. When introducing me to the graduate work she completed at the University of Lafayette, Georgette LeBlanc of Church Point spoke of her desire to present in her poetry an “embodied Acadian”: “I was looking for a character who possessed the qualities that I consider to be particularly Acadian: tenacity, a strong work ethic, a sense of co-operation, sensitivity and corporality” (G. LeBlanc, personal communication August 16, 2011).¹²³

¹²³ “Je cherchais un personnage qui possédait les qualités que je considérais remarquables chez les Acadiens: ténacité, l’éthique du travail et de l’entraide, la sensualité et la corporalité.”

Comparisons can be drawn between Catholic, Cajun and Acadian treatments of embodiment. As often as Acadians speak of being faithful to their culture, and the discipline required in upholding a cultural presence, they speak of being seasoned by generations of hard physical work which allows them to be overcome by their music, unable to keep from dancing, “moved” by it. One very soft spoken and self-deprecating informant said “That’s how I do everything, by feel. The [crab] trap’s heavy, the door’s stuck, you know? I think sometimes when a set gets going at the Doryman¹²⁴ and I’ve had a beverage...even when I don’t dance out there, but you know how you move a bit, *ein*, and don’t even know it?...There’s a lift to some players. I don’t think I could help it [moving]... Everything feels light, right? When the rest of the time everything I do is heavy... Maybe I’m getting soft” (personal communication, identity withheld, August 2011).

Robert Deveau (fiddler and host of one of the aforementioned parties) speaks of two periods of learning to play the fiddle—one that he calls “the brain part” which he learned when he went to university “and practiced more by myself” and the other “the feel” which he learned first from local fiddlers who would teach him anything provided he could identify what it was he needed to know. He describes trying a hundred “wrong ways” to use his bow before he could half imitate the one he was after and then he would go to his teacher to correct it. As he described the pedagogical situation it was clear that the approach was all correction and no suggestion, but in no way does Robert see this as a

¹²⁴ A tavern in Chéticamp with Sunday matinees that are not entirely unlike the scene at Whiskey River Landing (certainly no bar-top dancing, though).

negative angle: "If I didn't learn something, it was because I couldn't feel it enough to know it was wrong" (Robert Deveau, personal communication, January 17, 2011).

Routinely, interviewees discuss Cajun music in terms of a "work hard, play hard" philosophy or describe dancers by comparing those who "couldn't stand still if they tried and others who are trying too hard to move." Venues are described the same way: "That's the difference between here and white night."¹²⁵ If people drink they won't try so hard" (Chris Trahan, personal communication April 2010). Again to reference Ray Abshire, he once spoke to me about dancing, saying,

You dance, right? Do you ever have someone grab you and it's just a nightmare?.... There's no rhythm in their bodies and then someone else grabs you and it's like you're dancing on air?... If it flows, if you have to think about the next step you're gonna take, it ain't gonna happen. You're just going through the motions. You're not really there. You're not in a groove. Some people are born with it, some people work at it and can finally get it with instruction, but some people are just never gonna get it.... Certain dancers you see, their moves are so natural and no one else on the floor is making that move and that's their expression. They didn't learn that... folks'll come at it their own way if they can.
(Ray Abshire, personal communication October 11, 2010)

The foundational nature of embodiment is that the body is the primordial place of every symbolic joining of the inside and the outside—Butler going so far as to argue that there are no separate parts to join, but only a policing of various culturally-defined

¹²⁵ "White night" is a derogatory reference to a Cajun dance night at another bar. Chris Trahan, a dancer and guitarist, thought white night had "no spirit" and certainly wouldn't make a point of going. The bar owners had responded to requests from dancers who wanted to prohibit drinks on the dance floor (limiting them to the bar area) and start evenings earlier, but the result was that the evening was populated primarily by teetotalers who were very serious and exclusive about the kinds of Cajun dancing allowed. It eventually closed down because the bar couldn't make enough money to cover the cost of staff and talent. The reference to "white night" is an area of examination in itself since the majority of "fun" Cajun dance halls are overwhelmingly white as well.

boundaries (Prieto 2002; Butler 1993). Music-making, more than any other artistic enterprise, involves the body in an integral way at all stages—in composition, performance and reception. Even the most seemingly objective musical perspectives (music as idea, act, object) implicate a listening subject who is physically involved (i.e. hearing sound as loud or soft, feeling a pulse, temporally registering a phrase's trajectory). Affective musical dimensions place the listening subject in time and space further still. It is no accident, then, that alcohol is paired with music far more often than other artistic forms or that it so often facilitates active, embodied participation. Its facilitative properties are doubled when one considers its simultaneous effects as both a symbol and a natural, physiological modifier. Alcohol, like music, like religious faith, is used to bring us closer to something, but succumbing to this "nature" element also keeps participants humble, acts as a reminder of one's own weakness when one overindulges (Wilson 2005; Pittman and White 1991; Martinic and Leigh 2004; Mandelbaum 1965; Klingemann and Gmel 2001; Heath 1995, 2000; Gusfield 1996). The ebb and flow of musicians' enthusiasm in the *Mi-carême* run is typical of Acadian and Cajun musical gatherings. In the beginning, music is somewhat slow to start until alcohol's effects entice someone out of self-deprecating shyness. Gradually, the whole room becomes alive with music and cultural unity until, inevitably, someone who a moment ago was leading the charge has mismanaged the balance, giving alcohol a sole responsibility when its only workable capacity is as facilitator.

These ideas of embodiment extend into the way players speak of learning to play or to dance. Consider this conversation I had with Leo Saulnier, a fiddler living outside of Church Point, on the subject of his own musical beginnings:

LS: You know, I think I picked it up first at a party. [A *local fiddler*] was playing and he started talking and we were all wanting the music to keep going, but he wasn't paying any attention to us. So I picked it [the fiddle] up as a joke. It must've sounded God awful, but I was dancing around and screeching...

MM: And you could play something just like that?

...
LS: Well, I didn't practice or anything but it just turned into a joke I did and I'd be watching people, you know, to imitate them holding their fiddle like this or rocking in their chair (*imitates the mannerisms of others*).

MM: But the tunes?

LL: Oh, well those were in me anyway. And the rum'd get the fool outta me.

Mr. Saulnier's way of telling me the story of being a musician includes work, family, lineage, drink, instinct, physicality, spirit and social relationships. For him, learning to play the fiddle is like learning to walk and talk, primarily intuitive. Through his imitative approach, musicianship becomes a skill in itself, but also a bodily representation of an inner character. He tells it with humorous self-deprecation, and a revealing balance of certainty ("those were in me anyway") and humility ("it sounded God awful") that is reminiscent of the language of faith. When he talks about his Catholicism and its patterns he is similarly dismissive about the way they have immersed themselves entirely into his character. The autopilot description of his faith traditions does not suggest thoughtless adherence to patterns. Instead, he describes immersion:

LS: Things are different today, everyone shacks up and they aren't afraid... We didn't eat meat on Friday, we dressed up on Sunday, I remember my mother always looking for her hose. I went to mass and wouldn't dare work on a Sunday. Saturday you went like the devil to get enough done.... I say my prayers every night and the rosary with the family and you do this for your whole life.

MM: Who taught you your prayers?

LS: One prayer I remember learning...but I don't remember learning the others.... Now that I have more time I might say it three, four times a day... and sometimes I'm through the whole thing before I think about it....I think if they said mass in Latin tomorrow, I'd know it all.

MM: Do you understand it? Do you know what it means?

LS: Of course I know what it means. Not what the words mean on their own, but

MM: You'd know the responses.

LS: I'd put "*et cum spiritu tuo*" in the right spot.

The patterns and traditions of sacrament appear to be as much a part of Mr. Saulnier's religious life as the substance. Sacramental connections might also be made between the transubstantial foundations of the Eucharist and the way Mr. Saulnier speaks of the rum that "get[s] the fool outta me" and encourages him to play. In the thinking and teaching of the Church, all sacramental parts (Baptism, Eucharist, Reconciliation, Confirmation) are not celebrated together, but they are definitely held together by each other (Grainger 1988, 79). Similarly, Mr. Saulnier's fiddle playing uses the connective thread of intimacy to make a religious experience of tunes, rum, an old joke, and gesture. Though, like Ray Abshire, Mr. Saulnier himself never suggested to me that music or alcohol was a substitution for religion, his activities invoke the description of alcohol

presented by 19th century American philosopher William James in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*:

The sway of alcohol over mankind is unquestionable due to its power to stimulate the mystical faculties of human nature, usually crushed to earth by the cold facts and dry criticism of the sober hour. Sobriety diminishes, discriminates and says no; drunkenness expands, unites and says yes. It is in fact the greatest exciter of the yes function in man. It makes him for the moment one with truth. Not through mere perversity do men run after it...it is part of the deeper mystery and tragedy of life that whiffs and gleams of something we immediately recognize as excellent. (James 1996, 377-378)

The dependence of Acadian narratives on being expelled, hard-done-by and dominated—physically and emotionally moved—works with the gesture of drink through which drinkers deliberately humble themselves with socially solidifying effects. The accumulation of failings is what is seen to be fruitful, which is why simple conditions and limitations are so celebrated in all of these ethnographic sites. The socially informed body is an object of interest not because it is a symbol of the cultural, but because it is its very basis (Douglas 1973). Ritual is not theatre; it cannot be memorized and performed in the sense of an actor performing on stage, but instead must be enacted as a participating spiritual agent. Sociologist Roger Grainger writes that “the meaning of religious ritual is not something to be demonstrated by means of movement, gesture and word: it is also something to be achieved. It demands [...] a degree of personal involvement” (Grainger 1988, 39). The hierarchical workings of Catholicism, then, with humans lower than God, the pope higher than his cardinals, and so on, is always underscored by an assurance that “the last shall be first” (Matthew 20:16) which leads me to the present discussion of priest and congregation as understood in Cajun and Acadian cultural history.

Priest & Congregation

Divergent visions of the role of the priest have had a remarkable impact on Acadian and Cajun responses to institutional Catholicism (*L'apport des prêtres et religieux au patrimoine des minorités conference*, l'Université de Sainte Anne, Oct. 2011). This is regularly distilled into evaluations categorizing the priest as either shepherd or warden with enormous repercussions in terms of cultural perceptions. Church Point resident and recording engineer Emile Blinn enviously says, "The people in Louisiana had the nerve to tell the priest to come out the same door he came in...so here [Church Point, NS] we have nothing that's musically ours....You can blame a lot on religion. If you want fun, peppy music, it's not going to remind you of St. Mary's Bay." He goes on,

For instance, the first priest in the area, Père Sigogne,¹²⁶ went to a place in Church Point where there was a party and people were dancing and he had a fit: 'Nooo you don't do that. Women dance in that room. Men in that one.' My mother, as a teenager, had dances in her house in Church Point. My grandmother would shut all the window blinds, sit in the same room and recite her rosary while the kids would dance with the guitar or fiddle player and hope that no one would come in. This was borderline sinning. That's why she had to recite her rosary and keep close watch. I mean, if the priest walked in, that woulda been something. It'd be 'I'd better see you in the confessional tomorrow.' My grandmother knew in her heart that there was nothing wrong with it, but she had been brought up with this. Grilled into her. Religion had a strong negative effect on the development of music and the culture in a broader sense. Religion stamped it out completely. No music survived. Even in our original songs, we can't say I love you. Too suggestive. Sigogne came here in 1799 and God bless his heart he did a lot of good things, but on the musical side of it, he crushed the originality and the development of what you'd call our own music. (Emile Blinn, personal communication August 2011)

¹²⁶ Père Sigogne was the first resident priest in Yarmouth County—celebrated for several contributions but notoriously severe as far as music was concerned. Churches predated his arrival, built in 1774 and 1786 to accommodate Acadians who had returned from Massachusetts following the expulsion.

Renowned Cajun scholar, Barry Ancelet, echoes the sentiment asserting that Louisiana should free itself from Catholic affiliations. In a 2011 conference presentation in Nova Scotia, Ancelet listed a history of Louisianan culture-bearers, young and old, musicians, French speakers, and non. He includes himself in this list and then concludes, *"De tous ce que je viens de nommer, pas un seul religieux dans la compagnie"* (in this whole list, not a single religious one among them) (Ancelet 2011). The statement is atypically narrow for Ancelet. I find it to be a curious contrast with work Ancelet has done on the relationship between the theory and practice of folklore, wherein he insists (as I do on the subject of religious demonstrativeness) that there are nuanced negotiations "between what folklorists think and how they convey the results of that thought to a range of audiences" (Ancelet in Henry and LeMenestrel 2003, 55). As Ancelet discusses programming cultural presentation, he talks about the integration of scholarship, cultural activism and authenticity, discussing the minefield of cultural presentation. How does one negotiate the field between esoteric and exoteric?

I am not suggesting that all of the musicians on Ancelet's list are secretly saying the rosary and not telling us about it. Neither am I suggesting that any of these performers don't know their own spiritual mind. But I do think religious understandings are sometimes deeply engrained in traditional behaviour, as is folklore. As Primiano writes in his work on vernacular religion, "When folklorists discuss "folk religion"...they imply that religion somewhere exists as a pure element which is in some way transformed, even contaminated, by its exposure to human communities" (Primiano 1995, 39) and, he later observes (perhaps cautions), "a presentation of the beliefs of others occurs always

through the filter of the empathetic perception and interpretation of the scholar" (40).

Religion is inseparable from the people who hold it and the practices they enact. It is, by definition, lived and should be studied "as human beings encounter, understand, interpret and practice it...with special attention to the process of religious belief, the verbal, behavioral and material expressions of religious belief" (44).

In "The Theory and Practice of Activist Folklore" (Henry and LeMenestrel 2003) Ancelet writes of the many ways folklorists disseminate their findings (radio programmes, documentaries, festivals, archives, articles and conversation to name a few). He writes that folklore can be presented in a variety of ways to suit the communicative demands of the people who "use" it. He writes that self-conscious demonstrations of authenticity or ones that loudly profess their cultural merit are not always as positive as performers or organizers might intend. The guises of religious information are similarly numerous. "By drawing on careful observation of the rules and the nature of cultural performance in its natural setting," Ancelet writes, "folklorists can develop better, more sensitive, more effective, and less abusive methods of presenting folklore and folklife in public settings" (Ancelet in Henry and LeMenestrel 2003, 65). The same is true for representing the role of religion and alcohol in Cajun and Acadian music. One has to be sensitive about the nuanced ways in which they are intertwined. Those who view priests as cultural champions typically cite the song collections and educational efforts of Chéticamp's Father Anselme Chiasson and Father Daniel Boudreau. This is what is concrete—the effects of these priests that has endured. But the impression left by religious authority—despite the fact that its tangible evidence is limited—is equally

valuable to an understanding of cultural evolution. Even in non-religious developments, the widespread understanding among Cajuns and Acadians as to what it is that priests condone—even if one disagrees or dismisses their orders—colours their culture with Catholicism.

The opposing attitudes held by Acadians and Cajuns towards the hierarchical order demonstrate the multiplicity inherent in the role of the Catholic priest as he is taken to represent both Jesus and the community—at once exceptional and common. I remind readers of the stories of Harry Choates and Cy à Mateur, as well, so as to highlight the cultural value afforded to flawed humanity, struggle, and full disclosure in Louisiana's Cajun circles while the private and restrictive surface more readily among Nova Scotia's Acadians. This is, again, a very Catholic concern particularly among priests who, like performers, are frequently operating in a rather lonely ministry despite throngs of followers. The notion that true performers should perform primarily out of some kind of cultural love has coloured interpretations of Choates' remuneration. Instead of viewing payment in liquor or in shelter as the act of a desperate alcoholic, Cajun informants make him into a hero. They refer to these details as if they are proof that Choates didn't think of music-making as a job, but as a lifestyle (Knight 1982; Brasseaux and Fontenot 2006; Thibodeaux 1982; Sandmel 2004; Choates 1946 (reissue 1995), 1998; Ancelet 1989). It smacks of the idea of vocation or "a calling." If anthropologist Gerald Mars is correct that drinking procedures can signify different degrees of integration (Mars 1987, 95), then the round-buyer, the bootlegger, the wine-head is as good a presider as any. And sacramentally, everything already means two things at once.

This overarching sacramental principle is extended to congregational concerns as priestly roles can only be relational. The ordinary becomes special in accordance with the sacramental principle of participation—a principle at work in cultural as well as religious collectives. In sacramental understandings it is this transformation of meanings, and particularly of the meaning of personhood itself, that exerts an influence upon the unchurched, attracting them to sacramental services and rites of passage. In the same way, those who feel they have no cultural background flock to Acadian and Cajun festivals from every corner.¹²⁷ The primary concern of the second Vatican council was to introduce practical changes to remind practicing Catholics that it is the nature of the liturgy to be done *by* the people rather than “to,” “for” or “in the presence of” people. In keeping with the mutually informing practices of folk and official religious practice, I believe this “doing” has a strong bearing on how the musical legends of Acadian and Cajun musical communities are positioned relative to their audiences. The audiences in Church Point are listening, devoted and appreciative followers, elevating musicians to a respected social status. In Lafayette, though musicians are respected, audiences are dancing, active critics

¹²⁷ As impossible as “no culture” is, many of the non-Acadian/Cajun people I met throughout my fieldwork, casually spoke of a cultural hole in their personal lives. Romanticizing ideas of poverty and rurality, many conversations included how safe they felt in Acadian/Cajun communities, how welcoming Cajuns and Acadians were, and how a visitor’s short vacation with “the simple life” could rejuvenate him/her in preparation for, presumably, a more complicated home life. It’s beyond the scope of this paper, but fascinating that no small number of them told stories, often sad, suggesting that they made connections between homogenous culture and inner peace. In casual conversations of the “what brings you here?” variety, many said they learned to dance or play or enjoyed time spent in Acadian and Cajun areas because their own cultural traditions were “so complicated” they “wouldn’t know where to start” or that they were a member of (x) group, but weren’t raised with their own ethnic traditions. Though in no way did I do any quantitative research on the subject, single women, divorced men and women, and newly retired couples—all white— comprised the majority of outside visitors I encountered, though there were a significant number of Japanese-Canadians/Americans as well.

and contributors making sure no performer rises above his station. Though styles vary, in both sites the committed—musically, culturally, religiously—are afforded extra permissions with regard to alcohol—are even expected to consume as part of a demonstrative, appreciative exchange. In this way they embody the parable of Christian life that is practice. The vine requires stewardship and new competencies emerge as musicians engage these techniques with symbols, communities and surroundings.

Conclusion: The Sacramental Principle of Practice

Kevin Wimmer, a scholar of traditional music and performer with the *Red Stick Ramblers*, *Balfa Toujours* and *The Racines* says “drinking songs are common to a lot of traditional cultures, but there’s a Catholic thing with it here....With Cajuns and Creoles being Catholic, alcohol is not forbidden. With [the] culture, you gotta go to church on Sunday, but you can have a good time on Saturday night” (Wimmer in Pittman 2006). Faith—culturally, religiously, or, as I’ve suggested, interdependently—involves coming together to acknowledge a group’s strength while also acknowledging its need for strengthening. There’s no denying that “playing the Catholic card” in Acadian and Cajun musical analyses has a vague sense of spiritual orientalism, but it is fundamental to the story Acadians and Cajuns tell of themselves—the image of the oppressed, superstitious and underdeveloped, managing to survive, even triumph, alongside their civilized and restrained oppressors.

“I’m interested in the vitality of the culture,” said Cajun fiddler Dewey Balfa, “and how it continues to evolve on its own terms. I don’t want it to stagnate. I’m interested less in the songs than in the process that makes them. As a result, our

collections aren't a museum or a cemetery, but a cultural recycling depot. Like the example our ancestors gave us, it's not what happens in the church, but in the lot in front of the church and in the streets that run through the community" (qtd. in Ancelet 2011).¹²⁸ Barry Ancelet uses this quotation to support the position that Louisiana Cajuns are an exception to the Catholic rule, emphasizing that it is not what happens in the church that matters, but what happens outside of church time, in the streets that surround it, in the square in front. In my view, these anti-Catholic interpretations only strengthen a position that emphasizes continuity between life's arenas; that, as Wimmer asserts, relies on reference to the things it claims to oppose. Catholicism, even in its most conservative teaching, emphasizes that religious practice is not relegated to what occurs within church walls, but that which is taken outside of it— "in front of the church, in the streets, in the community." Thriving Acadian and Cajun culture must grant at least partial credit to the patterns of Catholicism for enabling such masterful code switching, that is, what enables some cultural elements to manage others (Swidler 2001, 184; Feld 2012). Rather than being interpreted as a dismissal of Catholicism, my research shows that musical and performative features can be categorized in terms of pilgrimage, symbol, nature, leader and layperson. This analysis outlines just how deeply embedded religion is—not to be distilled into the singular matter of institutionalized practice, but to be acknowledged, perhaps even celebrated, as embodied philosophy and practice.

