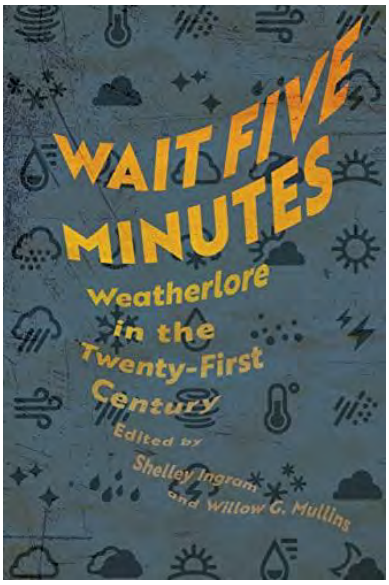


Wait Five Minutes: Weatherlore in the Twenty-First Century. Shelley Ingram and Willow G. Mullins, eds.
(Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2023, 324 pp.)

Kara Rogers Thomas *is Professor of Sociology and Director of Folklore and Folklife Studies at Frostburg State University.*

In their edited volume, *Wait Five Minutes: Weatherlore in the Twenty-First Century*, editors Shelley Ingram and Willow G. Mullins bring together an impressive array of contributors to explore weatherlore and its place in contemporary folklore scholarship. That's a daunting challenge given the discipline's long-standing interest in the topic, a fascination that reflects the general public's steadfast occupation with weather-related lore. What the editors have achieved in this publication goes well beyond a simple cataloging of weather-related proverbs, narratives, and divinatory predictions. Collectively, these essays investigate how social experiences of community, place, and politics shape and inform our beliefs about weather.

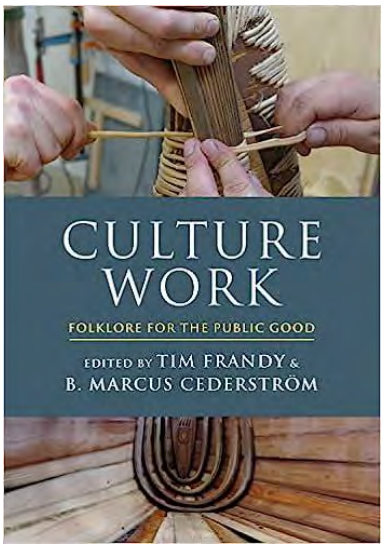
Ingram and Mullins admit that the essays they received in response to their call for submissions did not precisely align with the project as they initially envisioned it–an updated account of weatherlore as it had been previously examined by folklorists. In what may superficially appear to be an eclectic mix of material, the editors found overlapping trajectories that provided a much more nuanced understanding of weatherlore, "...first is a desire for our experiences of weather to match our beliefs about weather, and second, should that weather pose a threat, is a belief that we will survive it" (p. xv). Although the breadth of this volume's approach to weather offers its strongest attributes in that it will appeal to a broad audience, by the book's conclusion, I found myself longing for a few more conventional pieces on weatherlore.

Structurally, the volume is divided into three sections–"Belief," "Text," and "Tradition," each featuring five essays. It is in the introduction to these sections that the editors' work shines. In the introduction to "Belief," they explore how cultural factors shape our experiences, interpretations, and beliefs of and about weather. Exploring the disquieting reaction to the greenish hue of sky that every Midwesterner understands as a harbinger of tornadoes, Ingram observes that college students she surveyed in the U.S. South do not perceive the sky in the same manner—even though tornadoes frequently pummel southern states. Rather, their weatherlore is rife with indicators and narratives of hurricanes and humidity. The work highlighted in this section goes on to explore the complexities of weather-related beliefs and their religious, cultural, and political ramifications. In the introductory remarks on "Text," the editors show how weather plays a central role in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, describing the book's physical setting as well as its dramatic mood and

tone. The editors posit that weather plays a similar role in the literature of the 21st century. In reflecting the realities of climate change, weather goes beyond the contextual to drive contemporary narrative action (arguably, weather also drove the action in Shelley's book since it produced her monster). The editors provide a provocative introduction to the theme of "Tradition" by exploring the ways people stock up for pending storms–different weather events evoke different preparation–and what they consume, often marrying the festal with the ferial.