¹²⁸ "Je m'intéresse à la vitalité de la culture et comment elle continue à évoluer selon ses propres termes. Je ne veux pas la figer. Je m'intéresse moins à la chanson qu'au processus qui la produit. Par conséquence, nos archives ne sont ni un musée ni un cimetière, mais un centre de recyclage culturel. Selon le modèle de nos ancêtres médiévaux, ce n'est pas ce qui se passe dans l'église, mais sur le parvis devant l'église et dans les rues et ruelles fécondes de la communauté"

Recognizing the ambivalence between our desire for a new reality and our terror of losing the old, religious traditions regularly seek to smooth the path to religious insight. They do this by providing a facilitative physical and social environment in the form of worship services, rites and rituals, preaching and teaching. Some traditions encourage meditation and fasting, and some use alcohol or psychedelic drugs (Batson, Schoenrade, and Ventis 1993). Some drink their beer and play on stage on a Sunday morning, thanking the crowd for having “come out to see us straight after mass” (Ann Savoy, Festivals Acadiens Lafayette, October 14, 2010). But transgression is always more visible than conformity so analysts can be slow to see sameness (Douglas 1992, 2002). Though both music and alcohol are considered a part of Catholic culture, analysis of their place in Cajun and Acadian cultures is too quickly seen in terms of extreme behaviour and is therefore deemed anti-religious. Such analyses shy away from re-worked conformity. All deviance is not covert and neither can it operate without reference to opposing forces and so the collective risk associated with being deviant or rebellious is as often a matter of solidarity as it is a gesture of distance. The only way an observer can tell whether or not a given style of behaviour is deviant is to learn something about the standards of the audience which responds to it (Freilich, Raybeck, and Savishinsky 1991; Becker 1964; Gusfield 1996).

When everyone drinking and dancing and playing in Acadian and Cajun circles considers themselves to be eccentric or rebellious or a-religious, a reoriented moral world is created, but not an entirely new one. This is the “ritual inversion” that Turner identifies as part of the ritual process. It has the potential, he asserts, *either* to transform social

relations or to reify old ones once the ritual ends (Turner 1982; Turner 1962). Again, I posit that analysis would be well served to eliminate the “either” element in favour of a “both/and” understanding of religiosity in drinking and making music. A truly new moral order hardly ever comes about. Problem-oriented behavioural analyses put drinking in a prickly place academically and socially, but its productive, constructive, religious possibilities are already aligned with, and incorporated into, sacramental behaviour—just overlooked. Thus far, at its academic best, drinking is perceived as a time-out state in which individuals cannot be responsible for their actions. As a result, deviance attains a peculiarly *disembodied* quality wherein it lies more in the eyes of the beholders than in the persons of the actors themselves. The deviant, in this case the drinker, is made deviant both by the way his action is received and the way it is intended, regardless of whether these two interpretations align. This approach overlooks the *kind* of drinking that marks pilgrimage, symbol, sacrament and leaders as religious practices—marks religion not only as embedded, but fully alive in secular life.

This interpretation does not suggest that the sacrilegious and the sacramental are conflated, but instead it is a reminder that they are co-dependent. The reminders may be secular or merely reminiscent of sacred symbols, but as reminders, referents, they are implicated in a sacred relationship (De Schrijver 2001, 41). Most of the practicing Acadians and Cajuns are in search of, or maintaining, procedures that will foster “some recognition (in symbol if not always in language) of a generalized social bond that has ceased to be and has simultaneously yet to be fragmented into a multiplicity of structural ties” (Turner 2002, 96).

In Church Point, *tintamarre*'s attraction for a diaspora community is important because the "generalized social bond" of identifying as Acadian seems somewhat fragile in the face of out-migration, "stranger" settlement, and musical assimilation. Fortified by outsider interest, the religious procedures of *fête nationale* effect a sense of "communitas" wherein communal integration relies on modalities of relationships rather than "an area of common living" (Turner 1962, 96). To Turner, sacred sites like the vague Acadie can only function in the context of communal integration. More importantly, rigid structures (like the factors that prompt Church Point residents to worry that they have nothing Acadian of their own) might be obstacles to ritual transcendence. In these displaced and diasporic communities, religious procedures work by creating "a moment in and out of time" (Turner 1962, 96), one that ushers in "liminal situations and roles [that] are almost everywhere attributed with magico-religious properties" (108). The expulsion story serves this purpose for Church Point. The area becomes the sacred site, validated by cultural belief even if it is not verifiably a site of historic or geographical origins. Residents and visitors can be *in* their celebratory time because they share feelings of triumph in a history that is very much *out of* their time. Catholicism is a practiced, performative faith which comes alive pre-eminently through participation and a believer's sense of ownership in its rites. When Church Point makes their belief in Acadianity ritually observable, they do so by adapting Catholic practice, re-working the very structures they blame for their cultural dilution.

In Turner's view, religious rites have the potential to break through the rigid structures of regular social experience to reconfigure the subject's relationship with

him/herself and with the wider community. In gathering at Whiskey River Landing or participating in *Mi-carême*, being Cajun or Acadian is prioritized over whatever other structures and identities govern the rest of their lives. And because these rituals, more so than in Church Point, are created by and for permanent residents, the majority of participants know one another's "regular social experience" quite intimately, know a good deal about what's being broken and can therefore drink in a manner that assumes sympathetic company.

There is a debate among contemporary Acadian and Cajun scholars as to whether Catholicism is to be held accountable for cultural loss or credited with its ability to distinguish Acadians and Catholics from their Protestant neighbours (Louder and Waddell 1993; Gaudet 2000; Carroll 2002, 2007). Thus far, however, the work fails to explain why Catholicism has remained viable for many Acadians and Cajuns. The result is a denigration of the conscious choice many Acadians and Cajuns make to remain Catholic, tacitly or overtly, or to remain cognizant of Catholicism, in opposition or apathy, while participating in traditional cultural activities. The medium of cultural practice is the message of engrained religiosity (McLuhan 1964).

The intention of this chapter was to highlight continuity in terms of understandings, responsibilities, and change, and to connect musical and religious practice, through alcohol, to embodied senses of meaning, scriptural and practical understandings, interiorized and presentational styles. Cajun and Acadian musical repertoire is buoyed by its social, religious and performative conditions. It is fortified by its emblematic role—its reflection of the health of Cajun and Acadian culture more

broadly. Like primitive religion, its primary purpose is not the saving of souls or mass conversion, but the preservation and welfare of society. There is a certain irony in the development of religious thought that has brought us through various regulations back to this point—that religion is what one lives rather than what one protects from potential defilement. It is not so distant from the magical early stages of religious development described in Primiano's discussions of vernacular religion (Primiano 1995). There are certain controls that receive more or less attention at various points in history, but there is a certain awe attached to the fragility of both divine and defiled states (Douglas 2002). And if all of this sounds too heavy, perhaps a person should consider the Catholic influence on drinking, dancing, playing and culture just so fiddlers like Joe Cormier won't describe a person in this way:

Once, a long time ago, some of the Protestants decided to put on a bazaar to make money for the church. So they asked one of the fiddlers of the time to play for them, but they weren't used to instrumental music at all. Later on, this fiddler was reporting to Dan J. Campbell who was wondering how it went. "Ah" he replied. "Not a drink in sight. I might as well have been playing for a herd of Holsteins." (Cormier 1998)

Chapter Five

Irony and Interpretive Risk-Taking

In ethnographic work, questions regarding cultural narrative, interpretive gestures, and the construction and maintenance of image are typically central. Ethnomusicologists have almost always taken from sociology or anthropology in order to stress the ways communities engage with symbolic action. The underlying thought is that, via music, symbolic engagement shapes relationships, perceptions and understandings. As a result, dramaturgical theories have often been employed (Butler 2006; DeNora 2000; Prieto 2002) and several scholars have flirted with metaphor (Feld 1988; Rice 2003), but only recently have ethnomusicologists begun to examine the metonymic powers of palindrome (Diamond 2006), linguistics (Fox 2004; Feld et al. 2007; Samuels 2004), puns, and/or literary devices which depend on the combination of simultaneous multi-directional understandings.

In collective caution, analyses have sometimes isolated each symbolic element to a degree that deprives interpretations that consider a polyvalent capacity.¹²⁹ As emphasized throughout this dissertation—from religious devotion to cultural heroes, linguistic identification to sociable humour—it is important to examine the nature of evidence when discussing the presence of multiple meanings in a single musical event.

¹²⁹ Having said this, the examinations of *polysemy* and *heteroglossia* as presented by Porcello, Feld and Samuels (Feld et al. 2007, 109) have affected my analyses in significant ways, but the tendency those terms have toward the ambiguity of meaning is perhaps not exactly appropriate to my analysis here. Also, Fish's "interpretive communities" addresses isolationist thinking, contending that there is no text independent of a set of cultural assumptions (Fish 1980). This, too, is apparent in the ethnographic work I present here, but still values a collectivity perhaps at the expense of the dialogue this collectivity (the interpretive community) has with very personal and individual interpretations.

While standing in the fields of many musical festivals, I have witnessed, instigated, and participated in many arguments regarding the effectiveness of a given musical act. The same fiddler has brought a person to my left to tears while infuriating a person to my right. His tunes seemed to interrupt a conversation in front of me, while inspiring another; to some listeners his presence on stage committed him to the role of cultural ambassador with all of its associated responsibilities and, for another, the stage had no bearing on the position that every musician is an individual motivated solely by his own interests. All of these responses (and many in between) occur at once, in the same musical moment. All of this even before one addresses the nature of the performer's intentions: his own polyvalent capacities.

In ethnomusicology and elsewhere in the social sciences, there is a vast literature on the subject of "in" and "out" groups (Radano and Bohlman 2000; Baker 1984; Spaaij 2008; Waterman 1991; Washburne and Derno 2004; Rustin and Tucker 2008; Malone 2002). Some of this work deals with ethnicity and being genetically, geographically or historically "in" or "out." Some of it has to do with interpretive capacities that can be reduced to the seemingly simple idea of "getting it," and being "hip" or "cool." Sometimes these positions are entangled in one another. But with very few exceptions (Becker 2004; Brinner 1995; Stokes 1994), most understate the fact that, once "in," the ways interpretive groups distinguish themselves is myriad. Furthermore, symbolic expression tends to be addressed as process-oriented, inherent to a group's cultural modes of expression or a matter that is subject to the whims of creators. Though these approaches are certainly valuable, they might be further strengthened by a consideration

of ricocheted meaning—a musical meaning that can be made by bouncing one participant’s performative/interpretive tendencies, capacities, or preferences against another’s. Developing from discussions of audience reception, actor networks, and reader response (Tyson 2001; Latour 2005; Krims 2007; Bourdieu and Johnson 1993),¹³⁰ there are analytical benefits to broadening a linguistic device-based analysis. This analysis includes the “literacy” of interpretive receivers, the quality/ability that makes creators of receivers and the same capacities that make composers of listeners.

The writing that is done *about* music, as seen throughout this dissertation and elsewhere, involves revision, symbol, motif, divisions of time, flashback, citation, reference and narrative voice. All of these demand a level of literacy on the part of *all* involved. When levels of literacy are uneven, as they most often are, the idea of a single interpretive group must splinter. But a “splintered” community of meaning makers is not necessarily a disintegrating or substandard one. Interpretive communities are perhaps best conceived as a system of grafts which are sometimes fully rejected and sometimes recombined to create never-conceived-of, co-operative wholes. This is where the irony of Cajun and Acadian music comes into play.

Defining Irony

In music, literature and social interaction at large, irony is increasingly central in cultural products. Contrasting definitions of irony, all of them with strengths and

¹³⁰ I certainly realize the breadth of these invocations, and that their nuances are diminished when presented in so cursory a fashion. My intention is primarily to highlight their common focus on the capacity individual audience members have to create their own, sometimes unique, meaning from a work that is communally heard or played. The works referenced here are also particularly keen to acknowledge the possibility of continuously re-creating meaning, depending on one’s own changing interpretive capacities and the effects these capacities may have on other “receivers.”

weaknesses, have created a need for a theory that presents irony not in its traditional way, as a phenomenon wherein the ironist deliberately flouts truth, implying the opposite of what was actually said (Grice 1975, 53), but as a family of rhetorical strategies and theoretical approaches that are neither wholly united nor incompatible. Theoretical work of the last thirty years emphasizes that irony's purpose is not simply to signal that the meaning is the opposite of that which is stated, but that it is *more* or *other* than that which is stated (Gibbs and Colston 2007; Sperber and Wilson 1992).¹³¹ This work acknowledges that irony can appear as understatement, coincidence, deviations from expectations, hypocrisy, judgment etc. (Gibbs and Colston 2007, 4). It also suggests that irony can often emerge naturally and spontaneously, without having to be taught or learned in culturally specific ways. For the purposes of this dissertation, I am not so interested with finding and cementing *a* meaning in the Cajun and Acadian music I study. I am instead interested in highlighting how we know that there is a possibility of many meanings. I turn, then, to the ways irony's presence is signalled.

The most effective irony is said to be the least overtly signalled, the least explicit; the most effective irony occurs when the risk of incomprehension and misunderstanding is greatest. The fewer and more subtle the signals, the "better" the ironic effect. In *Irony's Edge*, Linda Hutcheon categorizes these signals into those with meta-ironic functions and the ironic signals themselves (Hutcheon 1994). With meta-ironic signals, a series of

¹³¹ For example, asking a slob in an over-polite fashion, "Would you mind very much if I asked you to clean up your room sometime this year?" is ironic, though there is no "opposite" meaning to be found. Saying "You sure know a lot" to a know-it-all, does not imply that he knows very little (which would be the opposite of the stated meaning), but it remains ironic in that it makes an unspoken suggestion: the know-it-all should perhaps reserve some of his knowledge in order to be socially considerate.

expectations frame the utterance as potentially ironic, therefore not constituting irony so much as signalling its possibility. The ironic signals themselves appear either as gestural (i.e. raised eyebrows or smirks), phonic (throat clearing, word stress), or graphic (quotation marks and other typographical markers), but what makes these signals both difficult to pinpoint and effective is that all of them have a capacity to be *unironic* as well. They can therefore be received differently by different discursive groups at different times. Hutcheon (1994, 158) lists the five generally agreed upon categories of functioning signals:

1. various changes of register
2. exaggeration/understatement
3. contradiction/incongruity
4. literalization/simplification
5. repetition/echoic mention

I suggest that we consider these signals as evidence of the presence of multiple musical meanings. Proof of the ambiguous. Although by now the thorough and ambitious archivists and collectors of the world have thought to transcribe and/or record many of the traditional musical contributions of Cajun and Acadian musicians (Savoy 1984; François 1990; Chiasson and Boudreau 2002; Various 1999; Labelle, Castonguay, and McLaughlin 2000), none of these catalogues suggest that a literal reading would render the “feel” of the music as it is “meant to be.” In fact, they forcefully insist otherwise. Instead, the musical collections emphasize the distance between arenas of literacy—those who know how to read music need to be taught how to read this particular music’s cultural colouring if they are to perform convincingly. There are ironic meanings in addition to the meaning that is overtly stated.

In literature, analysts make regular use of the propensity words possess to go on having meaning even in the absence of any ascertainable or verifiable referent (Fish 1980; Kristeva and Moi 1986; Friberg and Battel 2002; Eco 1976; Barthes and Heath 1988; Pavel 1986). By now, most insist that interpretation is a circular process whereby valid interpretation can only be achieved by a sustained, mutually qualifying interplay between our progressive sense of the whole and our retrospective understanding of its component parts.¹³² But this becomes slightly contentious when considering the scope of a musical whole. Where in literature New Criticism would assert that “the work itself” is a closed universe of discourse, ethnomusicologists tend to shudder. Ethnomusicology as a discipline is founded on predominately sincere, fruitful and well-intended efforts to highlight how musical meaning is in a relationship with broader contextual happenings. The result is a general fear of “close readings” and a hesitation associated with the notion of “the music itself.” Accusations of being an armchair scholar or a stodgy “old-school” musicologist who studies “the text” in this way is exactly what the discipline hopes to avoid. Knowing that this fear has been ably conquered by many ethnomusicologists (Shelemay 1998; Meintjes 2004; Stokes 1994, 2010; Tenzer 2006), the concern can still sometimes trump analysis of the musical elements that might, even (particularly!) in their minutia, feed a broader musico-cultural understanding. It’s a bit of a baby with the bathwater scenario coupling “a refusal to sentimentalize social conditions” with a “compulsion to sentimentalize human nature” (Frith 1988, 98). In no way do I propose a micro-only approach to analysis, but I do think that the field of ethnomusicology could

¹³² These arguments exist in (sometimes active) contrast to Ed Hirsch’s “authorial intent” and Heidegger’s “inner life of a text.”

benefit from co-dependent analyses. The big, socio-cultural meanings music can make or represent are paired with the fact that each performance and each listener receives or contributes to music's meaning differently. These differences are, at least in part, the result of the heightened sensitivity each participant has to varied and extensive mediation.

Ethnomusicology seems to have fewer reservations about jumping on the literary theory wagon as it approaches New Historicism, viewing history skeptically, but broadly. Hats are tipped to Barthes or Chomsky on occasion, speaking eagerly of "cultural competence" or the system being as meaningful as the message. But I think there remain some fundamental "meat and potatoes" elements to deal with in terms of literacy and our ability to analyze using the tools of literature as a parallel art form. One must be wary of analyzing systems without acknowledging their parts. Literary theory and discourse analysis have already done a lot of ethnomusicological legwork, so if the field will make use of those efforts, very, very small presentational details might be credited with an ability to shape (and be shaped by) the very, very big personal and cultural attitudes.

The very, very small things I speak of are those whose presence can seem innocuous, if detected at all. Because they are so small as to be almost imperceptible (i.e. the difference between the consumption of two bottles of beer or three, the use of one region's accent or another's) these little parts travel freely between cultural zones and collect/disseminate cultural information as they go. The drink is not collecting or disseminating anything, of course, but its presence and the manner in which it is shared begins to mark things as Cajun or Acadian. The previous chapters have hinted at the ironic capacity of Cajun and Acadian music in order to begin some discussion as to

whether or not style (or manner) has an ontological dimension. The question, throughout, has been “To what degree do the stylistic choices in one cultural arena permeate others?” The question always has an eye to the co-dependence of seemingly opposed interpretive positions. In this penultimate chapter, I will explicitly outline irony’s signals and apply them to the musical tendencies of Cajun and Acadian repertoire. Throughout, I will reference and assemble material from previous chapters: Harry Choates and Cy à Mateur, the lyrical, socio-historical and religious contexts of the broad Lafayette, Church Point and Chéticamp regions—all in relation to alcohol. Making broader, summary strokes of these more detailed examinations, I assert that these communities use alcohol and its in-between nature in culturally specific ways to determine degrees of cultural intimacy. And they do so with the help of irony as a broader cultural approach.

The real work at hand, however, is in determining the presence of figurative techniques and justifying their appropriateness as an analytical tool in Cajun and Acadian musical contexts. From the arsenal of figurative language, irony presented itself strongly in the fieldwork I conducted in Cajun and Acadian environments and it did so via a variety of avenues. First, irony is key to comedy and lends itself well to the bold, life-loving, “*laissez-faire*” image of Cajuns while also having the capacity to be a pivotal part of the sly, somewhat impish social approach of Acadians. Second, irony is valuable because its presence can often go undetected. Drinking habits, musical technique, irony, and cultural competence are alike in this way. The fact that they are often undetected does not render them meaningless to an audience. Instead, it allows for multiple audiences based on their discursive capacities and confirms the possibility of many simultaneous

communicative bodies of consensus. There is one performance, but there are multiple meanings. Irony has an insider/outsider effect that aligns itself well with musical and drinking worlds in that the pleasure that comes of irony, music making and drinking has a certain dependency on that which is uncertain, untenable and largely untranslatable. Above all, the ironic capacity of Acadian and Cajun music and their associated behavioural habits is displayed in a way that is openly comfortable with risk. Irony is particularly capable of going horribly wrong and Acadians and Cajuns take that chance. Over-evaluating an audience's ironic capacity (or, worse, one's own capacity to deliver ironic material—or material ironically), creates impressions that are beyond apology, beyond repair or reinterpretation. Used well, however, it strengthens a sense of community, adds a depth to artistic creation, a style, and heightens the pleasure of communication for all involved. This is not in spite of but *because of* its often cruel or crude appearance. Irony at its most sophisticated is also quite exclusive, allowing those “on the inside” to pat themselves on the back, revelling in the ignorance of their less enlightened colleagues. At its most sophisticated, irony walks a very thin line with as few signals as possible indicating its comedic, subversive or hyperbolic intent. In the coming pages, the signals, discursive strategies, musical techniques and cultural personalities of the studied Acadian and Cajun communities will highlight the ironic capacity of alcohol and its value in determining varied degrees of communal understanding.

Cajun and Acadian Approaches to “The Postmodern Condition”

The particular ethnographic descriptions of preceding chapters detailed Cajun and Acadian musical contexts, but I would like, now, to provide some overarching

impressions in order to fortify the discussion of irony as a broad cultural approach. Beginning with Cajuns, their cultural displays are an indoor/outdoor, always “on” affair. Regardless of weather or locale, there is somewhat of a uniform among many Cajun cultural enthusiasts wherein dancers of both sexes are cowboy-booted and many men have bandanas—to save them from inhaling all the dust when outdoors, to wipe the sweat off their brow when indoors, or, if particularly old-fashioned, to hold between his partner’s hand and his own when two-stepping. Women who are performing onstage often wear country style, floral-printed summer dresses, but women who are dancing and listening wear tight jeans with bejewelled back pockets. Cleavage is proudly displayed, many are heavily made-up, sporting labour-intensive and inflexible hairstyles and there’s a noticeable popularity in “Kiss Me, I’m Cajun” wear.¹³³

Many Cajun musical occasions are accompanied by expansive craft fairs and food festivals, so, while listening to Cajun music, people will often be seen walking around with brimmed hats, pouring sweat, drinking beer and eating crawfish *étouffée*, alligator sausage *po’ boys*, and *boudin* balls.¹³⁴ Slogans on crafts exclaim “Who Dat?” in reference

¹³³ Though discussions of gender have been, at best (and for lack of a better word), skirted in this dissertation, the presentational variations among “Cajun women” are quite extreme. Scholarly work on the subject examines the polar stereotypes which range from docile, often victimized, homemaker to sexually aggressive “boss” (Heylen 1994; Ware 2001, 2007; Gaudet 1989). Though specific examinations of gender are beyond the scope of this dissertation, I suspect that these images also have an ironic element, and are worthy of further examination.

¹³⁴ *Boudin* in Louisiana is a white sausage made from pork liver and rice, but in Cajun country it is just as often a combination of shrimp, crab and rice rolled in a ball, battered and deep fried. *Étouffée* (which translates to ‘smothered’) is a thick and rich stew/gravy typically made of crawfish, crab or shrimp and served over rice. *Po’ Boys* are foot long submarine sandwiches filled with deep fried chicken, shrimp, oysters, sausage or beef—often with gravy or thick, creamy sauces. The high fat and carbohydrate content is meant to sustain a “poor boy”—inexpensive to make, but filling. It’s a diet that is not for the faint of artery.

to the New Orleans Saints¹³⁵ and have Tabasco sauce or *fleur de lis* designs on everything from bumper stickers to stained glass windows. Word play, not unlike that discussed in chapter three, is often language/pronunciation based (i.e. frequent use of puns like “*Heaux! Heaux! Heaux!*” on Christmas crafts or “World’s Best Paw Paw” on t-shirts in reference to Cajun slang for *papère* or “grandfather”). Items that are targeted specifically to male or female reveal some pretty strongly gendered images: men as aggressive “swamp men”—hunting and fishing or warning “Don’t make me go Cajun on your ass!” and women as sexy and strong, if crass. As a particularly gauche example, a popular women’s t-shirt is emblazoned with reference to crawfish-eating technique saying, “Suckin’ heads ain’t all I do” or another: “Cajun Woman: Sweet, Spicy and Salty.” For both sexes, you’ll find shirts saying “Six Pack” which display cans of beer where abdominal muscles might be. Cajun Louisiana also seems fairly ungoverned by time-centred behavioural conventions. There are drive-thru daiquiri shops and by 11 a.m., with or without occasion, parks and porches are heavily populated with beer drinkers. At festivals, the lines at numerous beer tents are ten deep from 10 a.m. onwards. All of these cultural examples are not ironic—the 10 a.m. beer line, for example, seems simply outlandish or curious—but the presence of some eccentricities is buoyed (I would even go so far as to say “permitted”) by surrounding ironies. If participants unevenly suss out the

¹³⁵ Fans of the New Orleans Saints, the American football team (Superbowl champions in 2010), chant “Who Dat say dey gonna beat dem Saints?” as an expression of support, but the term is also used as a noun—a synonym for a Saints fan. The use of “who dat” has a history in minstrel shows and vaudeville acts of the late 19th century—gags based on an Abbott and Costello-esque conversation where one character asks, “Who dat?” and is answered by another, “Who dat say who dat?” It goes on.

distinctions among what is cute, witty, extreme, ironic or incongruous that is, in itself, an ironic occasion.

There is no doubt that there is a Cajun attachment, in word and deed, to the expressions "*laissez faire*" or "*laissez les bons temps rouler*." But despite the prevalence of these phrases in Louisiana's tourist literature and constructed image, Cajun attitudes would have to go a long way before they reinforced Lyotard's "anything goes" notion of post-modernity (Lyotard 1984, 76). What is more often highlighted is a continuing anxiety about what is real or, dare I say it, "authentic" and what is false, exaggerated or constructed. Without an institutionalized or even agreed-upon Cajun voice (or, really, any desire for one that I've seen), a palpable preoccupation remains regarding what constitutes an authoritative musical canon, and who can be trusted as its keeper. When Cajun culture flirts with a larger-than-life construction and claims that this hyper-reality of big trucks and heavy drinking, strong women, loud talking, spicy food, boisterous dancing—essentially "work hard, play hard"—is its reality, it becomes necessary to consider not only how much is style and how much is substance, but whether or not this can be considered on a sliding scale depending on the interpretative capacities/tendencies of performers and their audiences.

The same is true of Acadian communities, though cultural displays are taken to the other extreme. In Church Point and in Chéticamp, tri-coloured flags hang off the majority of houses and tin stars representing the Acadian star of the sea decorate others. Businesses from hair salons to insurance agencies are named after Longfellow's Gabriel and Evangeline. Celebrations involve boat parades and community mass. Concerts are in

church halls or on church grounds. Performing ensembles at “official” events often dress in Acadian uniform—chemise and vest for men, apron and wide skirt for women.

Otherwise, fashion is fairly modest and nondescript. Although in private homes, people play, drink and socialize together regardless of age, public events are very cautious about the availability of alcohol. If there is irony, here, it is in understatement—in a public image that is far more docile than private practice. But perhaps there is no irony to be found in these Nova Scotian communities at all. Studying absence and difference is, I think, as valuable as studying what is common.

Throughout my fieldwork and analysis, I’ve been trying to find the musical elements that warrant the cultural narrative connecting Acadian music in the Canadian Maritimes to the Cajun music of Louisiana and, beyond the most coarsely identified instrumentation and occasional shared song repertoire, I have found it pretty difficult to suggest that these musics—in substance— have any more in common with each other than they do with several other North American musical communities whose repertoire centers around folk song or fiddle-based traditions. But this contradicts the narrative upon which the museums, festivals, literature and casual conversations of Acadie rely. The shared 1755 neighbourhood of Acadians and Cajuns bears a lot of cultural weight and I certainly don’t denigrate it, but throughout this dissertation I have come to suggest that the *style* employed in Acadian and Cajun music—narrative technique, ironic performative presentation, comfort with code-switching—draw them closer together than do their musical products. Acadian and Cajun discursive formation trumps their musical style to the degree that it becomes, in many ways, the bulk of its substance.

When historical “facts” are aestheticized they are evaluated according to schemes that are typically reserved for composition and transmission. Although it has become an old idea in academic circles, the social practice of folk musicians wherein they are saddled with a documentary or museum-like responsibility for an entire culture’s history, music and social practice, is alive and well in Acadian Nova Scotia and Cajun Louisiana. The illusion is that traditional music is “real” rather than “created”: that these musics are not composed so much as communicated; that they are born of the cultural group and not of individuals. Recall Chase Dugas’ conversation with me wherein he reminded me that he was at Whiskey River because he was Cajun, but why *I* was there was more suspect. Recall also, the alcohol-free musical gathering shared by Arthur Muise and Peter Poirier described in the last chapter. Or the alcohol-inspired recording conditions of *Allons Boire un Coup*. All are focused on the conditions of creation—the suggestion being that surroundings are at least equal partners to that which is being performed. Many preservation vs. progress arguments rely on this responsibility-based approach and make tradition a serious matter of authenticity rather than a flexible one of interpretation.

Tradition-bearing comes to depend on the same “discourse of sobriety” that cultural theorist Bill Nichols notices in the presentational style of documentary films (Nichols 2010, 39). Nichols contends that certain presentational forms come with expectations of infallibility. Because documentary films are vernacularly seen as truth-bearers or “uncoverings,” argues Nichols, they are often painted into a “serious” corner until the two (truth and seriousness) come to be seen as inseparable. The repercussions of this kind of popular thinking are that more jovial presentations or those presented in a less

“sobre” tone are seen as less trustworthy, or containing less “real” content. By relegating the culturally meaningful to the presentationally serious and/or singular, there is a risk of ignoring the persuasive, witty and imaginative rhetorical skills that are every bit as compelling a representation of a socio-cultural world. Chapter two’s stories of Harry Choates and Cy à Mateur represent opposing attitudes towards this approach—one figure distanced and one embraced for the deviant ways they dealt with the seriousness of culture.

Most agree that Cajun culture is “larger than life,” but I believe what this amounts to in lived experience is a Cajun culture that is simultaneously impossible to ignore (very, almost inescapably, physically present—in conversation, dance and hospitality) and too much to believe at face value (in terms of world view, groups that are funny, sociable, and adventurous are often dismissed in favour of those who prioritize sombre and serious issues, the idea being that no one is that big all the time). Throughout my fieldwork, for example, it was exceedingly difficult to sit on the sidelines and watch an event go by. Men pulled you onto a dance area without any of the formalities of asking if you felt like dancing; people of either gender would comment on whether or not you had a drink and what kind of drink you had; once I was even surprised from behind by a concerned stranger spreading sun block on my arm. Routinely people were incredibly complimentary whether or not it was warranted. I make no accusations of insincerity, but having someone tell you, “You dance like you’ve been in Louisiana all your life” may be flattering, but it doesn’t make it true; it doesn’t make your dancing any better, but it does have an effect on the way you feel about the experience. A comment like this, which may

be generous, encouraging, mocking, patronizing, observant and/or oblivious is exactly the kind of ironic cultural moment I'm trying to uncover in this dissertation. Similarly, the "personal space" violations I've described never came across as such—to me. Instead, it was as if public brazenness eliminated concerns one might otherwise have about these fairly intimate gestures. The associations and responses to flirty behaviour change drastically when it is perceived to be without intention and for its own sake, for entertainment. At the same time, however, I had a conversation with a Cajun international human rights lawyer who said his accent had been a real handicap throughout his career: "If you say *"hyoomantearyuhn"* like my grandma does [exaggerating a Cajunized pronunciation of "humanitarian"], you'll get invited to all the office parties, but all the degrees in the world won't get them to stop thinking you're a little dumber than the rest." (personal communication, April 2011).

The reverse is true of Acadians. Knowing, historically, of their physical resilience, innovativeness, and linguistic and cultural persistence in the face of ceaseless oppression makes their projected image appear too docile to be true. A general humility among Acadians along with a tendency toward private isolation, and cultural homogeneity contributes to an image that is almost more secretive than it is compliant. But of course the range of social styles is vast. As discussed in chapter four, the idea of an isolated Acadian identity is complicated by contemporary economic and social conditions so an adherence to the idea that Acadians are always understated will amount to tremendous misunderstandings. Having said this, many individuals situate their behaviour in reference to this stereotype—even if they dispute it.

The suspicion is that both groups have become too mythologized, too fictional, too distant and their music needs to be “unpacked” to find something more “real,” but I think that’s a mistake. There is nothing unreal about a jumbled package, a variety of meaning makers working at the same time. Though the approaches can appear as contradictory, Cajun and Acadian musicians are alike in that both groups question any reality that approaches singularity. The music’s associative embeddedness in *Mardi Gras* or *Mi-Carême* only strengthens a penchant for threshold-crossing, for ambiguity, for uncertainty. As this dissertation stresses, however, multi-voicedness is not restricted to these special days of the year that have come to take on an aura of cliché. Analytically, Cajun and Acadian music makes it difficult to be sure whether this is the simplistic music of boorish rednecks and the quiet folks from the middle of nowhere, or the sophisticated, nuanced music of those whose performing techniques and discursive strategies make the interpretive capacity of outsiders overheat (or perhaps stall). It hardly matters since what’s equally engaging is that Cajun and Acadian musical contexts reveal that both extremes (and several in-between) are present among performers and listeners on any given occasion. Most importantly, several positions are often seen at the same time.

Musical Signals, Ironic Signals

Recall Linda Hutcheon’s list of ironic signals so that I might apply them to the music I experienced and analyzed throughout my research:

1. various changes of register
2. exaggeration/understatement
3. contradiction/incongruity
4. literalization/simplification
5. repetition/echoic mention

I take as examples the Cajun standards “Allons a Lafayette,” “Valse des Vachers” and “Rêve des Soularde” in order to outline the presence of these ironic techniques in Cajun repertoire and performance. I choose them not at all because they are unique in their demonstration, but because they are widely played and recorded by a variety of musicians who are diverse in their approach while broadly considered to be under the same Cajun genre umbrella. I suggest that these tunes, as presented by Harry Choates, Dennis McGee, various members of the Savoy family, Ray Abshire, the young fusion-Cajun group, *Feufollet*, and the world music darlings, *Beausoleil*, reframe the idea of being a purist or being true to Cajun culture, such that it puts the role of any particular tune itself, and even the music’s rather characteristic means of ornamentation, in service of ironic presentational style. Acadian repertoire is referenced as well, but because it is so often displayed using the opposite, understated approach to irony, musical examples are described rather than transcribed.

Changes of Register

Some forms of irony are easier to represent than others. “Easy irony” generally assumes (usually safely) a broad interpretive community with common understandings. With fewer efforts toward concealment, this type of irony is generally free of the interpretive risks of offense that threatens many of irony’s other faces. Its accessibility acts as a gesture—and it is almost always a friendly one. Easy irony is a threshold easily crossed, a group to which one can be welcomed with few pre-requisites. In everyday social use, it is the effect of being caught in St. John’s, Newfoundland on a rainy spring day and meeting a stranger who exaggerates the sweetness of his tone of voice and says,

"Oh, another lovely spring day in St. John's!" Despite the use of ironic techniques, the gesture can hardly be misconstrued (you both know that, though the weather *is* typical of a spring day in St. John's, it is hard to consider it lovely) and is instead seen as a moment of friendliness (the use of irony suggesting greater friendliness than "rotten day" because a communal understanding, slightly beyond the direct, has been assumed). In musical use, the registral changes in Cajun and Acadian tunes operate similarly.

Like most North American fiddle traditions, Cajun and Acadian dance music is based on a formal structure of AABB in which each strain is typically eight bars long. Acadian tunes adhere to this formula fairly rigidly but Cajun songs and tunes often have the added element of "bridges" or "turns" such that there is a core melody (the tune, sung or played) and an instrumental interlude or bridge (the turn) that is melodically derivative but distinct.¹³⁶ Typically each turn and each tune are eight bars long (sometimes nine when players include a sort of transitional or "resting bar" when moving from tune to turn or back to tune). The larger structure is not at all rigid, but quite often the tune is introduced instrumentally and then it is sung; a verse (sometimes two in direct succession) is sung and, between verses, bridges and/or tunes are generally passed around highlighting different members of a performing ensemble who may embellish according

¹³⁶This term becomes somewhat difficult regionally since many Acadian circles refer to A and B sections as "first turn" and "second turn", while many Cajun musical circles see the full "tune" as comprised of A and B sections and the "turn" as a melodically separate (if derivative) portion which is also composed of A and B sections of its own. It is basically a distinction of scale which is unnecessary if considering these traditions separately, but somewhat unclear when considered simultaneously. I will tend toward the term "bridge" when referring to Cajun "turns" for greater clarity, though this is not entirely representative of the language used by my informants or in the transcribed repertoire.

to their tastes and/or capacities. The pattern then repeats according to the number of verses, instrumentation of the ensemble, or any number of performative factors.

Typically structured so that sections can be repeated more or less indefinitely without losing aesthetic appeal, sections are fairly short and are clearly delineated by shifts in register. In instrumental pieces you'll see a change in register which either alternates from low to high octaves, switches to a closely related key (dominant or relative minor/major, tonic minor/major), or makes a fairly broad melodic leap to contrast the surrounding material which generally moves in steps or small skips. In Cajun songs, this shift in register presents itself in the oscillation between vocal and instrumental sections or between instrumental "tunes" and "bridges"(François 1990; Savoy 1984). In either case there is a definite and reliable stop or breath between sections which emphasizes the shift.

In Acadian songs, register shifts occur as verses alternating with a repeated chorus. Though the change is marked by the change in register or melodic centre, the sections are not drastically different. A and B sections are often derivative, using comparable melodic figurations and often identical harmony. Like the joke of saying "lovely day" in the rain, performers "get" that the B section is neither the opposite of what has been stated nor exactly what has been stated, but they "agree," for effect, to present them as if they were. The discrepant understandings emphasize the nuanced separation of similar sections—it is neither the same, nor completely different, but both and something else. The entry-level potency or effectiveness of this tune/song structure may be simple, but it is not diminished by its simplicity. It is "standard," everyone "gets

it,” it is basically impervious to misinterpretation and though it’s not the most powerful instance of irony, not the most distinctive feature of Cajun or Acadian music, it’s hard not to acknowledge it as a welcoming and essential gesture/feature or the musical canon.

Repetitive AB structures are not at all restricted to Cajun and Acadian music and, for many, it is this structural simplicity/predictability that is attractive to those outside the tradition. The structure allows for multiple points of entry. If, when performing, you miss the low register A-section, you can prepare for entry at the higher B-section or vice versa. If you don’t know the verse of a song, you can probably catch on to the chorus before the performance is through. It’s been described to me as the musical equivalent of “down home hospitality”—the overt changes in register keep the structure from being dull, give it that “easy irony” amount of personality that makes many players feel they’ve gained access or entered into a structure they can understand. However, because understanding that structure is not particularly demanding, access, at this level, can sometimes seem as if it is fully achieved simply as a result of some basic desire or interest. I emphasize, here, that it is not repetition alone that makes a musical structure ironic. Instead, the invitation repetition extends to encourage re-evaluation is what makes repetition an avenue towards ironic, alternative interpretations. The re-iterations that occur in Cajun and Acadian music are often cues that insist on cultural recall and reflection—opportunities that are missed by those who see this musical repetition solely as an economical use of melodic material.

Those within Acadian or Cajun cultural groups often consider the structure to be deceptively accessible. The achievement outsiders feel in understanding obvious elements sometimes (according to “insiders”) keeps people from looking for the subtleties that are

also available—and are more culturally meaningful. Renowned Cajun fiddler, David Greely, discussed this as one of the primary problems in teaching Cajun music: “They [students] come here for workshops, but they go home and play with their friends...the problem is that they don’t pay attention. They don’t know how to pay attention” (David Greely, personal communication, October 2010). Outspoken accordionist Marc Savoy agrees, with a particular fondness for appropriating the quote of ruthless American comedian W.C. Fields: “No one ever went broke underestimating the American public” (Savoy 2010). In a similar vein, Acadian fiddler Robert Deveau says, “If they [“outside” learners] don’t know, it’s ‘cause they’re too stupid to ask” (personal communication November, 2011).

These comments are not without parallels in discussions of community structure. Acadian and Cajun populations have different approaches to endogamy, with the former having a history of “purity” and the latter in constant negotiation as to what kind of mixing is most Cajun. The differences encourage an analysis of the ways in which register changes are displayed in non-structural aspects of the music (and non-musical aspects of the culture, for that matter). Changes in register are also harmonically apparent and are particularly noticeable in the highly individualized ways Cajun and Acadian music is performed. Though performance tendencies are by no means uniform, generally speaking, Acadian music is presented monophonically—songs are typically unaccompanied, fiddles perform in unison and any background provided by spoons, step-dancing or guitar/piano is primarily percussive—not harmonic. In Cajun music harmonic drones lay down a low foundation, either through the bass end of the accordion or via

second fiddle activity. Most of the melodic activity occurs in a different register from the harmonic activity with, traditionally, the high and strained vocal production of most male singers and/or accordion and fiddle melodies. There is very little mid-range, intermediary activity in terms of harmony as acoustic guitars play a predominantly percussive role rather than mediating the space between the extremes in range.

Melodically, register change is both an aspect of composition and improvisation. Using the popular two-step, “Allons a Lafayette”¹³⁷ as an example, notice that a fair degree of this registral change is written into the tune: each phrase of the verse begins on the upper end of the singer’s vocal register (high E or F#) and descends. The next phrase begins by abruptly leaping from this low cadential point back up to a higher register. Instrumental solos operate according to the same principles and as musical phrases are coming to a close with one instrument they are sharply, overlappingly, interrupted by the opposite end of the octave in another. Antecedent/consequent exchanges, both in verse and instrumental portions, are also frequent in traditional renditions of Cajun dance music, amounting to a change both in timbre and register. The result of these changes is a continuous reorientation of attention and in performances by Harry Choates, (who, as presented in chapter two, is rather famous both for his alcohol consumption and his “Cajunizing” of country music) this difference in register is exaggerated further by alternating octaves (Choates 1946 (reissue 1995); Brasseaux and Fontenot 2006). Choates also made extensive use of the vocal falls that are so characteristic of Cajun music—yet

¹³⁷ Joseph Falcon (1900-1965) popularized the tune and is recognized for being a pioneer of “the Cajun sound,” which is characterized by a great separation between high and low activity and, Falcon’s stamp, the “crying accordion.” An alternate transcription of the tune is also included in *Yé Y’aïlle, Chère* (François 1990, 13).

another instance of this propensity for register change. Not incidentally, this broad fall (often referred to as “the Cajun yell”) from the high and tense vocal timbre used by most male singers to a disappearing depth is used equally to express enthusiasm as exasperation. Based on casual conversation and intense observation, my interpretation posits that the uncertainty as to a performer’s expressive intent contributes to the overall ironic musical meaning.