A fascinating and pivotal byproduct of this work is the contribution the volume makes to contemporary concerns and discussions of climate change. As each editor and several contributors point out, weather is a safe subject of conversation. Discussions of weather serve as icebreakers. Sharing personal narratives of weather-related events provides people of disparate backgrounds with common ground. But in a 21st century immersed in changing weather patterns contributing to an increased intensity of weather-related disasters caused by anthropogenic climate change, people are finding themselves anxious about our future. Discussions of climate change are politically polarized, but these essays reveal how talking about the weather provides us an opportunity to voice deeper concerns about our changing climate. Albeit, I would have liked to have seen more care taken in the acknowledgement of the distinction of weather and climate given how the synonymous use of the terms can be misleading and counterproductive.

For the discipline of Folklore, this work holds particular value in showing the centrality of folkloric themes in the exploration of pressing contemporary issues. Taken together, the essays demonstrate the continued pertinence of folklore in our everyday lives and the merits of engaging in an academic analysis of traditions and beliefs. Although assigning the volume in its entirety would not be feasible for most educators, specific essays or clusters of essays could hold appeal to interdisciplinary discussions of belief, weather, and climate change.



Culture Work: Folklore for the Public Good. Tim Frandy and B. Marcus Cederström, eds.

(Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2022, 407 pp.)

Sarah Craycraft *is Head Tutor and Lecturer of Harvard University's Folklore and Mythology Program.*

This edited volume explores and expands upon the legacy of public folklore in the United States. The editors bring together 34 short essays exploring what they term "culture work" from a wide range of contributors: seasoned public folklorists, professors, program staff and directors, graduate students, and colleagues from neighboring fields. Although the editors and contributors use "public folklore" and "culture work" interchangeably, Frandy and Cederström propose "culture work" as a liberatory term because of its "proletarian implications and humble nature," its interdisciplinary openness, and its ability to move past the "public vs. academic" dichotomy to focus instead on folklore's capacity for addressing inequality and political

representation (5). They conceptualize culture work as those projects that are long-term, community driven, deeply collaborative, and translational across group boundaries.

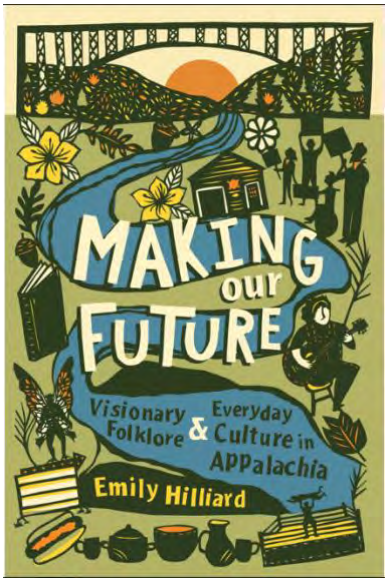
Rather than work with a strict definition of "culture work," contributing authors demonstrate what such work can do and mean. The essays are arranged in six thematic clusters, each with an opening introduction that provides commentaries on the state of our field in relation to the subtopic addressed. Part I: Public Folklore, Cultural Equity, and Collaboration introduces the work that public folklorists do, and the essays consider the possibilities and difficulties of this work. Part II: Beyond Preservation and Conservation, explores the relationship between culture work and collections, emphasizing the responsibility of folklorists to reflect on archives as "the tracks we leave and follow" (79). Part III: Amplifying Local Voices addresses the outputs of culture work. The authors suggest "amplifications" to conceptualize what culture work can and should do beyond staging folklife. Part IV: Creating Community argues that community is sustained *through* folklore, and as such our tools of trade might contribute to community-led sustainability. Part V: Engaging with the Past considers the ways in which folklore and cultural work are always in conversation with the past as a production of the present, exploring negotiations between heritage and history. Part VI: Creating the Future emphasizes change and creativity as central aspects of tradition, with the power for creating desirable, livable futures for all.

On their own, the introduction and section abstracts are important contributions to our field thanks to their clear summaries of the components of public folklore and its role in contemporary issues of cultural access and equity. Together with the contributing essays, they offer a refreshing manual of sorts for collaborative research, public projects, the tools of our work, and reflection on its impacts. Case studies cover an array of genres and topics: folk song, festival, vernacular architecture, craft, sports, labor lore, belief, museums, and shifting community priorities. Several essays explore cultural revitalization efforts, while others foreground the labor of culture work. Essays such as Mary Twining Baird's "Notes from the Field: Activism, Folklore Research, and Human Rights on the South Carolina Sea Islands in the 1960s" and Richard March's "The Downhome Dairyland Story" exemplify the sense of "culture work" as described by the editors, illuminating how such work was carefully fine-tuned to serve the communities. The text's overall structure nicely performs the balance between grounded work and distanced reflection that the authors advocate for in their conception of culture work, moving between ideas and application.

The volume's essays also offer an immersive, historiographic, and sometimes anecdotal introduction to the interwoven institutions involved in public folklore work: the National Endowment for the Arts, the Smithsonian Folklife Festival, state arts agencies, local museums, universities, K-12 classrooms, and, of course, communities themselves. These interconnections are described with poetic, yet straightforward writing. As such, the text is instructive and appropriate for readers at many levels who are looking to bring folklore and community-engaged models into their teaching, research, and applied practice. The book is also appropriate for international readers who are interested in U.S. applied models but need a brief background on the structural (im)possibilities that shape this work. The interested reader should note that most essays focus on case studies in the Midwest, with exceptions such as those exploring the relationships between national institutions and local infrastructures. Indeed, the editors introduce the volume's framework in conversation with the University of Wisconsin-Madison's public engagement imperative, the "Wisconsin Idea." Thus, the volume also addresses entanglements between

community and university, interrogating to whom we are responsible in our research and programming.

Overall, *Culture Work* does much to advance conversations about what folklore and folklorists can offer broad publics. As Frandy and Cederström suggest, the contributing essays make clear that "good research is public work and that good public work is research" (8). I myself am eager to teach with this text and its reframed approach to the relationship between "public" and "academic" folklore. This contribution is an immensely helpful tool for moving beyond the still-present "mistaken dichotomies" of our field and simply getting to work, with all the strategies that a thorough training in folklore can offer.



Making Our Future: Visionary Folklore & Everyday Culture in Appalachia. Emily Hilliard.
(Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2022, xv + 261 pp.)

Georgia Ellie Dassler *is the Program Director, Folk and Traditional Arts at Mid Atlantic Arts.*

Emily Hilliard served as the West Virginia State Folklorist from 2015 to 2021. In *Making Our Future: Visionary Folklore & Everyday Culture in Appalachia*, she presents stories and case studies from her work in the state.

Making Our Future highlights a diverse array of West Virginia traditional culture. Chapters cover everything from a community-run museum contesting dominate narratives of scarcity and segregation to the Swiss town of Helvetia, WV, and how locals represent their traditions to tourists to a tour of West Virginia hotdog stands. Hilliard brings the chapters into conversation with one another around the unifying concept of *visionary folklore*, which she defines as using cultural heritage to consider and contest not only the past and present, but also what the future will look like.

Hilliard brings thoughtful attention to the history of extraction from West Virginia and the Appalachian region. This includes extraction of tangible resources and economic value by the coal industry, as well as the misrepresentation of West Virginia culture by and for outsiders. But she warns against "the dangers of fixing West Virginia vernacular culture in the past" (16). Instead, she approaches her work with a future orientation, grounded in the material realities of the place. She asks, "How might a future-focused framework help us be more attuned to present conditions? What current narratives will constitute the base of future folklife? What must we fight for in the present so that future communities may retain their sovereignty and have agency over how their traditions are transmitted?" (210).

Some chapters present more obvious links to one another and to the concept of visionary folklore. For example, the chapter exploring the legacy of late author Breece D'J Pancake through the place-

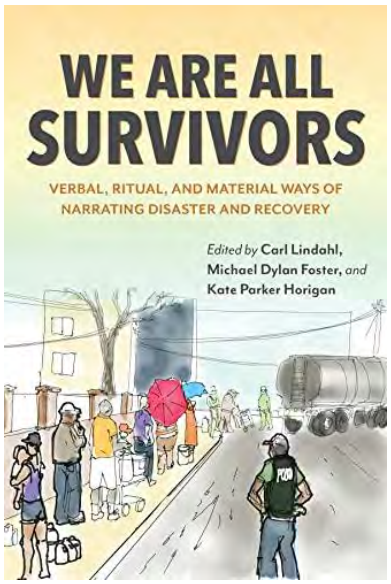
based perspectives of his childhood acquaintances feels least connected to the rest of the book. Still, *Making Our Future* serves also as a kind of memoir, cataloging the stories and projects Hilliard was most excited by during her work in West Virginia. As a result, it is all a delight to read. Hilliard's conversational voice brings you in, highlighting the humanity of each West Virginian introduced throughout the book.