In more rock-infused versions of “Allons a Lafayette” (such as that played by the band *Low Maintenance*), the “answering space” that allows for the aforementioned antecedent/consequent relationship is eliminated. There are scalar connections linking the low termination point of one phrase to the high range of the next and the harmonic space between high and low is blurred: the singer sings in a more comfortable range and intermediary instruments fill in a once-empty space. This is achieved, partially, from a greater number of instruments (pedal steel, electric guitar, drums, bass), but the “filled-in” effect is also achieved through a varied use of the accordion and the guitars. In these versions, the accordion is played more harmonically than melodically and the guitars leave the percussive responsibilities to the drums as they play an increased harmonic role.¹³⁸

So as not to lose sight of the overarching themes of this dissertation, or the summary intent of this chapter, I would like to draw parallels between these musical changes of register and what, at least in North America, are considered to be “typical”

¹³⁸ I base this description on field recordings taken at the *Festival Acadiens et Créoles* in Lafayette in 2010, though at the time of this writing, several similar performances by the same band are also available on YouTube.

tendencies when alcohol consumption crosses into the territory of intoxication. Inebriation causes many people to be equally conspiratorial and loud. Sometimes to comic and sometimes to dramatic effect (and I do *not* intend this observation as an aside), people affected by alcohol are often conspiratorial and loud *at the same time*. Many inebriated people are incredibly enthusiastic and then pass out, extremely happy and then depressed (or vice versa) and in terms of policy, there is little that is moderate about legislation when it comes to alcohol—alcohol use is prohibited and permitted in ways that continually rub against each other. Perhaps the discrepancy between Acadian and Cajun approaches to cultural display is not so distant from the type of register change we see in their music and their approach to the public use of alcohol. For both groups, there is a definite insistence that the spheres of life are connected, but for Cajuns this attitude is dependent on a responsibility to both work and play hard, oscillating between the two, while for Acadians leisure is primarily more private, made legitimate by work, continuous.

Exaggeration/Understatement

Steve Riley, accordionist, singer, and leader of *The Mamou Playboys*, discussed what it means to be Cajun and whether or not there were contrasts between his image and the public perception of a Cajun personality. Riley summarized his feelings, saying, “Cajuns have a way... They’re humble and prideful at the same time. Like, ‘come eat at my house, we don’t have a whole lot, but here’s some gumbo,’ and then, after you’re done, ‘Man, ain’t that the best gumbo you ever had. You’re not getting that gumbo anywhere else!’” (personal communication, October 2010). Cajun culture’s use of

double-voiced discourse is centred on a divided allegiance between origins and progress, preservation and integration, self and neighbour. They typify negotiations of social and personal positions, public and private representations that have been a common mode for the marginalized in the United States. Though Cajuns are stereotypically depicted as isolated, backward-looking, rural and xenophobic, Cajuns' cultural contact has actually always been diverse. Houma and African American populations constitute a significant portion of Lafayette Parish's cultural makeup and Cajuns themselves make very clear distinctions among sub-divided communities in terms of music, behaviour and language. The way nuanced local knowledge is exchanged for a discourse of purist xenophobia for tourist traffic and the less intimate resembles double-voicedness, as it appears in Bakhtin's work—the primary purpose for carnivalistic behaviour; W.E.B DuBois spoke of it in terms of “double-consciousness.” The related, but distinct approaches to multi-voicedness contributed by several other theorists, including approaches to “signifyin’,” “transculturation” and “contact zones” highlight the complexity of interpreting and critiquing diverse presuppositions (Bakhtin and Holquist 1981; Du Bois 1995; Gilroy 1993; Clifford 1988; Pratt 1992).¹³⁹

¹³⁹ I do not wish to lump these vastly different ideas together to reduce them, but to highlight that the same interpretive actions which make “signifyin’” about increasingly detailed in-group distinctions occur exactly as “contact zones” negotiate the right to assert meaning or “transculturation” attempts to communicate meaning across cultures. If one attends the St. Joseph du Moine annual summer concert in Nova Scotia, makes a commercial recording, wins an East Coast Music Award or is involved in any number of Acadian musical experiences, the same performance might gain you status within your intimate ethnic musical community while threatening that status across groups or cultures formed according to other criteria. The opposite is equally possible. Though the concepts are vastly different, their co-presence is frequent and performers can never be certain (if they are even aware) of how varied the way people are listening can be.

Cajuns have a history with their more “sophisticated” neighbours who use the “down to earth” label both to absent Cajuns from “real” consideration and to valorize them as “natural.” Their self-identification is equally suspect in this regard, amounting to some kind of integral Cajun subject that prides itself on a “do it by myself” toughness. The general consensus among “insider/outsider” theorists is that the marginalized can use this creative and divided discourse to be heard at the centre and yet keep its critical distance to ward off any punitive consequences and thus safely unbalance and undermine their oppressors. To use the *Allons Boire* album yet again, the use of underclass modes of expression by upper-class students of Cajun culture highlights that there is something in the double-voiced delivery that reinforces a cultural position. Slightly inebriated students who have really done their social and historical homework contributes towards rendering the album almost invulnerable to criticism—from ivory tower academics or from backwoods boozers.

The case is that no matter how distant “the other” may be, when played at a high enough volume, it can still seem pretty present. If, as a point of departure, one takes the adage “a drunk man’s words are a sober man’s thoughts” it is possible to see drinking behaviour as simultaneously distant and present in Cajun and Acadian practice. Often we expect people to be accountable for their behaviour, whether drunk or not, but in practice this is unevenly enacted from group to group. We find that the drunk in the room is too “in your face” to dismiss and at the same time we find this same drunk highly dismissible in that he is just too much, too other than his sober self, to take seriously. The addition of alcohol to social circumstances is the addition of behavioural indirection which is a

decidedly ironic feature and this, understandably, makes for a certain variety of unease. Audiences and social observers often suspect irrationality of a drinker, but can't be certain. In protecting oneself, accusations might be made of being intolerant or simply having no sociable sense of humour, neither of which are very conducive to community building. But if we read indirection where we shouldn't, we are equally duped. As Linda Hutcheon writes, "irony means never having to say you're sorry" (Hutcheon 1994, 50).

Alcohol-induced behaviour is bound up in irony precisely because it can sometimes seem the most literal behaviour of all. Because a sober interpreter often doubts a drunk deliverer's agency (or at least considers it to be compromised), he is afforded an unusual amount of signifying space. Interpretively undervaluing the drinker's capacity for musical contributions allows him to exaggerate his preferences in musical behaviour. Because the sentimentality of chapter three's "Un Acadien Errant" singing party-goer is dismissed by his mother, he is afforded a moment to speak to the emotions he feels without surveillance. Because Cy à Mateur is not expected to do anything constructive, he is afforded the space that is later credited with the preservation of dance traditions. And, like irony, some members of the culture see this happening in real time, others in retrospect, others never recognize it as culturally valuable. All three (alcohol use, music, and irony) can independently tease on the edge of acceptable, on the edge of seriousness and legitimacy, and all three can be caught by the safety net of "you just don't understand" which is why, combined, they are natural if not indomitable, playmates. In many ways, the self-deprecation we see in several drinking Acadian or Cajun musicians is so convincingly rendered that a listener might wonder if it is feigned to the degree that it

has become arrogance. Alternatively, one might see this musician as someone who sees his music so laxly that drinking can't hurt it or as someone so certain of his musical prowess that he can overcome the debilitating aspects of drinking. This seems to be the conclusion arrived at by Peter Poirier and Arthur Muise. Tired of the attention afforded to smoking, drinking and talking in "Acadian" musical environments, tired of its compromising potential, they make an effort to eliminate it altogether. On the other hand, recalling the Acadian house parties of chapter four, the humble reluctance to play and sing at the beginning of a night turns into an unbridled display after a drink or two. This pleases the people imitating Loubie Chiasson, but it embarrasses people who are at home waiting for their husband or watching their son "make a fool of himself" by crying in front of his neighbours.

The co-presence of these possibilities—simultaneously understated and exaggerated— is what makes the music and its accompanying behaviour ironic. It is not the clearly exceptional, but rather the commonplace and rudimentary aspects of alcohol *and* Cajun/Acadian music *and* irony that make analytic approaches uncertain. Consider seriously the interpretive worth of the idea that "everybody's doing it," that the repertoire is comprised of time-honoured standards that "everyone knows" and that irony is regarded as a valuable and common means of communication far beyond these cultural enclaves. Those who participate in activities they have identified as "common" or "natural" are often suspicious (or at least dismissive) of interpreters who see things differently (or do not see "things" at all). The processes of explaining the punch-line of your joke, outlining the acceptable occasions and amounts for drinking, or transcribing

the ineffable elements of Acadian and Cajun music are not dissimilar. It is often the case that both the practitioner and the person to whom any of these practices needs to be explained begins to feel defensive, suspicious, and distant. Such responses are justifiable given that much of the communicative joy experienced is caught up in protectionism and much of the suspicion as to the practice's depth is caught up in offense. The certainty of the in-group exaggerates the skepticism of the out-group. By necessity, many are, to use sociologist Erving Goffman's term, "ex-colluded" (Goffman 1974, 84).

In music, when we are speaking of emphasis, we are typically speaking of dynamic level, timbral intensity and decorative ornamentation. Though the bulk of Acadian and Cajun music is basically played at one level—loud—its concern with emphasis is located in several precisely placed techniques. As is common in many "fiddle cultures," vibrant dance scenes were often paired with inadequate means of amplification. Drones and alternate tunings (*scordatura* in classical circles) became a popular means of maximizing volume. In Acadian tunes you'll typically find fiddles tuned to "high bass," ADAE, instead of the standard GDAE. In Cajun music, fiddlers often tune down to FCGD, allegedly to suit the accordion's preferred keys of C and G on a C accordion and D and A on a D accordion. Additional alternate tunings are also used with rationale that ranges from technical ease to timbral preference, to chordal voicing, to habit. Fundamentally, *scordatura* is used to facilitate sympathetic vibrations and overtones such that when voicing two notes, there is a third note produced as well. The effect is a sort of "triple voicing." I highlight this technique because, as in ironic language, the effect is simultaneously "both" and "neither" of the two notes used to produce it. The utterance

can be perceived literally or in terms of its unsaid or exaggerated meaning, but the true “ironic” effect is in the way these two rub together—in the case of bowed drones, “rubbed together” quite literally. As in irony, one needn’t reject the literal meaning, the core melodic note(s), in order to also “get” the ironic meaning. But the effect of core, drone *and* what sounds as a result of their simultaneity is also meaningful. Simultaneity and superimposition are effectively working together.

Accordion tuning practices are comparably revealing. Cajun accordions are often tuned “wet” meaning that there is an intentional discrepancy among the triple reeds required to create the distinctly Cajun sound of a given note (DeWitt 2003).¹⁴⁰ The desired effect flattens thirds about fifteen cents in order to remove the pulses that occur when octaves are perfectly in tune and the slight dissonance results in a vibrato, a tiny tremolo that is a characteristic of the Cajun accordion’s sound (Savoy 2005). The desired effect is in exaggerating the way it has eschewed “perfection.” Cajun accordion maker Marc Savoy says “slightly below is right.” With the lowest tuned to standard pitch the combination is what makes “a rich, vibrant tone.” “It’s like blended whiskey; the sum is greater than the parts; one taste brings out the other” when none of them are quite right alone (M. Savoy, 2005). Drones, double-stops, chords and techniques similar to wet tuning are common in most fiddle traditions, but Cajuns use these techniques generously. The “ring” that comes of discrepancy and divided focus is essential; the focus is on the division.

¹⁴⁰ This is not unique to Cajun accordions. Irish, Newfoundland and Québécois accordionists use a similar tuning technique to achieve “brightness.”

Cajun and Acadian bowing techniques are also interesting in this way as additional emphasis is often created by pushing down on the string. This contrasts with the technique of creating emphasis used in classical violin playing, where the direction of the bow is unchanged but the speed at which it is pushed or pulled increases. Several other fiddle traditions use this technique as well—the addition of force and then its relaxation—both effective in their own right, but adding an additional “meaning” by coming together in such rapid succession and generally without any change in bow direction. The effect on the listener is much like those optical illusion exercises where one is not certain whether they’re “supposed to see” the vase or the two faces. Especially when you can really see the two, the magic is in the rapid oscillation between the two images, the two techniques—so rapid that one doesn’t really come after another, but that knowing and hearing the two possibilities creates a third possibility based on simultaneity. This is not forced *or* relaxed bowing but both and their combination. Shuffle bowing operates on similar principles, with a slight, but palpable additional force placed on alternate pull strokes. In addition to the “surprise” of a de-emphasized beat one, this amounts to placing a small oppositional power on the rhythmically weak beats of two and four that is particularly valued in dance fiddling.¹⁴¹ Because these are such slight but meaningful elements of the style, they play into the double-voicedness I’ve been discussing throughout. When done well, the understatedness of these techniques allows for a degree of self-congratulation among those who “get it,” and serves to separate those

¹⁴¹ Shuffle bowing is often communicated as pull-push-PULL-push, pull-push-PULL-push. See Meghan Forsyth’s work on the PEI Acadian shuffle (Forsyth 2012) and related work by Kate Dunlay and David Greenberg on Cape Breton bowing techniques (Dunlay and Greenberg 1996).

within the tradition from those without. Many of the musicians I spoke to say that these are the elements that keep students who “come-from-away” from ever really sounding like Cajun or Acadian fiddlers.

My research suggests that this layered listening is what’s at play with the *segundeur*, or second fiddle, as well. Typically, he emphasizes the core rhythm of the tune using chorded drones or double stops. Traditionally these *segundeur* parts are played primarily on lower strings, but in more modern arrangements, he uses the same techniques in a higher register—acting as a treble or tenor second fiddle. The various harmonic possibilities are therefore emphasized by eschewing them for simplicity. The core chords, I, IV and V, are taken literally in Acadian and Cajun arrangements—presented simply and minimalistically, with only the rarest harmonic substitutions. By omission/suggestion/understatement, they ironically exaggerate the host of available harmonic possibilities/substitutions.

Exaggeration and understatement are employed rhythmically as well. Although in notation (including my transcriptions) one often sees Cajun dance tunes and Acadian songs written in eighth note groupings, what is actually played/sung is more often a lopsided triplet. Again as a result of its rather rudimentary appearance, exaggeration can be enacted quite subtly. What the semblance of simplicity affords is room for emphasis of almost any degree such that these eighth notes are not restricted to any one rhythmic relationship. Instead the subtleties of these relationships are heard, played or ignored according to the capacity of both the listener and the performer—ideally to both in kind, but interpretive discrepancies are fruitful as well (Turino 2008; Keil and Feld 1994).

Degrees of ornamentation are used similarly and range from slight and almost imperceptible mordents to dramatic glissandi. These, and several other intermediary ornaments, are used in accordance with the communicative space that performers perceive they've established with their audience.

To illustrate this point I will recall a Sunday afternoon get together in Church Point, Nova Scotia that was particularly dense with musicians and dancers. As is typical in the later hours of a session, a series of solo dancers were performing in small spurts—a few distinct “steps” each and then leaving the floor to make room for the next dancer who typically gets pushed onto the floor by people in the audience who are familiar with their abilities. It amounts to a display that is half shared between humility and frivolity. One gentleman got up to dance, revealing himself to be very “neat” and light on his feet. In Acadian dancing, arms are often free such that they are raised or bounce to emphasize certain steps. Steps, too are often punctuated by particularly strong stomps or high kicks, but this man did very little of that—arms by his side, footwork intricate, and very close to the floor. In the span of about two steps, the fiddler eliminated what seemed a characteristic slurring style, and made his ornaments less elaborate—barely grace notes. The next tune in the fiddler's medley was not one he typically plays, but one that is popular in Richmond County, another Acadian area about 500 kilometres north. The dancer smiled, glanced back at the fiddler to recognize the gesture of adjusting his fiddle style to suit a regionalized dancing style and continued. When his turn was through and the next dancer appeared, the fiddler resumed his earlier style.

In a comparable occasion, a guitarist in Lafayette altered his rhythmic pattern whenever one couple danced by him, adding more elaborate syncopated patterns than he had used the rest of the night. In Cajun couple dancing, motion around the floor typically moves counter-clockwise so it was clear that the alterations were attached to a particular couple. Speaking to the couple afterwards, the woman said, "Oh, my Dad used to teach him [the guitarist] and he [her father] had no time for any of this modern stuff, but when Kevin [the guitarist] was a kid he wanted everything to be exciting so he did that kind of rhythm stuff and now that he plays a lot straighter, he just does it for me, as a reminder of Dad. It's funny. Sometimes I don't even see him up there but then I'll hear that little mm bah! mm bah! (*imitating a syncopated rhythm*) stuff and I know he's seeing me"

(Alexandrine Robichaud, personal communication October 2009). Not fully composed and not fully improvised, cultural use of exaggeration and understatement demonstrates a degree of subtlety where emphasis ranges from that which needs to be overt to elicit dramatic effect to that which functions as an insider code of conduct. It is an example of how a private meaning is made.

Tell some people the joke all you like; they can study your timing and your gestures, your tone of voice and the way you choose your audience, but it seems as if they'll always deliver it wrong. They'll put the punch-line in too early or signal it inappropriately, use one poorly chosen synonym, or not know their audience as well as they think. Sometimes by being *too* careful, *too* studious, the desired effect will be lost. Sometimes they'll notice the lack in themselves and sometimes carry on obliviously. When one considers the intimate way social behaviour is understood among those close

to us it is possible to assess drinkers not necessarily as “a typically sober person, now drinking,” but *both* this sober person and this drunk person in one— oscillating and simultaneous and therefore creating a third. Elements of a drunk and sober version of this person are present as is their friction against each other. These elements are at once forceful and relaxed, much like Acadian and Cajun bowing, harmonic sense, vocal stylings and ornamentation.

It is difficult to dismiss as coincidental the alignment of these musical techniques with individuals who so frequently express an affinity for double-meaning social behaviour. Like many social and cultural groups beyond my field of study, Cajuns and Acadians often express harsh judgment in a joke or affection in an insult. Of course there are risks of being construed as crass, pompous and aggressive in the case of Cajuns, or subdued, complicit and simple in the case with Acadians, but interpretive communities develop competence that is appropriate to their contexts—sometimes at the risk of rendering intra-group relationships difficult to develop. When speaking of pedagogy in traditional circles, fiddler David Greely expressed his sympathy with the hordes of learners who, despite efforts, abilities, and the best intentions, always come up shy in truly Cajun interpretations of tunes: “It matters *a lot* what you’re around all the time... You gotta be *around*. I mean Steve [Riley]¹⁴² was watching the masters. You gotta be around a higher level of musicianship so that you can elevate yourself” (personal communication, 2010). And “higher” is not always so easy to measure.

¹⁴² Steve Riley is a world-class Cajun-born accordionist who, at the time of this interview, performed with Dave Greely in *The Mamou Playboys*. Dave Greely has since left the band to pursue solo projects and smaller acoustic performances.

In the sociological examination of American culture that is presented in Ann Swidler's *Talk of Love: How Culture Matters*, cultural imagery is described like echolocation (Swidler 2001). Swidler speaks of the way communities are continuously bouncing ideas off the cultural alternatives made apparent in environments. This is the effect of irony. Our attentional energy is devoted not just to the presented idea and not just to its antithesis, but primarily to how these possibilities rub together and bounce off one another. The process can be found in every aspect of Acadian and Cajun music depending on the scope of conceptualization.

Most would agree that Cajun and Acadian musics, rooted as they are in strong dance traditions, is rhythmically regular, but rough. Several would argue to the point of saying that this reveals its simplicity, and justifies its derogatory labels as "chank-a-chank" music, but look again. The vigorous dance moves in Cajun styles are actually inspired by a fairly economical use of fiddle bows and accordion bellows. Marc Savoy even advocates practicing with accordion bellows half closed so that students learn to maximize the effect to effort ratio: "If you exert too much energy, you'll strip out something," you need to leave room for "concentrated movement when you need it" (M. Savoy, 2005). Again, our expectations shape how we feel regularity, how we conceive of the communicative field and, again, it is only when understatement is the norm that exaggeration has the greatest impact.

Contradiction and Incongruity

Many fans of Cajun music are initially attracted by the *laissez faire* attitude that seems to permeate all aspects of Cajun culture. Many Cajun musicians, however, are

selective with the expression's applications. Without denying the *laissez faire* aspect of their music, there is a militant addendum about the precise ways in which "anything goes." Using the common food metaphors, most speak of Cajun music being more flexible than people think in terms of ingredients/component parts and less flexible than people think in terms of process and patience:

I find gumbo an awesome fusion of a few very simple ingredients that produced an amazingly delicious and very unique dish, much greater than the sum of its parts. I follow a family recipe that was handed down from my grandmother and yet my gumbo is slightly different, even though I follow the recipe closely. Because I am not my grandmother, and since my world is very different from hers, and also that the quality and quantity of each ingredient may be a little different, her gumbo has evolved to taste like mine does today. This I would call natural "evolution." If I were to pour a gallon of "Kool-aid" and maybe add a few "Big Macs" into the pot of gumbo, then I probably would have something that no one would or could eat. I would definitely call this brilliant innovation a "change." Where have all the people gone who were able to take these few simple ingredients of scorched flour, onions and meat and fuse this into something as good as gumbo, and all into one single pot?! How did this come about? I read today's recipes for new dishes of Cajun fusion, and even though they are very complicated, involving many stages of preparation, the end result is that they can't begin to compare with the simple old recipes for *sauce piquant*, *étouffée*, *courtbouillion*, gumbo, *fricassée*, jambalaya, etc. Not to mention the fact that because of the complexity of preparation, you now have used every pot and pan in the kitchen and instead of having the time now to play a tune, you can now enjoy hours of washing dishes. (Savoy 2010)

What is initially striking (and perhaps inviting) to the imperfect among us is the fact that, in terms of ornamentation and embellishment, the anything goes aspect of Cajun "style" seems to be accenting the very things that many other musical circles consider "wrong," "off," or at least best kept quiet. Their use, however, of these "ingredients" is carefully assembled.