Making Our Future provides strong examples of how to take vernacular culture seriously as an entry point for engaging with complex concepts. Teachers at any level can draw inspiration for how to think differently about the everyday culture of their students and how to incorporate it into the classroom. The most appealing chapters for K-12 learners are likely to be those about hot dogs, the independent West Virginia pro wrestling scene, and the video game *Fallout 76*. Good thing too, because the *Fallout* chapter (my personal favorite) provides one of the clearest articulations of visionary folklore. The chapter on the 2018 West Virginia teacher's strike could serve as a relatable entry point for teachers themselves. The book could also thrive on syllabi at the university or graduate levels. For example, I can imagine the chapter about women songwriters becoming a valuable addition to a women's folklore or gender studies course.

Hilliard's writing is engaging and never takes for granted that readers have pre-existing expertise in folkloristics. However, the book's primary audience seems to be other public folklorists, as Hilliard encourages us to "center voices that have historically been marginalized or erased from the record" and to "assist […] communities so that they are able to continue to practice their expressive traditions" (11). As a result, readers will benefit from a prerequisite understanding of what "folklife" means and how public folklorists approach their work. Still, *Making Our Future* is an accessible entry point to high-level theories and methodologies, such as collaborative ethnography, another of the book's conceptual throughlines.

Collaborative ethnography, as Hilliard lays it out, "frames narratives as participatory and equitable dialogues" between culture worker and collaborator, rather than directed primarily by the fieldworker (xiii-xiv). Teachers could also employ a collaborative ethnographic model as a framework for engaging students' cultural communities in the classroom.

Hilliard's "hope is that this book contributes to a picture of what folklore is, why it is important, and how the framework of folklore can help us understand, access, and engage with cultural communities" (xv), with an eye toward the future, equitable representation, and social and economic justice. *Making Our Future* grounds these concepts in uniquely West Virginian contexts, but Hilliard also makes them feel approachable and easily adaptable to other communities.



We Are All Survivors: Verbal, Ritual, and Material Ways of Narrating Disaster and Recovery. Carl Lindahl, Michael Dylan Foster, Kate Parker Horigan, eds.
(Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2022, 174 pp.)

Donalyn Heise *is Associate Professor of Instruction, Department of Art and Art History, the University of Texas at Austin.*

What happens after a natural disaster? What helps individuals and communities recover after trauma? What is the role of researchers in a community relief effort? *We Are All Survivors: Verbal, Ritual, and Material Ways of Narrating Disaster and Recovery*, edited by Carl Lindahl, Michael Dylan Foster, and Kate Parker Horigan, provides valuable insights from scholars who use their skills as folklorists and field ethnographers to explore ethical, authentic ways to study and respond to natural disasters.

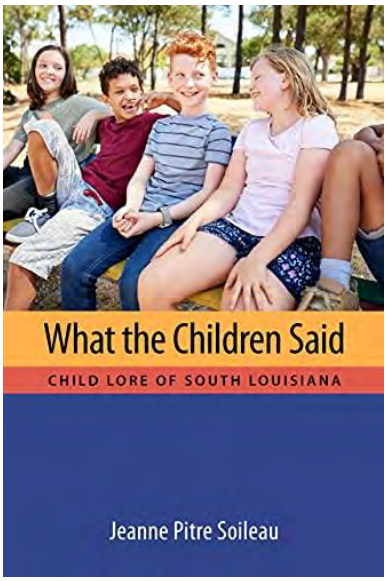
The book is timely, relevant, and well organized, starting with the first chapter, which provides an overview of the information to come. Each chapter author shares valuable experiences and insights from disaster-affected areas in the United States and abroad, moving readers toward a survivor-centered response to collective trauma from natural disasters such as hurricanes, floods, earthquakes, tsunamis, and a global pandemic. Folklore and ethnographic research are used to uncover deep understanding of the culture and values of each area; help identify tradition bearers; and reveal authentic narratives told through oral traditions, rituals, and cultural objects. With special attention to local logic and local wisdom, authors suggest survivors are the best sources of knowledge about what is happening in their communities and provide authentic perspectives on effective responses. Insights on how to work collaboratively to regain, maintain, and create traditions are shared. The text encourages us to examine our positionalities and avoid a dichotomy of researcher/researched, supporter/supported.

This book offers insights on the cultural assets and tools of everyday life and their power to link the past, the present, and our future. Studying material culture—the act of collecting, archiving, and sharing objects—reveals what we value. Rituals and cultural artifacts can uncover insights into how individuals and communities return from loss, displacement, and collective trauma. Shared stories told and retold invite others to contribute to the ongoing narratives.

Chapter authors expand on the concept of empathy and its contribution to trauma research, disability studies, psychological research, and folklore research. We are called to move toward greater understanding of the thoughts, values, and wishes of survivors themselves to regain, maintain, and create traditions collaboratively. There is much to learn from paying attention to how we interact with survivors, how we gather and share their stories. Resilience should not be imposed upon survivors, but empathetic listening to the stories people share after disaster can often reveal ways individuals and community cope with trauma.

Unlike some books with chapters by different authors that result in disjointed narratives, the editors of this book provide a common thread that integrates concepts throughout. The book can be read in nonlinear fashion, starting with the reader's area of interest. However, I do not recommend omitting any chapters as each provides valuable contributions to the topic of ethical, survivor-centered responses to disasters.

This book bridges research/theory to practice and provides practical application of concepts for future scholars, leaders, policymakers, and community workers. This publication contributes to the growing literature on qualitative research methods, providing rich narratives to elevate authentic voices of survivors. It would be a useful addition to any reading list for an introduction to research, arts-based research, or undergraduate and graduate students interested in qualitative research in social and behavioral sciences. It contributes to the emerging field of resilience research and community work that use strengths-based approaches to increasing capacity for individuals and communities who have experienced trauma. It also provides valuable insights for local and national leaders charged with designing, implementing, and allocating resources for effective relief efforts following a natural disaster. In addition, this book is useful for K-12 education, serving as a guide for students and teachers to conduct their own fieldwork ethically or for readings to explore concepts of empathy, folklore, and cultural traditions. Finally, art classes could benefit from insights on material culture, the collection and preservation of cultural artifacts, and the ways individuals and communities use objects and rituals to commemorate what is valued. I highly recommend this book to learners of all ages.



What the Children Said: Child Lore of South Louisiana. Jeanne Pitre Soileau.

(Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2021, 331 pp.)

Jocelyn Hazelwood Donlon *is a lecturer in folklore and literature at the Louisiana School for Math, Science, and the Arts, Natchitoches, Louisiana.*

Jeanne Pitre Soileau's collection of children's lore draws largely from her fieldwork conducted in the 1970s-90s, with occasional examples from the 21st century. For 50 years, Soileau collected more than six hundred examples of children's lore from African American and Caucasian communities in Baton Rouge, New Orleans, and Lafayette—cities in South Louisiana.

The book's purpose is to provide a collection of full transcripts, partial transcripts, and lists that present the children in their own voices. Multiple variants of the lore show how transmission changes the language over time and space. In eight chapters Soileau catalogs "Counting-Out" methods of determining who is "it"; "Ring Games" performed as song or chants; "Jump Rope" games that could be complex; "Hand Games" played in the schoolyard; "Rhymes and Songs," including well-known parodies; "Running and Imaginative Games," from fieldwork at Gates of Prayer Hebrew Synagogue in Metairie, Louisiana; "Teases," which often enforce conformity; and

"Jokes," revealing how a child's sense of humor requires cognitive and emotional development to learn structure, timing, and order.

The collection demonstrates children's social and psychological development, showing their need for fairness in games, their desire for security when sitting in a circle, the complexity of jump-rope rhymes and hand games within African American communities, and their push for conformity. Children must grow into certain structures. For example, in response to "Why does the chicken cross the road," Soileau's four-year-old grandson replied, "Uh—maybe because he was going to the store?" But by age seven he had mastered the joke structure: "Did you hear about the kidnapping in the park….You ought to wake him up."

Soileau notes that there are differences in how African American and white children whom she documented perform their lore: Black children, she observed, often use African American Vernacular English (AAVE) when playing, while white children use white dialect; Black boys roughhoused a bit more than white boys; and differences in physical distances were distinguishable. The games not surprisingly revealed racist and sexist tendencies, with pejorative names and racist slurs in play. (One need only remember "Eenie meenie miney moe.") Transcripts also showed boys using insults to overpower girls, and girls slyly responding.

Because the book relies heavily on transcripts and lists, it is more useful as a reference work for teachers than as a thorough critical analysis of children's lore. Soileau includes substantive transcripts as examples of what to do and what not to do, acknowledging the teaching opportunities that come from her experiences. Teachers will find the breadth of this repository and the lengthy transcripts useful.

Some questions linger after reading, particularly as to what is currently happening on school grounds in the 21st century, especially with the transition to virtual games. Overall, however, the book is a useful contribution to the field of children's schoolyard folklore.