One of the first ornamenting techniques taught in Cajun fiddle style is the slide, starting deliberately on the “wrong note” accenting it and languidly sliding into the “right” one. The reverse is also common, where fiddlers begin on the desired note and then slide the finger down until it practically falls off the fingerboard. Rolling into notes is also common in Acadian and Cajun circles— placing one finger on at a time to roll into a higher pitch as opposed to attacking the note directly. The same technique is employed vocally in a good deal of Acadian song repertoire. There are differences of opinion as to the direction of influence among accordion, fiddle and vocal techniques, but melodically all have contributed to what has become the characteristic sound—modal melodies which often involve “out of place” pitches, and full disclosure of the limitations of each instrument’s tonal range, contributing to a catalogue of songs and tunes that often “skip pitches” in the sense of a “gapped scale.” The frequency with which all of these techniques are used increases with the addition of alcohol. Vocally, the desired quality emphasizes a sense of exasperation, giving it your all. Singers tend to sing at the height of their range, typically nasally and with a tight throat, and phrases are often punctuated by sigh-like falls which suggests that the singer is overcome and beyond control. The dramatic height juxtaposed with the singer’s expressions of exhaustion (enthusiastically on empty) is an exemplary indication of the incongruity that constitutes ironic signals. Clustering the “mistakes” as the markers of style serves to highlight the irony of taste makers as task masters.

Much like music, there’s a grammar of drink which means that there is also syntax, a system of ordering relationships into the meaningful and the incongruous.

Within the system of communication, much is agreed upon, but there are grey areas as well. A frequent discussion among many performing musicians revolved around questions like these: If I am a musician playing at the bar and am paid or thanked in beer, should I be insulted and feel denigrated or unworthy or should I feel touched by the absence of charade and ceremony, receive the gesture as an indicator of intimacy? Is alcohol the same as money? More or less socially solidifying? Distancing? Do audience expectations allow for me to drink onstage and are there caveats to this permission? Visual expectations? Does it loosen up a performer? Inhibit him? Is it an excuse for all the practice I didn't do? Will it let my stage presence compensate for my technical inadequacies? And does my audience view these positions as I do? Both the questions and their answers are coded messages, ones Mary Douglas talks about extensively in Griffiths and Wallace's *Consuming Passions* when she outlines that the more food (or in this case, drink) is ritualized, the more society looks not at the consumed item, but what it indicates about a means of classification. The core conscious of those who drink is affected by social distinctions and these depend on discursive communities in agreement (Griffiths and Wallace 1998).

Essentially, in order to recognize incongruity, we must also see parallelism. Remembering the lessons of lyric and language that were presented in chapter three, signs are organized according to resemblances *and* differences. Internal structures of resemblance emerge which reveal ideas of congruity as also, perhaps entirely, matters of expectation and suitability. Metrically this presents itself in the form of elision and extension that, depending on listeners' expectations, makes a tune feel like it has an extra

beat or bar, or that it's short by the same. It happens frequently in Cajun and Acadian music, particularly in older recordings and among older performers, but not all listeners "feel it" in the same way. At the level of the beat, regularity remains. The manner in which these beats are assembled amounts to "crookedness," making it clear that "added" or "deleted" beats are a temporal discrepancy only insofar as they defy a listener's expectations of the pulse. The ideas of musical expectation have been examined in Christina Smith's "Asymmetry in Newfoundland Dance Music" (Smith 2007) and Erynn Marshall's book on West Virginia fiddling (Marshall 2006), but also particularly well in Joti Rockwell's recent examination of "crookedness" in old-time music (Rockwell 2011).

With the crooked tune, Rockwell involves us in the subjective paths of musical experience, viewing conceptions of "crookedness" in repertoire as a means of understanding the particularities of musical performing and listening. The temporal discrepancies of "added" or "deleted" beats and bars discussed in Rockwell's work can be seen as a means of defying listener expectations and therefore acts as a window into the way both players and listeners conceive a given piece of music. The interest, of course, lies in the disruptions that occur when these expectations are not aligned. If we stop seeing meter as a static grid of time points but as the continuous unfolding of temporal projections, music becomes a process involving the ways in which potential durations are projected and realized. Rockwell argues against a dichotomy between rhythm and meter. The philosophical groundwork for approaches to meter must focus, above all else, on listener expectation. Christopher Hasty's theories of "projective potential" have vast applications in that having one's individual or collective expectations unfulfilled, in that

they are altered, eluded or even overdone (which in Hasty's theory amounts to a "projective potential" not being realized) provides a phenomenological basis for experiencing "crooked tunes," and techniques of indirection (Hasty 1997).

The key difference lies in the way the tune exists in each listener's head and whether or not performers are able to adequately assess these expectations and play with them "appropriately." This was most clearly demonstrated when I was afforded an opportunity to return a fraction of the generosity that had been offered to me throughout my fieldwork. One of my Acadian informants had his grandfather's playing recorded on a series of cassette tapes, but wanted the melodies transcribed into standard notation so that he could print a tune collection for musical members of his family. I offered to help, but quickly met with a fair number of tunes that were familiar to me, but not recorded as I had learned them. These proved remarkably (sometimes embarrassingly) more difficult for me to transcribe than the ones I had never heard as my familiarity with an alternate version, my expectations of the pulse, handicapped my ability to hear what was actually being played. I was prepared, in these tunes, for things that didn't squarely fit into a 4/4 measure, but I expected these changes to be at the level of two beats here and there—not one, not half a beat—and I conceived of them as "extras" not "short bars" as my informant did (which, in the end, helped tremendously, I hasten to add). This may be the same "narcissism of minor differences" that dominates the isolationist concerns of many fields (Werman 1988; Ignatieff 1998; Blok 1998), but that too is what irony is about—subtle alteration making large lexical differences. The social is far from stable and sure; it is no more than an occasional spark generated by the shift, the shock, the slight

displacement of other non-social phenomena. “Exquisitely small differences” are the ways in which people “achieve the social” (Latour 2005, 36).

In all of the transcriptions included in this chapter you will see that “Valse des Vachers”¹⁴³ has been transcribed in 3/4 time with no meter changes. This is the way the song is typically transcribed in collections of Cajun dance music and the way it is accompanied, generally on the acoustic guitar, with a steady and fairly percussive standard pattern of strong, weak, weak. But upon listening to performed versions of “Valse des Vachers” there is an explicit, noticeable disruption of this pulse so that, in two bar instalments, the listener can also hear three sets of two or a measure, sometimes two, of 4/4. In most Western music, only one metrical order is permitted to operate at a given time and so this disruption tempts us to trade in one metrical order for another, feel as if the tune is in mixed meter and that a transition point has been missed. But ironic tendencies in other cultural areas suggest to me that this is better considered an instance of challenging attentional energy.

Taking from the discussions of metric hierarchies and pulse layers presented by Keil & Feld (Keil and Feld 1994), Krebs (Krebs 1987), Butler (Butler 2006), and those previously mentioned in Hasty, Smith, and Rockwell, one’s ability or inability to adapt to rhythmic variation is key, but what’s particularly interesting, here, is that all parts do not vary/disrupt together. It is the secondary melodic activity that makes for a sense of rhythmic disruption—one that can be ignored entirely without affecting the harmonic

¹⁴³ This tune has been recorded and notated under several related but not identical titles. To date and to my knowledge “Cowboy’s Waltz,” “Valse a Vache,” “Valse du Vachez” and “Valse des Vachers” are all the same tune.

“fit,” the formal structure, or the sum of beats. Not unlike a good deal of polyphony, the “disturbed” aspects of the tune fleetingly rub against the “proper melody” and this disruption occurs only after the core tune has been established— only when it is clear that it is disruption we are meant to hear. A listener or performer is equally welcome to latch on to the still-present core melody. If he is not prepared to reorient attention to the alternative, he can be carried through the disruption by familiar portions and still find the performance musically meaningful.

Disruptions of this nature do not occur consistently or among all performers, but when they are present, something is revealed about estimations of listeners and fellow performers. Most of the more widely disseminated and commercially successful Cajun artists eliminate this metrical ambiguity altogether; others seem to make only selective use of this aspect of the tune’s arrangement.¹⁴⁴ It appears most frequently in live performances, typically in smaller ensembles (many of them family-based) and in the archived recordings and videos of performers like Amédé Ardoin, Dennis McGee and Canray Fontenot—recordings that took place when the intended audience was presumably conceived of as small and culturally intimate.

¹⁴⁴ Byron Dueck’s work on the social implications of rhythm and meter deals with this idea of public intimacy as well. His article “Public and Intimate Sociability in First Nations and Métis Fiddling” (Dueck 2007) talks about the possibility of simultaneous intimacies and “imagining modes of musical sociability” (p.30). Dueck argues that public and intimate variations are not necessarily exclusive or successive, but that they can exist in dynamic and ongoing relationships of “self definition, negotiation and contestation.” Most importantly, Dueck highlights that publicness is not unitary, but plural and audiences are subtly differentiated from one another, even in a single performance. His forthcoming article, “Civil Twilight: Country Music, Alcohol and the Spaces of Manitoban Aboriginal Sociability” (Born 2012 (in press)) promises to be relevant to the themes of this dissertation.

Variations in Acadian song repertoire operate in the same way. Among collected Acadian songs, many are transcribed with changing meters and “crooked” sections. Archival recordings reveal this still further. Performed versions of, for example, “Un ivrogne à table” as sung by Loubie Chiasson, Pat Aucoin and Leo Aucoin are far more likely to take metric liberties in their performances than many contemporary performers and certainly more than commercial recordings. But the most widely disseminated songs—those of Acadian origin but familiar to people outside the region—are most likely to be “square.” In both Acadian and Cajun environments, metrical ambiguity is far more frequent when players or singers have been drinking, but it is often dismissed as a mistake in these situations—difficult to suss out when comparing musical experiences in hindsight and in the social moment. Although there is no comprehensive information in this regard, these metrical disruptions are also common in the archival recordings that are said to have been achieved with the assistance of a measure of alcohol.

Figure 5.1 shows an excerpt from a simplified transcription of Dennis McGee’s performance of “Valse des Vachers” with Sady Courville. Recorded commercially in 1929-1930, the presumed consumer was of Cajun background—significant in establishing the discursive community required for ironic techniques to be effective. The tune begins by establishing a rhythmic series of bars in which the eighth note is established as the primary unit (all eighths or one quarter note and two sets of eighths). At the end of the first 8-measure phrase of the turn, the “strong, weak, weak” pattern is disturbed—first by establishing a monotone C which stands in stark contrast to the surrounding melodic activity and then by changing the rhythm to a half note followed by a quarter note. A

pulse is then established and reduced to the level of the quarter note (aided by the tie in m.34 and the triplet)—four of them. Four bars later the quarter notes are more explicit, making what is transcribed as beat three of measure 38 feel, to the listener, as if it could be a downbeat of a 4/4 measure.¹⁴⁵ The feeling of 3/4 meter returns at measure 40. Though it amounts to an “extra” bar in terms of the 8- bar structure outlined earlier, this does not disrupt the song’s danceability as a waltz. Most crucial, most interesting, is the possibility for it to be simultaneously felt in three and in four—it hasn’t switched meters so much as combined them. Alterations like this do not occur when the melody is sung. Neither do they occur when the tune (or the bridge/turn) is first introduced instrumentally. The feeling of three regular beats to a bar is firmly established before this alternate “feel” is presented.

¹⁴⁵ Alternatively, a listener might hear a hemiola—2 beats plus 2 beats plus 2 beats—in the space of two 3/4 bars rather than 4/4 as I have presented. This alternative interpretation (with thanks to Byron Dueck) only contributes further to my assertion that many interpretive communities are active at a given time. Further, an additional interpretation could see the vocalist as engaging in some metrical two-against-three play with the instrumental part.

“Valse des Vachers” (McGee 1994)

fiddle (simplified)



Figure 5.1

At the risk of presenting “Valse des Vachers” in too evolutionary a fashion, Figure 5.2 transcribes the song as presented by the Doucet-Savoy Cajun band on their recording “Live at the Dance.”¹⁴⁶ Hints of the McGee/Courville performance can be seen often and will be discussed in forthcoming sections pertaining to echoic mention, but for now, I would like to focus on the way metric duality is treated in the Savoy-Doucet arrangement—one intended for a wider and less intimate audience. Figure 5.2 highlights instances of four repeated high C’s. Their register calls attention to them as does their stress. Whereas the surrounding material emphasizes, in Cajun waltz fashion, a “fat” first

¹⁴⁶I think it’s significant to note that the live material assembled to make this album was recorded at the Birchmere in Virginia, Ashkenaz in Berkeley and Synod Hall in Pittsburgh—significant when you consider the greater variations these same artists tend to play in commercial studio recordings and in live performance in Louisiana.

beat, these C's, starting on beat two of measures 20, 24 and 28 are emphasized in sets of two. In measure 24, however, we hear the accent on beat two far less prominently. In this case, the quarter note G that is found on the downbeat of measure 24 functions as the first in a group of four quarter notes which ends on beat one of measure 25 (functioning as beat four rather than a downbeat). The quick succession and insistence of these quarter note C's keeps this musical detail from being relegated to the merely idiosyncratic. Their juxtaposition with the waltz pulse is indicative of the metrical duality that characterizes much Cajun music. And the subtlety, the finesse of the approach is, I think, indicative of the ironic relationship Cajun music has had with a wider commercial audience, one presumably less familiar with Cajun ironic approaches as a whole. *Feufollet*, a young Cajun band who has recently received quite a bit of attention for their engaging integration of Cajun music and several pop/rock genres has also recently recorded "Valse des Vachers." In their version there are no metric disruptions and the bridge or turn functions as musical interludes do in many popular songs: melodically and harmonically varied, metrically predictable (Feufollet 2010).

“Valse des Vachers” (Savoy/Doucet 1994)
fiddle/accordion (simplified)



Figure 5.2

Taking the case of “Valse des Vachers” as one example among many standards with “crooked” potential, there seems to be an inverse relationship between the presence of irregularity or crookedness and the performance’s dissemination. Archived and commercial recordings of Dennis McGee, Sady Courville and other “old-timers” as well as more current live performances in Lafayette and environs by Steve Riley, Ray Abshire and the Savoy family seem quite comfortable with “extra” bars to accommodate lyrics or melodic motifs. Commercial recordings with national distribution (i.e. *Beausoleil* and *Feufollet*), however, include far fewer of the same disruptive tendencies. Most interesting, the same tune played by the same musician(s) varies in “crookedness” based on what seems to be degrees of familiarity among listeners and performers. When you’re “home” you can try that, but it will be seen as a mistake “away,” said David Greely, “It’s a shame, cause not everyone away is ignorant” (personal communication, October 2010).

A number of these metrical and rhythmic features warrant discussion that is particular to a relationship with alcohol consumption and a relationship to Acadian and Cajun cultural projection. Meter and rhythm, which appear to be the dominant musical elements in most Cajun and Acadian repertoire, deal with temporality as well as periodicity—moving as much as segmenting. The frequent use of rhythmic anacrusis emphasizes this motion such that an intentional opposition can be seen to the fixedness of downbeats and pulses. The relationship of meter to rhythm can be considered as regulation is to freedom or composition to improvisation—both requiring the other in order to be most effective. An anacrusis releases continuation or motion from its dependency on prior beginnings. An upbeat effectively “comes from nowhere” and is unanchored from the beats that come before, pointing instead to what is to come. Although I don’t suggest that these connections to social behaviour and cultural philosophy are consciously considered and applied by all performers, I do appreciate that the same aesthetic evaluative scheme (perhaps even a cultural script) would see alcohol consumption not as a weight so much as a release, would see upbeats as springboards, and would see Cajuns and Acadians as moving forward due to the vaulting capacity of their past.

I find these rhythmic rubs interesting, too, in light of what Christopher Hasty would refer to as “rhythmic hierarchy” (Hasty 1997, 115). Hasty reminds us of “the assumption of duples” when he considers rhythmic perception at the level of the quarter note, half note, then whole note. He points out that the concept of subdividing, essential to our understanding of Western rhythmic notation, narrows our rhythmic *sense*. Again,

the music's invitation to be understood in ways that are not *strictly* in terms of twos does not mean it cannot be understood in twos at all. This is the "not one or the other, but both and a third" analysis offered earlier in terms of ironic devices, and it occurs both in the rhythmic division of the beat and in larger scale conceptions of the way these beats, these bars combine and recombine. This approach to hierarchy is, I think, musically analogous to the religious discussions of chapter four. The church is structured around the decreasing authority of pope, cardinals, bishops, priests and laypeople, but theologically it depends on the disruptions of this order, the humanity of all of these leaders, proving that what is "holy" is not rigid—what is essential in Christian teaching is not that Jesus is human or divine, but both.

Throughout this dissertation, contradiction and incongruity have been addressed in terms of need or centrality, what belongs, what is essential to Acadian and Cajun music. Style is typically considered incompatible with need— an accessory which adds interest to the solid social structure. Though it is indeed difficult to think of human social behaviour, irony or music without considering the effective force of style, it is similarly difficult to think of need having no bearing on the ways behaviour, humour, or cultural products are fashioned. Taking from Pierre Bourdieu's "stylization of life" wherein he describes style as that which "tends to shift the emphasis from substance and function to form and manner" the incongruity of style and need are immediately brought to the forefront (Bourdieu 1984). The historical status of Acadians and Cajuns as dispossessed has an element of stylization to it as cultural revival efforts combine with changing demographics. Many analysts suggest the poor try to eat and drink like everyone else as a

way of overcoming the feelings of deprivation and difference associated with poverty (Fitchen 1987, 309; Pittman and White 1991, 372; McGovern 2009, 267; Marshall 1979, 26; Heath 1995, 2), but because diet is so closely associated with power and moral superiority, even upwardly mobile Cajuns express an affinity for alcohol as a stylized expression of solidarity with a more marginalized past. “You can never be too rich or too thin” says the duchess of Windsor, clearly in no danger of either. The ability to be choosy, to have a “superior” diet, bleeds quickly into moral evaluations that many Acadians and Cajuns see as culturally compromising.

As a part of one’s diet, alcohol consumption is also a matter of style and is often considered the last refuge of the poor. Drinking establishments have long been considered the ultimate in liminal spaces (Wilson 2005; Pittman and White 1991; Pernanen 1975; McGovern 2009; Martinic and Leigh 2004; Marshall 1979; Mandelbaum 1965; Klingemann and Gmel 2001; Heath 1995, 2000; Peele and Grant 1999; Fleming and New South Wales. Bureau of Crime Statistics & Research 2008; Davis, Thake, and Vilhena 2010)—where employer and employee are equalized, where public and private life can converge, where economic status can remain uncertain, where work and home life can be bridged. Style-less, though, is the alcoholic—the one who really needs a drink and is therefore, in his need, “less” than those who can handle liquor both responsibly and casually. What a person drinks is a measure of style. Who one drinks with, how much one drinks, where and when one drinks are measured similarly and these standards are far from universal or transferable. Those who abstain do so for a variety of reasons—some of these reasons, like health restrictions or prohibitive laws, are imposed, while others, like

religious observance, are a matter of individual or collective choice. What I'm getting at is the incongruity between presentational style and actual practice.

Literalization/Simplification

To be direct and unvarnished can be as communicatively risky as any of the more indirect means of communication. Entangled in expressive forms are matters of consideration and manners, entertainment and self-preservation. What is often referred to as refreshing or disarming in behaviour that seems liberated from conventions is equally often considered to be rude or unrefined. Cy à Mateur and Harry Choates are perfect examples of this behavioural riskiness. Wondering whether or not one can assume of interpretive communities that "they will look for other meanings, even in [my] silence"¹⁴⁷ can make straightforward messages difficult to identify, communicate and, certainly, sustain. But it can also be said that communicative trends downplaying sincerity afford a new edge and bite to simplifying and the use of the literal, such that they can take on an ironic capacity as well. Using literalization or simplification as an ironic device is a reminder that irony's role is not simply to add richness or variety to modes of expression, but also to add an evaluative accent and to emphasize the emotional positions taken on by both performers and interpreters—degrees of detachment or involvement.

The song literature is especially capable of using literalization ironically. Cajun and Acadian song texts are not at all elaborate and, as demonstrated in chapter three,

¹⁴⁷ This Umberto Eco quotation comes of discussions surrounding his novel, *Foucault's Pendulum*. Eco had taken a public stance against deconstructionist readings, denied the in-group irony suggested by his use of his fellow-theorist's name and dismissed it as coincidental—Eco meant the physicist Foucault of pendulum fame. But the novel basically begged (and rewarded) precisely the kind of reading Eco had denounced, sparking discussions of face value, stated intent, analytical rewards and contributing significantly to the genre of "critifictional" writing in which ironic positions and targets were often confused.

reading them will reveal no involved narratives but instead common themes of loss, poor treatment or being left behind. All of the linguistic and narrative techniques outlined in chapter three demonstrate this Acadian and Cajun affinity for literalization and simplification. There is a cultural pleasure in understanding and sonically reconciling a specific regional language with the oppressors it has musically managed to fend off. There is also a cultural comfort in narrating one's own life by positioning it against more collective modes of cultural expression—modes that are suggested by a common class, region, occupation or age.

The same performative approach that is at play linguistically can account for the inadequacies inherent in most musical transcriptions of Acadian and Cajun music and might even suggest the impossibility of their improvement. As thorough as they hope to be, if graphic representations of irony are taken literally they can destroy its effect. Similarly, the best-intentioned student taking the most thoroughly and accurately transcribed representation of Cajun or Acadian playing will fall short of its "magic." Words like "feel" and "lift" and "swing" and even "dirt" are often used to account for the stylistic distance between performed and transcribed versions of Cajun and Acadian music. I suggest that this distance is typical of the consequences of irony, whether it is intended or not. It has applications far beyond Cajun or Acadian music, but every utterance is a momentary intersection of the said and the unsaid. The intersection occurs in the communicative space that is set up by *both* meaning and affect, *both* intention and reception. This is the intersection that makes irony happen and it is a highly unstable,

sometimes even dangerous, one which threatens the understanding of the music as a whole.

In this fourth type of irony, the attempts made at literalizing through notation what is effectively and essentially figurative highlights the aesthetic power of Cajun and Acadian music. What is absent in the notation highlights what is present, if untenable, in performance. Not one collection claims to be valid without extensive listening and imitation of live and recorded performances and though one could argue that this is true for most any musical undertaking, fiddle and song transcriptions are particularly reductionist. Seeing Acadian and Cajun songs notated and contrasting this with a performed version begs most of us involved with transcription to break out our pencils that we might add bow strokes, slurs and notate ornaments, mark arrows up and down for pitch and invent some system to signal rhythmic pushing and pulling. We're rarely satisfied, but we're galled with the inadequacies of the transcription we were handed and when we are through, our own "thorough" transcription is likely illegible or simply favours a different and equally incomplete set of musical elements, getting us no closer to the tune we're hearing. We might step closer descriptively but it has little value prescriptively.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁸ Charles Seeger's 1958 contribution (Seeger 1958) was among the first to discuss that "the full auditory parameter of music" could not be fully represented "by a partial visual parameter" (184). This suggestion prompted discussions as to the role of notation. Prescriptive was (and still is) used as the term for notation-as-blueprint, that is, as a set of orders which, if followed, would result in the desired musical effect. Descriptive notation, on the other hand, acted as somewhat of a report—a description of a musical event that had already sounded. Though well-embedded in musicological and ethnomusicological education today, the distinctions between the two approaches continue to highlight the hazards of "capturing" anything social.

These “simple things” are the markers of cultural intimacy (Stokes 2010; Herzfeld 2004; Swidler 2001) and, ultimately, this is what irony is all about. It marks in groups and out groups and, at its most effective, can come so close to its target as to be able to use its very language. Through a self-assured willingness to be construed as their opposite, Cajun and Acadian performers relativize the dominant’s authority and undermine their stability in part by appropriating the dominant authority’s powers—by being the larger than life Cajun that their dominants think of as boorish. Their repertoire does the same. In the face of accusations of being unrefined or sloppy, drones and the extremes of melodic range become characteristic. But of course “they” don’t all do that—certainly not consciously. Routinely, irony is permitted where it is not understood, or perceived where it isn’t. I have thus far discussed irony as if there is one ironist and one interpreter, but I will immediately address the fact that musically and socially there is almost always a polyphonic conversation happening where turns are sometimes taken and sometimes not and attentional energy is often divided. My own fieldwork serves as an example. While I was asking questions about accordionist Wayne Toups (the featured artist at *Festivals Acadien et Creoles* in 2011), I had the good fortune to have accidentally stood beside Chris Trahan who was quite knowledgeable on the subject of Cajun music. He was describing Toups’ background and offering his insights into Toups’ repertoire selection (already an indication that Toups was speaking differently to me than to Trahan and that Trahan was in dialogue with a broader swath of Cajun musicians than other people I had spoken to, who weren’t familiar with Toups’ career). But then he stopped himself mid-sentence, laughing. “I’d better stop talking or we’ll be starting rumours,” he said. As I

was missing the joke, he then explained that Toups' last two numbers were favourites of Trahan's and, usually, he dances. Toups noticed his absence among the dancers and, finding him in the crowd and seeing that he had been distracted by me (a stranger), Toups chose his next selection as a tongue-in-cheek comment on what he perceived to be happening. He started playing "Johnny Can't Dance," a high energy song that tells the story of Johnny who goes to all the dances, trying to get the girls to dance, and though he tries and tries, he can't dance. Had Chris not explained this to me, I wouldn't have known that the inclusion of "Johnny Can't Dance" was a commentary. Having said this, "Johnny Can't Dance" is a favourite of Wayne Toups and his band. Perhaps it was coincidental and Trahan was reading into it too deeply. By the time I got a chance to ask Wayne Toups, he had forgotten that particular moment. By then, it had more significance for me than for him. I use this story to emphasize that in alcohol-affected contexts, a good deal of musical meaning depends on that which is undecidable and ungrounded.

Repetition/Echoic mention

For this final ironic strategy, I would like to point to a performance lineage that can be found in "Valse des Vachers"—a lineage that points to a shifting hierarchy in the musical use of ironic devices. Figure 5.3 is an excerpt from an earlier portion of the same recording that is presented in Figure 5.2: the Doucet-Savoy Cajun band on their recording "Live at the Dance." In this simplified transcription, the same melodic motive that signals the rhythmic disruption (from three into four) in McGee's performance (Figure 5.1 above) is hinted at in the last beat of measure 11, but it does not lead into the same overtly duple grouping:

“Valse des Vachers” (Savoy/Doucet 1994)
fiddle/accordion simplified



Figure 5.3

Although the triplet figure is itself unremarkable, its positioning makes it less so. Its placement at the end of this phrase is identical to McGee’s and its isolation, the fact that it does not pass into a G or another melodically related pitch but instead jumps down to less audible accompaniment-like material, calls attention to the figure as something in and of itself—a quotation or echoic mention rather than an ornamental coincidence.¹⁴⁹ To add credence to this suggestion, the same melodic material occurs later in the same performance (Figure 5.4) and this time it is extended in ways very similar to Dennis McGee’s performance, ways that are particularly hard to overlook considering the highly intentional and informed performance habits of Michael Doucet and Marc Savoy.

In measure 15, the tonic C is emphasized by the triplet and descends through the A toward the G, as in McGee’s performance. Again this performance stops short of offering the degree of alternative meter presented in the McGee/Courville performance, but these two quotations occur where improvisatory material is typically placed. They therefore signal the double-minded attention offered to, and required of, listeners throughout. Performers and listeners reposition attention through reference, through

¹⁴⁹ In contrast, the same figure at the end of measure eight functions differently—approached by a stepwise ascending triplet and completed in the downbeat of measure five, again by step, to a G.

repetition and echoic mention. In *Feufollet*'s recording of "Valse des Vachers" (Feufollet 2010), the core tune remains basically the same, but in terms of harmony, accompanying motifs, vocal technique and ornamental material, the piece becomes almost entirely through composed. In this case, musical effectiveness comes from making old material new, averting repetition and applying more modern production techniques.

"Valse des Vachers" (Savoy/Doucet 1994)
fiddle/accordion simplified

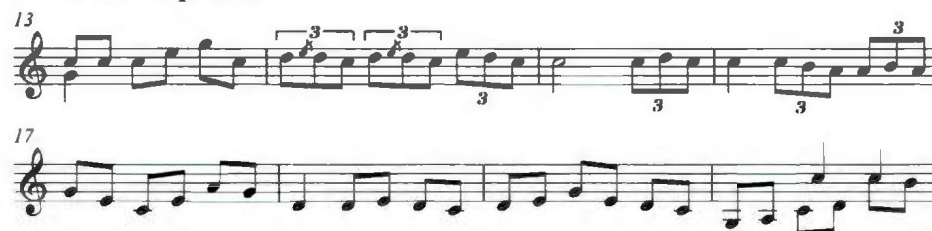


Figure 5.4

As outlined earlier in the chapter, the structure of most Cajun music depends on repetition. On a large scale, all of the song's component parts depend on a repeated harmonic structure and all instrumental parts are subject to repetition based on the enthusiasm of performers and listeners. On a smaller scale, bridges that highlight different members of the ensemble who embellish according to their tastes and/or capacities often include a fair amount of echoed material, signalling a relationship among soloists by quoting portions of the preceding improvisatory melodies. Within a given performer's part, repetition is used for emphasis. Repeating descending scalar passages, for example, occur in rapid succession to indicate both virtuosity and energy. Rhythmically, patterns are typically established early and then sustained, and a propensity for double timing is

again indicative of repetitive features—repetition being equated with steadiness or “drive” and seen as essential to rhythmic playing.

Repetition in Acadian and Cajun repertoire is not “more of the same.” When considered temporally, the way music is experienced, repetition is a technique that can remind us of the motion of our perception/engagement, that the rhythm that comes of repetition is not static but flowing. Occasionally the awareness of structure, or an ability to hear “oh, there it is again” overshadows the *unrepeatability* of experience, but experiencing rhythm involves participating or becoming involved in an event as it is going on. The dancing prowess of Acadians and Cajuns makes this abundantly clear as the experience of rhythm is measured by the intensity of involvement. Good dancers do anything but follow along with whatever the musicians decide to do. Many of them are composing syncopated counter-rhythms, responding to their partners’ abilities to do the same, and indicating their awareness of other couples on the floor by imitating them, challenging them, or giving them room. Experiencing repetition means attention must be relatively continuous, but “continuous” is not trailing behind the musical activity or even keeping up, but moving ahead, anticipating. What listeners anticipate is not the projection of a definite outcome, but a readiness in light of what’s come before (again I suggest hints of the religious analysis in chapter four). Repetition must be analyzed as *both* multiplicity and unity so that what is seen as rhythmic can be considered in terms of the motion of our perception and engagement. Whether expectations are fulfilled or not, engagement is in a direct relationship with repetition and echoic mention. The ironic effect is in the rubbing of the played or heard meaning with the plural edges of what could have been played,

what could be expected given a listener's cultural competence—the said against the unsaid.

Even in the most basic assessment of inebriated behaviour, repetition is at the fore. Not only do those “under the influence” typically repeat themselves and dwell on things, but they also need to be told things repeatedly, to be reminded, to be assured of relationships between intention and effect. In reference to performance situations, many bands speak of the behaviour of more inebriated members—the ways set lists often fall by the wayside, favourites get played again and again and a sense of time regarding how long it has been since a given piece was played disappears. In performances I've attended in Lafayette and environs, the most repetitive versions of Cajun standards are played at the end of the night, in bars when both performers and audience members are drinking. In Acadian environments, an inebriated group means it's likely that a favourite song will be sung again and again, prompted not by the idea of how many times a song “should” be sung in a given night, but how much love there is for it in the room. By this stage in the night, the inside jokes of musical quotation and the (comically) extended versions of familiar songs increases dramatically. And, to further complicate the issue of identifying irony, these occur next to quite literal responses: performers do not want to “wrap it up” so they keep going. Though the embodied response is shared, it is literal to some and ironic to others.

Irony's Problems and Possibilities: Concluding Thoughts

Irony's capacity for disastrous misfiring makes it a problematic mode of expression. Alcohol's capacity for creating musical and social disaster also makes it a

double edged sword of a cultural tool. It's important to ask why it is so attractive to use a form of discourse where a person says/plays/sings something she doesn't actually mean and then expects people to understand not only the intended meaning but also her attitude toward it. More importantly, it is necessary to understand the plurality, the range of irony and alcohol's functions as well as its effects. Irony's tendency to be used defensively invokes James Clifford's question: "What are the dangers, in the extreme, 'of putting the whole world in quotation marks'?" (Clifford 2010, 25). The answer, of course, is that the world in quotation marks makes divisions between "in" and "out" less and less traversable (assuming that is always considered a danger). Irony and alcohol are loose and loaded, comical and cutting, but there are few markers as revealing of cultural competence. Marc Savoy counts as one of the most grievous offenses among Cajun aficionados a failure to comprehend the subtleties that account for a culture's uniqueness thereby "resulting in an exaggeration of what is very obvious together with producing the near impossibility of articulating these subtleties if and when they are understood" (Savoy 2010). Fond of culinary metaphors, Savoy goes on to speak of the way his father cooked:

What made the dish very wonderful and unique were not only the subtle blend of ingredients but the manner in which he actually cooked. It was equally important to know when to leave the pot open, at which moment he needed to put the lid on so that the gravy would form and when to apply or reduce the heat for the taste to be just right. Someone not familiar with the entire process would most likely taste his *courtboullion* and relate only to what was the most obvious thing about it. If this person attempts to duplicate what he just ate, it will very likely come out with way too much cayenne, too many ingredients that don't belong there, and a consistency approaching that of contact glue. The things that are important to the outcome of a wonderful *courtboullion* go unnoticed because they are very subtle; and it takes a lot of patience

to recognize, a devotion to develop and a passion to create. (Savoy 2010)¹⁵⁰

The bottom line is not a “you either got it or you don’t” approach to learning culture. I’m actually quite convinced that the ironic elements of Cajun and Acadian performance can be learned, but not in a hurry, and not musically without also being steeped in the broader cultural techniques of history, sociability, lyric and language and religion. When alcohol affects Cajun and Acadian musical environments, the music can appear repetitive or simple, incongruous, erratic or exaggerated, but this is not all there is. Seen as a protective or elucidating measure, these ironic techniques can be held accountable for the interdependent roles of alcohol, irony and music making.

In *Fictional Worlds*, Thomas Pavel claims that “societies that believe in myths [unfold] at two different levels: the profane reality, characterized by ontological paucity and precariousness, contrasts with a mythical level [that is] ontologically self-sufficient, containing a privileged space and a cyclical time” (Pavel 1986, 77). Perhaps I am taking the word “literally” too “literaturally” for an ethnomusicological investigation, but there is something to be said for this selective appropriation of cultural narratives and the ways they ricochet against lived Cajun and Acadian lives. Recourse into the unreal might work to protect one participant in a linguistic and/or cultural exchange while failing to provide similar shelter for the addressees. We see these approaches writ large in cosmopolitan

¹⁵⁰ Other memorable quotes include “don’t buy a typewriter before you learn to spell or an accordion before you can whistle me all the tunes you want to play.” Savoy is a staunch supporter of being seen and not heard, as far as cultural learning goes.

communities the world over. Cajun and Acadian examples of the same unevenness in terms of in and out groups are apparent in all of their musical genres and in the behavioural approaches surrounding them.

Chapter Six

Conclusion, Findings and Future Research

Throughout this dissertation, I have tried to examine alcohol as a valid musical factor that shapes and, in some ways, parallels the way musical performance enacts social relationships. I have situated this work in the musical environments of Church Point, Nova Scotia; Chéticamp, Nova Scotia, and in Lafayette, Louisiana and its surrounding communities so as to contribute both to the Acadian and Cajun musical scholarship as well as that examining alcohol and culture. Though the work has made no effort toward pinpointing anything so direct as a cause-and-effect relationship between alcohol and musical results, the research has made it clear that alcohol has a bearing on the flexibility of interpretive space. This is the space required for making meaning. By using indirect means of communicating social and musical material, performers and listeners engage in multiple simultaneous, but distinct, musical communities.

The musical events and contributors I have studied and presented here demonstrate that Cajun and Acadian repertoire is created, presented or received in ways that—aided by alcohol—expand or contract, exclude or include, offend or comfort. This work is the study of reciprocal influence—geography with history, traditional with contemporary methods, sacred with secular understandings, musical with social practice, sober with inebriated habits, basic with abstract interpretations, individual with collective identities. It is the study of how several musical meanings can be present at once and how the jumbled multiplicity is, itself, an indication of cultural intimacy.

Alcohol has a capacity for double-voicedness and indirection¹⁵¹—a capacity that reveals cultural intimacy (Stokes 2010; Herzfeld 2004) and fruitfully pairs with music's similarly in-between nature. Throughout this work, I describe this "nature" as "in-between" because of the variability in action and response among participants. The fact that a given musical gesture or ingested drink can be identical in substance means very little in terms of its communicative effectiveness among participants. Its meaning is made somewhere in-between "the thing" (be it the drink or the piece of music) and its physical and/or emotional effect. The subject and its effect are mutually constitutive—formed and made meaningful by their reciprocal, collective, and individual engagement with each other.

This engagement comprises the real and unreal, the intentional and unintentional, and the outcomes of this engagement (similarly intentional and unintentional) are the things that create musical contexts (Berger 1999; Stone 1988; Cohen 1995). The multiply and reciprocally constitutive nature of musical behaviour is a thread woven throughout this dissertation. The musical events described here are not solely the experiences of all the Cajuns and Acadians who were present, drinking or not, throughout my fieldwork. They include others, whether present or not, drinking or not, as well as all of their varied practices of constituting experience which are, in turn, affected by any elements of their

¹⁵¹ To use Bakhtin's definition, double-voiced discourse expresses the speaker's intentions in a refracted or conditional way. By using another's speech or language, two meanings—one said and one intended—are present simultaneously and are dialogically interrelated. Indirection is a related mode of discourse wherein there are signals to suggest that the deliverer means something other than she says. By using these kinds of ventriloquism, Bakhtin highlights that all meaning is made not in an utterance itself, but in interactions between speakers and listeners and the ways they achieve understanding through reference to their own experiences and encounters.

social life that impinge upon that constitution. Though the analytical aspects of this dissertation only skim the surface of phenomenological theory, they rely on similar understandings of the relationship between notions of experience and those of a real, objective world of things. Like the musical cultures it presents, this dissertation is formed by and contributes to scholarship that considers the constructive capacity of combined (Merleau-Ponty [1945] 1989; Husserl [1931] 1960; Berger 1999; Giddens 1984) and indirect forms of communication (Pavel 1986; Hutcheon 1994; DuBois 1995). My analysis of alcohol's place in the music-making cultures of Acadian Nova Scotia and Cajun Louisiana contends that though experience is always socially constituted and potentially shared across groups, the sharing is always partial. It is made of hyper-personal understandings of meta-social happenings.

As my research has considered music and alcohol simultaneously, it has examined inebriated musical behaviour as an expression of culture insofar as it takes the form of a highly patterned, learned comportment which varies from group to group. But the analysis also considers that alcohol's influence is simultaneously governed by highly individualized tastes, preferences, motivations and effects. Drinking is most often a social act, but the fact that the act is performed in a recognized social context does not demand that all participants have an equal relationship towards it or a single view as to its capacities. Drinks are in the world. Depending on the participant and her links to other participants, the act of drinking may or may not be a commentary upon the world or a surface to dig beneath. Drinking can be an intentional or unintentional outcome of individuals' relations across history—relations that are themselves intentional and

unintentional. Drinks are among the things that constitute the world, but they are bundled tightly with other real things—the acts and objects of language, music, and ritual; the social abstractions of history, religion, sociability, and memory. Alongside these well-established cultural contributors, alcohol is worthy of ethnomusicological consideration. Alcohol's inclusion in a socio-musical equation has subtle effects—physically, socially and artistically—that surface throughout this dissertation. Again, I remind the reader of Thomas Pavel's "really real" concept—the same concept that introduced this research. The performance worlds described in this dissertation arise out of the actual world, but if the performance is persuasive and effective, it subsequently becomes an autonomous structure, able to establish its own codes of conduct. It becomes the basis of its own independent universe, one which does not derive its authority through direct reference to the real world, but through its own set of relations. Alcohol contributes to the imagination of a musical event as an autonomous structure.

Obviously, alcohol has no agency; it has no capacity to act independently, no free will, no ability of its own. But it has an effect on the agency of those who consume it or are indirectly affected by it. Alcohol affects degrees of fellow-feeling and technical prowess, and fellowship and technical capacity are central to almost every music-making scenario. Throughout history, it is indeed the exploitation of this fellow-feeling that has allowed alcohol to facilitate the commitment of some of our most grievous cultural offenses. But exploitation is only possible where trust is also possible, where there is a relationship between what is and what could be. With ongoing adjustments, cultural participants continuously assess the "really real" in reference to what other possibilities

there might be. As I hope this work has proven, reference comes in many indirect ways. Beneath the autonomous structures (in the performance world or in the “real” world) are infinite links connecting performers and listeners to history, language, religion, humour, other people, other times, other places.

This work has focused on relationships rather than a given thing or entity. The expressive modalities studied here are demonstrations of individual and collective character and therefore each musical and social action has been revealed as subject to a network of interpretations, consequences, and sensations. Throughout, the presence of alcohol in Cajun and Acadian musical settings highlights intersubjectivity and emphasizes that the realm of social interaction is not easily delineated: it is not simply Whiskey River Landing, Ethel Haché’s house party, the Savoy family’s album or a *tintamarre* parade. In any given musical context, participants are socially situated according to their linguistic capacities, religious understandings, historical positioning and social attunement. How the participants in this study use or avoid alcohol in order to engage with their subjective realities exposes a wide range of codes which have lasting effects on musical intentions and interpretations.

I see relatively little to be gained from cracking these codes, as all of the material presented in this dissertation proves that meaning accumulates in a somewhat selective manner. The processes by which things are coded and interpretive selections made are not always intentional, but they remain invaluable to the making of meaning. The processes become texts in their own right. To strip away the code is to strip away the way each listener and performer interacts with his own history, his own references, with other not-

present groups and influences, and with his own tastes, preferences, capacities, and inclinations.

Earlier in this work I wrote of interpretive ricocheting. I use the term ricochet as distinct from (but dependent on) many inter-textual or other dialogic approaches. My study of alcohol in these Cajun and Acadian communities has made clear that meaning can sometimes be made by those who are *not* intentionally engaging, or those who are unevenly engaging with musical and social material. No single person present in a musical setting is interacting with an identical group, so if a message sent ricochets off one participant and meets another without engagement, its journey still contributes to the musical experience. It is a concept that takes into consideration the complexities inherent in perspective, vantage points, and the social nature of cultural experience, while recognizing the equally active and constitutive component of individualized human conduct, agency and engagement.

As the bulk of this dissertation demonstrates, the closeness or distance with which cultural identities are held has a lasting effect. Chapter two speaks, in part, of how Acadians have mythologized Cy à Mateur, but this hardly suggests they have an arms-length sense of their culture. Neither do Cajuns prove through their “everyday man” of Harry Choates an exceptionally close sense of their culture. Instead, the stories, recordings and behavioural associations made between the communities and these legendary cultural figures suggest that the distance or tugging between behavioural interpretations is analytically rewarding. Though, through this research, I have learned a great deal about Harry Choates and Cy à Mateur, I have learned far more about the

interpretive, communicative and evaluative processes of the cultural groups that revere or revile these men.

Though of course there are exceptions, most citizens of St. Mary's Bay discuss their own culture by restricting themselves to what happens in St. Mary's Bay or to its community members. Again, speaking generally, Cajuns combine outside and chance happenings with those that occur closer to home. This means that when searching for the expert on Harry Choates, I met with enthusiasts of all backgrounds, ages, and abilities. I read websites, journal articles, blogs and liner notes and listened to musical material that ranged from commercial recordings to studious imitators to hearsay. This was not the case when searching for material on Cy à Mateur. In fact, it was not the case when looking for material on a large number of Acadian musicians. That kind of research required in-person interaction, direct lineage, private invitation, and was accompanied by a general certainty that interest in Acadian music was either extinct or reserved for the most intimate and ethnically-determined circles. Cy à Mateur takes on the undisputed role of "best dancer" in the history of Nova Scotia Acadians, but tellingly, he has travelled more than most in his community and deviated from behavioural norms in a comparably exceptional manner. In assigning the legendary role to "the deviant," an insecurity among Acadian musicians is revealed. In the hands of Cajun interpreters, comparable behaviour is defined as defiant more than deviant. Incorporating cultural approaches to alcohol in the interpretations of these stories has provided great insight into the manner by which Harry Choates is made common and Cy à Mateur made mythical. Two equally formative

sides of surveillance show themselves in attitudes towards these legendary musicians: one rooted more in care and protection and one in control and direction.

Cy à Mateur and Harry Choates serve as distillations of themes that run throughout this work—among them the notion that publicly visible community activity is not always binding. While social behaviour like drinking and music-making has the potential to promote cultural solidarity, it can just as readily strengthen division, lessen social trust and weaken democratic institutions. This work asserts that if personal ideology is seen as having a cultural component, it must be conceded that ideology is formed relationally. Cultural ideology can, therefore, “exploit difference to generate diverse conceptions of group identity” (Appadurai 1996, 13). Alcohol, and the activities involving it, demonstrate intersubjectivity; alcohol is at once object and ideology, a distinctive practice, a cultural concept, a means of generating difference and a means of conceiving in-group identity.

The contributions this dissertation makes to Acadian and Cajun cultural scholarship are directly related to these ideas of interdependence. To date, studies of Acadian and Cajun music and culture have been dominated by a historiographic, linear focus. They are rooted in old world genealogical origins and follow the music in terms of cause and effect social circumstances. These examinations include invaluable studies of cultural contact and its repercussions, first with English, Irish, Scottish and Native populations in Acadia and then with Spanish, Native American, and African American populations in Louisiana. These have been presented predominately in terms of isolation, introduction, integration and, occasionally, reintegration. The scholarship follows the

musical repertoire in a similar fashion: old world origins, oral transmission, commercial viability, cultural decline and revival, with circuitous, recurring interest in tradition, authenticity and outsider interest. In the process, scholars have contributed extensive biographical profiles to the literature of Acadian and Cajun studies. They have also unearthed, collected and produced highly informative musical recordings and personal recollections that have amounted to a vast body of archival material.

Supplied with the wisdom and knowledge provided through these approaches, this dissertation asks Acadian and Cajun studies to make lateral considerations when addressing what is or isn't culturally formative. My work states that, for every juncture presented in the existing scholarship, there are multiple others to consider—junctures that come of combined and sometimes conflicting personal positions. The interpretive value of each cultural intersection depends on participants' orientation toward personal and collective identities. Religion, language, individual and collective history and social behaviour can be considered in isolation or in combination to produce widely divergent levels of cultural competence. Acknowledging that each of these has uneven potential for reciprocal influence, this dissertation begins to lead the study of Acadian and Cajun culture away from its grounding in linear history and into a scholarly consideration of multiplicity. This work demonstrates that for every marker of cultural intimacy or closeness, there are equally meaningful and formative markers of exclusion and distance. This research encourages Acadian and Cajun studies to position the cultural expressions of music, dance, language, religion and social behaviour such that multiplicity shares the position heretofore reserved for singularity and unity.

Even at the level of the individual, the idea of identity is in no way singular and it is for this reason that the term “narrative mobility” figures so prominently in chapter three and throughout this work. Depending on the links which connect a composer, a performer and a listener, the expressive effect is changeable, mobile. Lyrically, a message can be relayed using narrative techniques that support, contradict, or have nothing to do with the true position of a singer and all of these relations disclose a detail of their own. The repertoire and performance contexts discussed throughout this dissertation reveal both a devotion to narrative disjunctions and an imprisonment at its hands. In some instances, narrative mobility is demonstrated in an Acadian national concept that has moved away from defined space, but displayed in the “homeland” of Church Point, Nova Scotia. In others, narrative mobility is demonstrated in the infusion of religious ritual in secular hang-outs like Whiskey River Landing in Henderson, Louisiana. Throughout, this “both, either, and neither” approach to identity is demonstrated in alcohol-affected performances wherein the presence of alcohol is seen as an essential element to some participants, an incidental attendant to others and a detriment to others. All participants can be seen to be sharing the same musical moment while they share certain aspects of it with only a select few.

Alcohol-affected musical practices in both Louisiana and Nova Scotia demonstrate an intuitive transference of meaning between cultural fields. The engrained methods and meanings that have marked liturgical music or linguistic tendencies or cultural display or behavioural expectations through the ages have informed one another even when they appear distinct and/or incompatible. Again, binaries are revealed as co-

dependent. Cajun and Acadian, sacred and secular, deviant and conformist, ironic and direct, appropriate and inappropriate—the behavioural tendencies associated with each are strategies used to communicate to many groups at once. The ethnographic work that grounds this research has demonstrated that, at their most irreverent or uncouth *and* at their most refined and thoughtful, cultural approaches to making meaning exist in reference to one another.

Specifically, the irreverence in *Mi Carême* and *Mardi Gras* highlights exactly how deeply the community knows religious ritual—making fun of themselves while reinforcing every ritual they mock. The “rooted errantry” of Cajun and Acadian French and its lyrical use, the love-to-hate heroes of Harry Choates and Cy à Mateur, the indirection inherent to ironic modes of communication—what all of these have in common is intimacy. Each element of this examination of alcohol in musical culture displays a level of cultural intimacy. The avenues to understanding are so layered, multi-faceted, intertwined, vertically and horizontally varied, that both Cajun Louisiana and Acadian Nova Scotia have rendered themselves (or been rendered) *both* separate and informed by the happenings of “the real world.” Their cultural attachments are not the sole source of their identities, but they are in negotiation. Their actions are not sacred or profane, but both. They are, at once, exceptional and common.

In analyzing the capacity alcohol has for blurring the boundaries between style and substance, this dissertation asserts that sacramentally, behaviourally, linguistically, and historically everything means (at least) two things at once. Indirect forms of communication risk alienating some interpreters, but the great satisfaction and cultural

contribution of this communicative approach, is that indirect, ironic efforts also hold the promise of bringing other interpreters closer. Alcohol-induced behaviour is bound up in irony precisely because it can sometimes seem the most literal behaviour of all. Because a sober interpreter often doubts a drunk deliverer's agency (or at least considers it to be compromised), the alcohol-affected are afforded an unusual amount of freedom and signifying space. All three (alcohol use, music, and irony) can independently tease on the edge of acceptable, on the edge of seriousness and legitimacy, and all three can be caught by the safety net of "you just don't understand" which is why they are such dynamic colleagues.

In most of the venues described in this dissertation, the audience as a whole is never unaffected by alcohol (though again, of course, everyone isn't drinking). Several tunes take as their moment of conception an alcohol-fuelled jam session. Several songs take as their point of departure an attitude towards drinking that affects friends, family and community. Time and again, my research has taken me to a drinker in a drinking establishment performing drinking songs for other drinkers, and it is easy to see how this time-out zone, this secondary world can operate according to a set of rules that is other than the world outside the bar's doors. But my research asks how this secondary world and its particular approach to being can come back to the "really real" world to some degree. If a musician returns to the really real world and interacts with it, the separation has already been transcended. If he takes the changes he made to a tune while drunk and makes it part of his repertoire, or if a listener learns the tune as performed by an alcohol-affected performer, or if he himself is alcohol-affected, the results are no longer fictional,

but actual. If Harry Choates or Cy à Mateur teach life lessons that are applied to contemporary contexts, if “*L’ivrogne a grondé par sa femme*” makes a vacationing pipe-fitter cry, then the men and the material are no longer legendary. They are really real.

To look at conjunctural spaces like these, where alcohol and performance practice work together, is to look at an almost infinite number of ways that public intimacy can be fostered. What’s encouraging, exciting, even inspiring about this work, is that it begins to look at individual personalities in a way that exceeds the confines of biographical case studies. Intimacy relies on familiarity, knowing that which is “usual” and therefore seeing the significance of absence, the implied but unsaid, the unheard but there for the hearing. The approach I’ve taken here is something like reading a palimpsest: formative pieces of culture have been erased or seem, initially, invisible or incidental, but those who are newly writing on the page can feel, are guided by, and/or avoid, the impressions left before.

By applying the methods used throughout this research, ethnomusicologists can begin to acknowledge the value of using an analytical approach that functions like the zoom lens on your camera. At times, particularly in the chapters dealing with lyric and language and ironic gesture, I have found it necessary to “zoom in” and do intensely close formalistic analysis. I have tried to get at “fixed” indicators that my interpretations of the unsaid are possible, if not entirely verifiable. As with many elements of this dissertation, the approach was formed in response to the question “why not?” For example, there is a dearth in formalist analyses in Cajun and Acadian music that is usually attributed to the fact that it is variable, subject to personal interpretations, or orally learned and

disseminated. Quite simply, I wanted to know whether the approach *not* used could be studied in terms of the approaches commonly used. Does absence have a bearing on meaning? The same approach affected my examinations of Cajun and Acadian Catholicism as well. What lingering resonance is there of practices left behind or altered? Finding it necessary to “zoom out” for this portion of my analysis, I was able to position what was said about Catholicism in Acadian and Cajun culture against what Acadians and Cajuns were actually doing to support or contrast these claims.

What’s exciting about this approach is that it demands sustained attention and facilitates exactly the sort of intimacy it attempts to uncover. If analysts are to consider what is *not* there as evidence, they must know enough to register absence. With this approach, researchers can be a fly on the wall, an armchair scholar, an archivist and a down in the dirt participant all at once, gleaning each approach for its ethnographic assets, recombining them in situationally-specific ways. Because it requires extensive feedback, a concurrent development of intimacy among performers and researchers is required.

The effect of communicative style that surfaced as I balanced, evaluated, and incorporated the contributions of informants was an unforeseen asset as well. In my experience, the most forthcoming consultants, those always eager to tell you more and guide you to the “right” events, are sometimes the ones that need to be approached with the greatest caution. There needs to be a healthy dose of discernment when determining the criteria by which they select the cultural elements that warrant sharing. But in examinations like mine, the interpretative allowance extends beyond what a researcher is told. By including a good deal of what is not there, not said, and not heard in addition to

what *is* heard, said, played and present, investigations, by necessity, begin broadly—only able to move to the specific when they acknowledge that cultural influence comes in many guises. Again, in my experience, even informants who might be hesitant to articulate what is culturally meaningful to them, or quick to dismiss themselves as “not an expert” are far more ready to dispute claims that describe them as something they are not.

Not unlike alcohol consumption, this ethnographic approach is somewhat risky, but handled responsibly, measured, and well-balanced, it affords occasions for interpretive material to come from seemingly unlikely places. It is an approach that considers, at every juncture, the cultural influence of varied presentational styles. Indeed, this is how I came to the study of alcohol and music in the first place. I thought that alcohol had been taken away from the cultural equation too soon, but without adequate justification as to its dismissal. I thought alcohol was effective in the musical circles I participated in. I thought people used alcohol for different musical purposes and to different musical ends and when I saw that it was so rarely discussed academically, I wondered “why not?” To reintegrate alcohol into the “musical factor” list meant I first had to consider its role in broader culture. Alcohol came into my musical investigations with all of the baggage it had accumulated in medical science, social studies, and religious studies—all this even before regional attitudes could be considered. This baggage encouraged the communications perspective that figures so prominently throughout this research.

It is an awareness of alcohol’s nuanced effects that prompts me, now, to turn to some of the shortcomings of this dissertation. Although I believe this dissertation makes

valuable and overdue in-roads into the study of alcohol and musical culture, it is in no way exhaustive. Again, I refer to “the nature of evidence” identified in the introductory chapter. The blatant selectivity throughout this work is directly related to (perhaps even justified by) the sensitivity of the topic and the vulnerability of the consultants, but it is problematic, nonetheless. In some cases, I have tried to protect informants by being ambiguous about their identities or lumping individuals’ behaviour into collective tendencies. Sometimes this protection is against social stigma, but in other cases it is against personal detriment. Arguing for alcohol’s productive capacities is a little too-easily done with some participants. Uncovering and/or suggesting the constructive repercussions of alcohol’s relationship to music and cultural growth can also encourage family irresponsibility, poor health habits and musical inattention.

In some cases I have maybe been too careful, choosing to present people under pseudonyms who personally expressed no desire for such anonymity or avoiding descriptive examples that implicate some community members by association. This includes people who did not want to be part of this work, but were present at many events with consultants. The imposed anonymity may be arrogantly authoritative of me, but careful consideration and consultation has assured me that this position’s goods outweigh its evils.

Beyond all of these personal considerations is the emphasis I wish to place on intersections over individuals. I wanted this work to examine links as texts, not just a means of getting from one text to another. Again, the presentational choices I’ve made in the previous five chapters are related to the nature of evidence in ethnographic studies,

particularly ethnographic studies like this one which highlights one factor—namely alcohol—while knowing that it sits, not untouched, in and amongst many other factors. The conjunctural approach I have taken to examine the alcohol-music pairing in Acadian and Cajun culture makes evidence of process, but this means that all of the “evidence” remains necessarily murky and subject to alternative interpretations. Though this is problematic, it is not prohibitively so. In fact, I think it’s an honest representation of research in general—the way participants and analysts foreground some factors over others in accordance with their own interests, backgrounds and/or pursuits. By highlighting alcohol against all other cultural players, a controversial hierarchy has already been enacted, so all of the “proof” that I have provided may divide readers and fellow analysts. For support in this, I again remind the reader of the writings of sociologist, Troy Duster: “alcohol is to social science what dye is microscopy...what this dye does is to highlight certain kinds of fundamental features of the structure of the cell, and I suppose that we can probably use alcohol in the same way to penetrate the structure of social life” (Duster 1983, 326).

Whether or not we consume or abstain from alcohol is one of the most divisive and pervasive aspects of cultural life that remain to be studied, so I offer now some areas for future study. I extend the scholarly invitation enthusiastically and with full confidence that considered and even-handed investigations of alcohol’s place in music-making will make valuable contributions to contemporary critical theory. I will presently offer brief outlines of the following areas in particular: gender, economy, and interethnic relations. Though they were left largely untouched in my research, they were apparent in the

regions I studied and have wide applications. I also suspect that conflict management, law, health, and culturally-situated temporal divisions (both in the “it’s five o’clock somewhere” sense and in terms of rites of passage) will often connect music with alcohol and I encourage their combined study.

Music, Alcohol and Gender

The consumption of alcohol reveals tricky matters in terms of gender relations. The rules of propriety for men and women have long been separated and the coming together of behavioural expectations is a very new development—and, at that, a fairly Western one. The development is too new and incomplete to yet understand how it will play out in history. What is known, however, is that alcohol and revelry—including that associated with music—is implicated in the history of abuse. Entangled in alcohol abuse and the offenses of sexual and domestic abuse are gender differentiations that are placed under the umbrella of both psychological and physical health.

Mary Douglas notes (Douglas 1987, 1-15) that traditionally, many of these gender-based examinations dealt with vulnerability and appropriate female behavior, but in many of the societies where women do not consume alcohol at all, there are strong feelings regarding the health benefits of alcohol consumption for men. By extension, gendered expectations in terms of domesticity, child-bearing, and child-care associate music and alcohol under an umbrella of negligence in some cases and comfort in others. Home-brewed alcohol and alcohol’s medicinal use are, in many societies, also strictly gendered as are appropriate venues and occasions for drinking. Even in societies where

women and men drink comparable amounts, public drinking remains a predominantly male activity.

Ethnomusicologists are encouraged to explore the songs of domesticity and alcohol with an ear to, among broad concerns, societal standards, conflict resolution, stereotypes, superstition, public shaming, and private confession. In more focused terms, musical activity relating to alcohol might involve bawdy songs, songs that relay information and/or traditions associated with the making of alcohol, the portrayal of gender and sexuality in alcohol-related songs, and the gendered use of alcohol among performers, popular and traditional.

Music, Alcohol and Economy

As many semi-professional performers will attest, the economic association of alcohol with musical performance is strong. Musicians are regularly paid in drinks, offered drinks as a courtesy, or given a percentage of bar sales. Most live music venues sell alcohol and this contributes to the overall revenue of a given performance. How is this factored into a musician's wage? As currency, alcohol's value is incredibly variable. It rarely translates neatly to a dollar amount so arguments develop among performers and venue owners regarding whether or not the bar owner is offering drinks to performers at wholesale (the business' cost) or retail (the customer's cost). As a performer, are musicians considered part of the staff or part of its clientele? How are the in-between identities negotiated, when one is a patron one day and a performer the next? The answers to these questions often encourage social stereotypes that are heated. What if all band

members don't drink despite the fact that they have similar expenses and have contributed to the same performance? What if the quality of the show has been negatively affected by the alcohol that has been consumed at the patron's expense? What if the business owner, while enjoying the show, has forgotten his responsibilities as patron?

Music and alcohol also enmesh performers in ideas of "social credit" where audiences see performers as behavioural examples, foils or friends. Though in North America the gift of alcohol is typically seen as a generous offer, its debilitating properties sometimes make the gift suspect. Offering a band a round of shots as a gesture of appreciation is met with mixed responses from performers as some would like to keep their professional and social lives separate while others want to integrate them as much as is possible. How do performers communicate that what is good for their audience is not necessarily good for them? How do performers cultivate attentive listeners while still ensuring that the venue owner considers the performance to be profitable?

Music, Alcohol and Interethnic/Interclass Relations

The economic value of alcohol moves easily into ideas of interethnic and interclass relations. Alcohol's use as a tool in colonization is firmly embedded in the firewater myth and its use in maintaining debt peonage among peasants has parallels internationally—with the subjects of this dissertation being no exception. Alcohol's relationship with political rituals is one area where international data tends to conform — among peasant and tribal societies as well as industrial and post-industrial societies. Within a single nation, subgroups can often be marked by alcohol's availability to them

or a given group's access to it. This is sometimes self-policed and sometimes inflicted (consider, for example, "dry" communities among Canada's Native populations), but in either case it is a marker that highlights (and sometimes questions) a given group's collective will. Music and alcohol's role in integration and regulation are study areas that are begging to be explored.

International relations also come into play when introducing "non-native" drinks and/or practices to a given society. Although this practice has a long history, increased globalization keeps the topic current. Again, there are suggestions that the biological makeup or environmental peculiarities in certain cultures make it impossible to identically process the alcohol native to another area, but there are also questions of whether or not alcohol is a gift or a curse and whether or not there is a possibility of "un-introducing" various types of alcohol in certain circles. The nature/culture debate factors in strongly. The same debates affect musical understanding and, in combination, the analytical lens encourages nuanced examinations of subtle cultural workings.

The oral culture of alcohol is also immense. There are mythic "bringers of alcohol" and numerous moral-holding legends that speak of its use. Proverbs, humour and other forms of popular culture are rife with alcoholic references and are ethnically marked. Instances of alcohol-related symbolism are present across all art-forms where drunkenness is connected to rapture, seen as a divine reward, or punishable in the afterlife. Folk legends and fairy tales, euphemisms, sculptures, paintings, songs, superstitions, home remedies, games, books, and festivals connect music with alcohol regularly. Lyrical analysis alone yields multiple references to alcohol as a lifestyle marker

and as a symbol. Through literature, language and folkloric reference to music and alcohol we can also study evolving ideas of propriety, danger, religion and conduct.

Final Thoughts

This research maintained as its primary purpose, an investigative interest in the pervasive role of alcohol as object or symbol in the construction of Acadian and Cajun musical worlds. I explored the cultural realms of humour, religiosity, oral history, and language, but by combining this exploration with an interest in behavioural attitudes, interactive relationships were revealed that were cumulative, mutually informing, uneven and in constant flux. By studying these cultural realms through alcohol's lens, my research was able to explore the potential of social criticism in the formation of cultural identities and their accompanying musical products. Music's potential to be affected by alcohol use in these performance contexts reveals that binary understandings of traditional and contemporary, sacred and profane, appropriate and inappropriate, normal and marginal, are interdependent. Either end of the continuum relies on constant reference to its opposite and various points in between. The indirect forms of communication that are so proficiently displayed in Cajun Louisiana and Acadian Nova Scotia are proof of this cultural exuberance. The available points of cultural intersection are myriad, so a musical participant need not trade in his individual understandings for collective ones. Neither must she prioritize the cultural value of normal social behaviour over behaviour that is deemed deviant.

Rather than opposing one another, normal and marginal behaviour belong to a continuum, sharing a considerable number of traits and benefitting from the relative

distance of the traits that are not shared. Though musical scholarship increasingly grants freedom to a *listener's* consciousness, there is a prominent notion that suggests quality *performers* come in one form—in control, genuine, maybe even serious (Adorno, Leppert, and Gillespie 2002; Jones 1976; Thornton 1995; Becker 2004). This work asserts that they belong to the continuum as well. The deficiency of the control assumption is that it presupposes a set of rules that function like social conventions and are therefore limiting. As a consequence, marginal or non-serious behaviour is presumed to be the work of model-breakers, rebels and other deviants. This, despite the fact that “deviant” behaviour is as relevant to enacted cultural attitudes and practices as the “normal” discourse that proliferates so many stereotypes.

To summarize the intent of this dissertation and my hope for its future incarnations, I would again like to assert that music and alcohol are enmeshed in a reciprocal relationship wherein religion, language, humour and history work in tandem to create and/or alter ideas of propriety and cultural meaning. In Cajun and Acadian societies, music and alcohol have traditionally been co-conspirators in the preservation and dissemination of a cultural identity that is both *laissez faire* and hard working; economically poor and culturally rich; bold and candid, direct and indirect.

The intricacies of these affective relationships has made this examination incredibly enlightening and exciting, but it has also rendered it, appropriately enough, entirely incomplete and inconclusive. This is not discouraging to me. Instead, I see in the reciprocal relationship of music and alcohol an analytical opportunity that has wide applications in ethnomusicological research. The relationship should contribute to the

field's ethical and social considerations when conducting fieldwork by asking what bearing alcohol's presence or absence has on the music and musicians that are being studied. Certainly, too, this research shows that the social construction of drinking and music-making can be used as an analytic tool with which to approach a given society. The most significant offering this work offers to the field of ethnomusicology is an approach to interpretive reciprocity and inter-dependence that is exposed throughout this dissertation. Through it, we are able to delve deeper and wider into the ways intimate socio-musical understandings intersect and resurrect.

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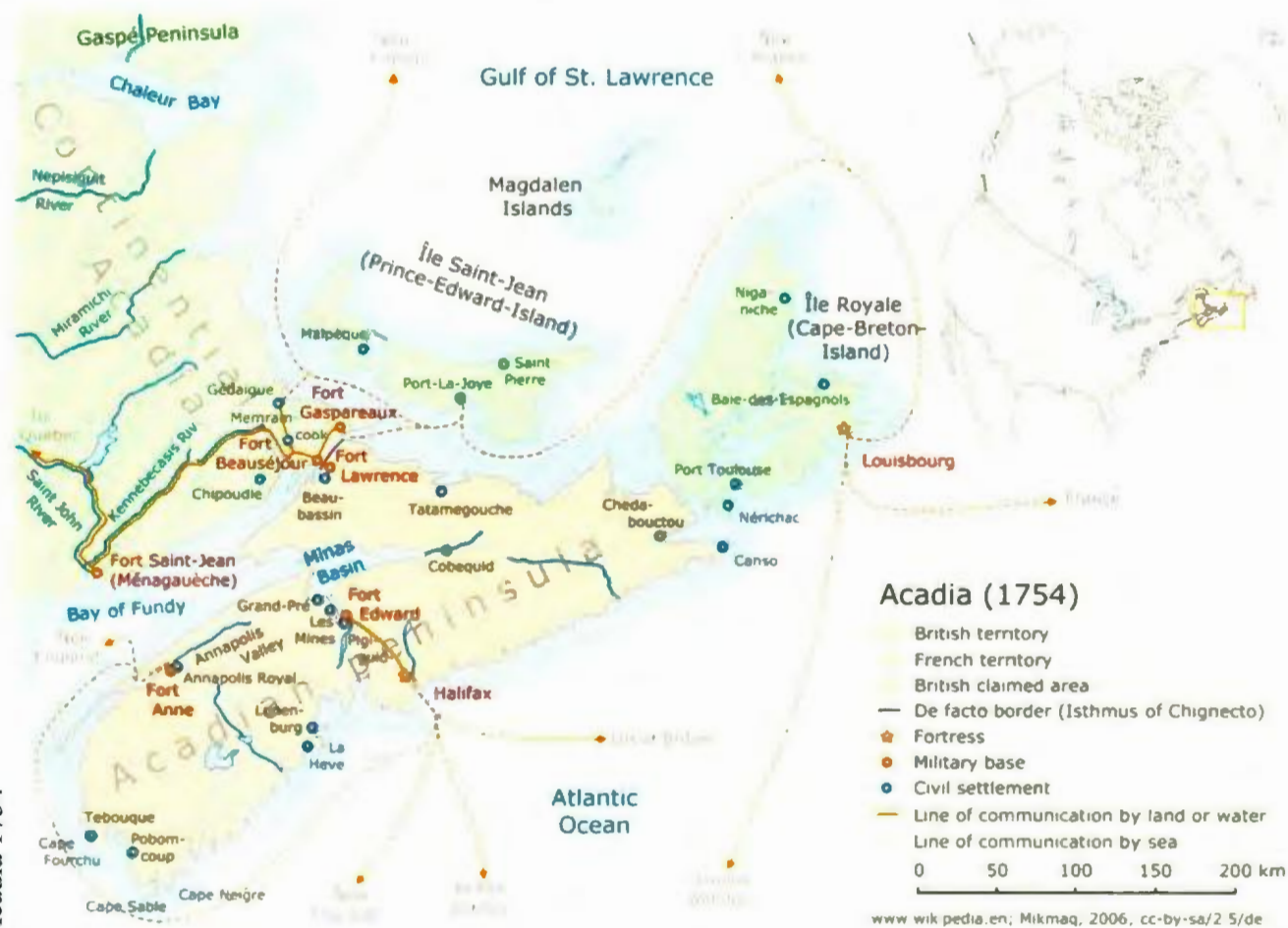
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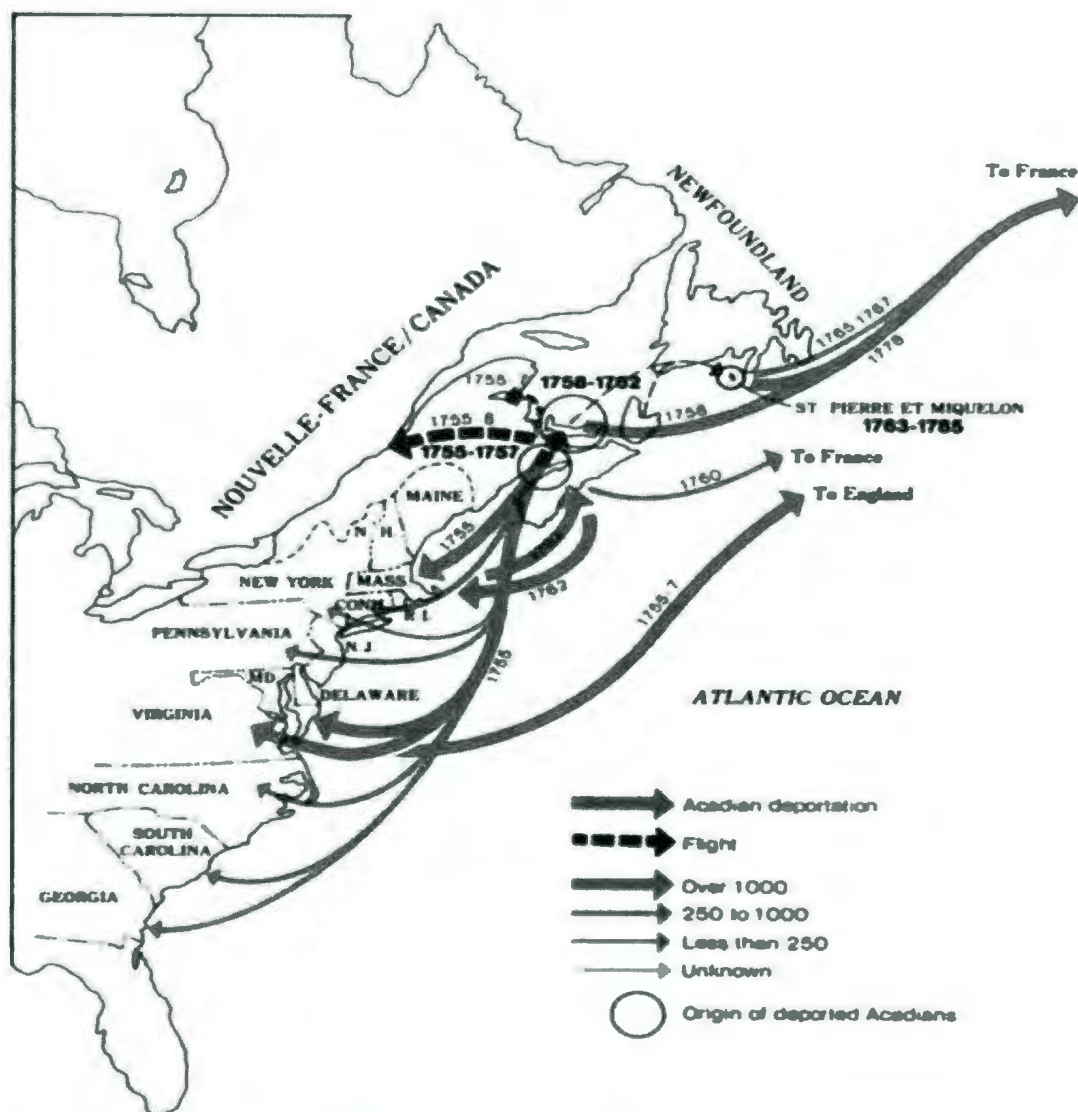
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Appendix 1.1
Acadia 1754



Appendix 1.2

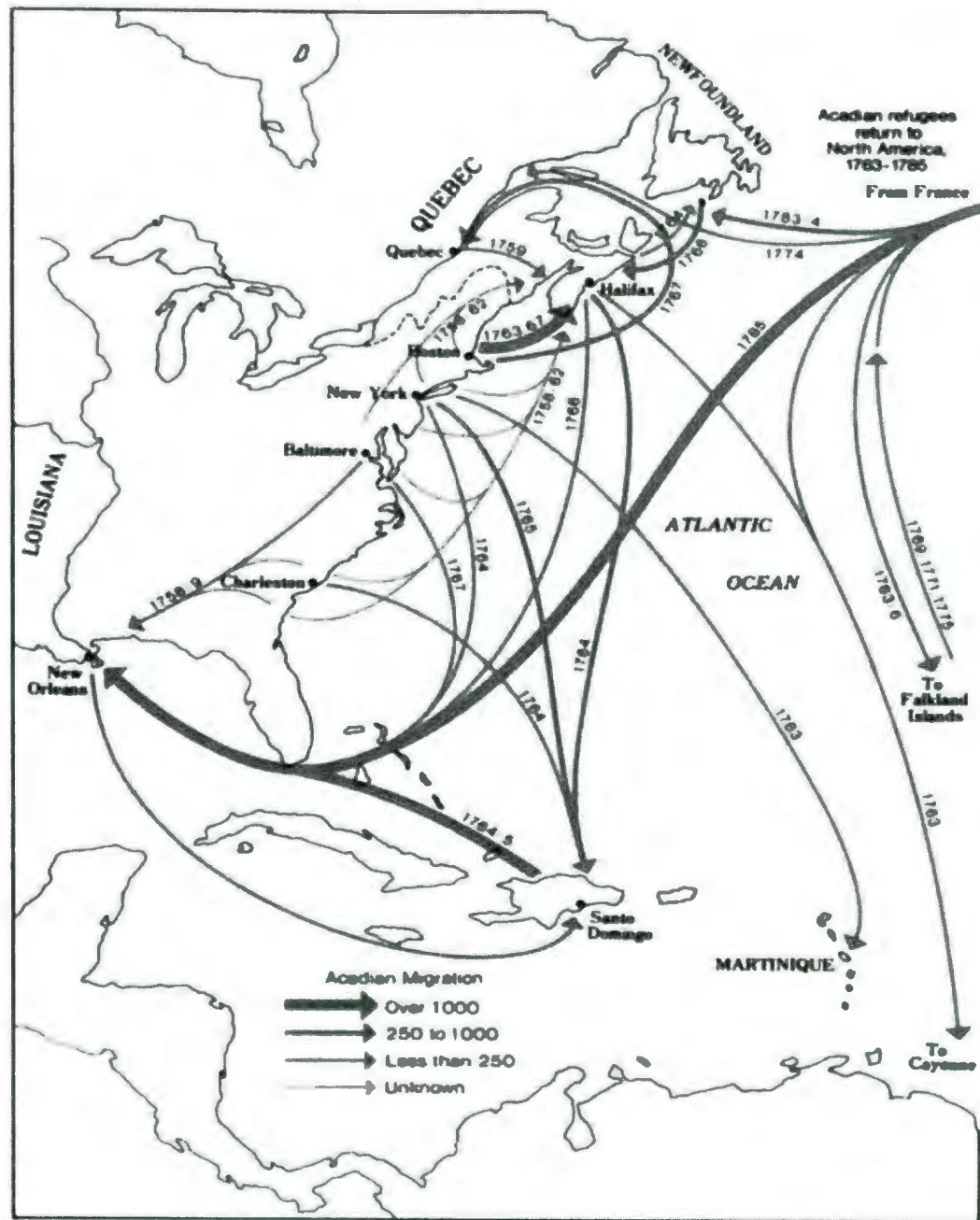
Deportation and Flight 1755-1785 (Griffiths 1973)



The deportation and flight of Acadians, 1755-1785

Appendix 1.3

Resettlement (Griffiths 1973)



Acadian migration, 1758-1785

Appendix 1.4

Acadian Nova Scotia



Appendix 1.5

Acadian Parishes, Louisiana



Appendix 2.1

Mon Nom C'est Cy à Mateur Lyrics and Music by Michel Thibault

Mon nom c'est Cy à Mateur
J'ai un nom qui sème le peur
Les lignes de ma paume
Parlent de tchômes et de fantomes
Mon nom c'est Cy à Mateur

My name is Cy à Mateur
I have name that instills fear
The lines of my palm
Speak of spells and ghosts
My name is Cy à Mateur

Ma vie c'est la vie d'un rôdeur
Qui cherche la terreur, la noirceur
Oui j'ai l'air d'un homme croche
Avec toutes mes pleines poches
Mon nom c'est Cy à Mateur

My life is that of a rover
Who seeks terror and darkness
Yes, I have the air of madman
With my plentiful pockets
My name is Cy à Mateur

Quand je bois, je suis un vrai poisson
Quand je danse, c'est le tourbillon
Quand je cours le jupons
Les femmes connaissent mon nom
Mon nom c'est Cy à Mateur

When I drink, I drink like a fish
When I dance, it's like a whirlwind
When I chase the ladies (the skirts)
The women know my name
My name is Cy à Mateur

La dame de pique ma meilleure amie
L'as de coeur ne m'a jamais trahi
Les rois et les valets me
Fournissent des cachets
Mon nom, c'est Cy à Mateur

The Queen of Spades is my best friend
The ace of hearts never deserts me
The kings and the jacks
Provide for me
My name is Cy à Mateur

Mais des fois ça me prend dans la nuit
Des fois quand la lune luit
Des pensées passagères...
des tristesses messagères
Des fois ça me prend dans la nuit

But sometimes, they consume me at night
Sometimes, when the moon glows
Fleeting thoughts,
of mournful messengers
Sometimes they consume me at night

Mais quand la nuit tombe sur la terre
Les enfants récitez vos prières
Vous me verrez survoler vos quais et vos
clochers
Mon nom c'est Cy à Mateur

But when night falls on the earth
And the children say their prayers
You will see me flying over the docks
and the steeples
My name is Cy à Mateur

Appendix 3.1

Un Ivrogne a Table



Un i vrogne a ta ble, S'en - i vre sou - vent. Bou teille a gre - a ble Ne dur'qu'un in stant! Bu
 10
 vons tous a la ron de, Di - ver tis sons nous. Bu vons tous a la ron de, Di - ver tis sons nous Bu vons.

Le bon vin m'enchante!
 Avec mes amis
 Je bois et je chante
 J'ai bien du plaisir

The good wine enchants me
 And my friends
 I drink and sing
 I'm full of happiness

J'ai ni père, ni mère
 Ni aucun parent
 Pour m'empêcher d'boire
 Moi fidèle amant

I have no father, nor mother
 No parents
 To prevent me from drinking
 My faithful love

Ma maitresse est belle
 J'en suis convaincu
 Quand je suis près d'eile
 Mon Coeur est ému

I'm convinced
 That my mistress is beautiful
 When I'm near her
 My heart overflows

Appendix 3.2

Un Acadien Errant

Un Acadien errant,
Banni de ses foyers,
Parcourait en pleurant
Des pays étrangers.

Un jour, triste et pensif,
Assis au bord des flots,
Au courant fugitif
Il adressa ces mots:

«Si tu vois mon pays,
Mon pays malheureux,
Va, dis à mes amis
Que je me souviens d'eux.

«Ô jours si pleins d'appas,
Vous êtes disparus,
Et ma patrie, hélas!
Je ne la verrai plus.

«Non, mais en expirant,
Ô mon cher Acadie,
Mon regard languissant
Vers tois se portera.»

A wandering Acadian
Exiled from his home
Weeping, travelled through
Foreign countries

One day, sad and thoughtful
Sitting by the flowing waters
To the fugitive current
He addressed these words

"If you see my country
My unhappy homeland
Go, and say to my friends
That I remember them

Oh, charming days
You have disappeared
And, alas, my homeland
I'll never see again

No, but with my dying breath
My dear Acadie
My longing glances
Will always go towards you

Appendix 3.3

Quatre Enfants

Quand je re - viens du ca-ba - ret, Ma femm' se fa-che con-tre moi Quand je re - moi__ Me

7 -
dit: "Plus de me - na__ ge! J'ai 4 en - fants i - ci pre - sents; Fai - sons en le par - ta - ge

2. J'ai quatre enfants assurément
J'en placerai deux au couvent
Et l'autre au séminaire
Mais le plus jeune reste avec moi
Pour me verser à boire

2. I have four children, it's true
I'll place two in the convent
And the other in the seminary
But the youngest will stay with me
To fill my glass

3. À boire à boire mes bons amis!
Vous avez l'air tout endormis
Ami, je te réveille
Et puis, du soir jusqu'au matin
Nous viderons bouteille

3. Drink, drink, my good friends
You seem asleep/bored
Friends, I'll wake you
And then, in the wee hours
We'll empty the bottle

4. À boire à boire mes bons amis
Vous avez l'air tout endormis
Buvons tous à la ronde
Amis, buvons de ce bon vin
Saluons tout le monde

4. Drink, drink, my good friends
You seem asleep/bored
Drink, everyone here
Friends, drink the good wine
Cheers, everybody

5. À boire à boire, mes bons amis
Vous avez l'air tout endormis
Quand bouteille sera vide
Plus de plaisir, plus d'agrément!
Nous partirons tout tristes.

5. Drink, drink, my good friends
You seem asleep/bored
When the bottle's empty
Happiness and cheer will increase
We'll be sad to leave

Appendix 3.4

Pine Grove Blues

Hey Negresse!
Quoi tu veux savoir?
Ayoù t'as passé hier au soir?
J'suis parti me saouler
Oh, ma negresse!
Quoi tu veux, mon neg?
Ayoù t'as passé hier au soir?
Je t'ai déjà dit, je suis parti me saouler
T'es arrive à ce matinm et ta robe a été
toute déchirée
Ça fait de la peine pour moi!

Oh, Negresse!
Quoi tu veux, mon neg?
Avec qui t'as couché hier au soir
Mais je t'ai dit, c'est pas tes affaires!
Hey, Anna Laura?
Quoi tu veux, Wilson?
Avec qui t'as couché hier au soir?
Tu ne sauras jamais
T'e arrive a ce matin et tes...

Hey Negresse!
What do you wanna know?
Where'd you go last night?
I went to get drunk
Oh, my negresse
What do you want, neg?
Where did you go last night?
I already said. I went to get drunk
You came in this morning and your dress
was all ripped
That hurts me!

Oh, negrese
What do you want, my neg?
Where did you sleep last night?
But I told you, it's none of your business
Hey, Anna Laura
What do you want, Wilson?
With whom did you sleep last night?
You'll never know
You came in this morning and you...

