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Alan Lomax (1915-2002) first came to Louisiana in 1934 on a field trip with his father John A. Lomax (1867-1948). Alan followed up this initial fieldwork expedition with a trip to New Orleans in 1937. They were recording American folk songs for the Library of Congress's Archive of American Folk Song. Together they published *American Ballads and Folk Songs (*1934) and *Our Singing Country* (1941) based on these collections. Alan later published *The Folk Songs of North America* (1960). They recorded a number of disks among the Cajuns and Creoles of South Louisiana in towns from New Iberia to Jennings. These Louisiana French field recordings were deposited in the Library of Congress's collection. In 1979, Alan Lomax authorized the Library of Congress to furnish a copy of these recordings to the University of Southwestern Louisiana's Center for Acadian and Creole Folklore. Excerpts from this collection were returned to the family's of those whom Lomax had recorded. Some of the most interesting material was included in a double album *Louisiana Cajun and Creole Music, 1934: The Lomax Recordings* on Swallow Records, and expanded and reissued in 1999, as *Alan and John Lomax: The Classic Louisiana Recordings, Cajun and Creole Music, 1934/1937* I and II on Rounder Records.

I should begin by making a few things clear. First, I am not presuming here to re-consider the extensive work of Porterfield, Hirsch and others who have recently examined the lives and work of John and/or Alan Lomax on the national and international scenes. I am confining my remarks to the impact of the Lomaxes, primarily Alan, in French Louisiana, the scene in which I have been engaged since the early 1970s. Also, I should point out that my own experiences with Alan were quite mixed. He was variantly inspiring and intimidating, frustrating and fascinating. As one colleague put it, his observations were brilliant, while his interpretations were sometimes off the mark. I seek neither to glorify nor to vilify. I want only to give credit and critique where they are due.

During the 1930s, John and Alan Lomax traveled across this country recording traditional music for the Library of Congress. Their work paralleled other Depression years projects like the Farm Securities Administration's Photographer's Project and the Work Projects Administration's Federal Writer's Project which had as a goal to document America. These projects represented an important change in the way America perceived itself as Teddy Roosevelt's melting pot nationalism gave way to more pluralistic attitudes focusing in on the richness of ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversity. The Lomax recordings became the basis for the Library's Archive of Folk Song, a veritable treasure of America's traditional music.

> The Archive's field recordings demonstrated the fact that every song tradition has culturally distinctive modes of performance, best documented in place with portable equipment. In fact, the newly invented portable electronic disc recorder, which we took into the field in the 1930s, was to change the whole course of musicology and folklore. It was now possible to document oral performance traditions by recording them in their natural contexts. For the field worker, it was deeply satisfying to witness the pride and pleasure of the folk community in hearing its own music played back for the first time and to realize that this artistry had been permanently preserved. (Lomax 1988)

The Lomax's Louisiana recordings of Cajun and Creole songs represented an expansion of John's original focus on Anglo-American ballads. He was assisted in this excursion into Louisiana French tradition by his precocious son Alan – he was eighteen at the time – who had by then studied some French. Alan later explained that John was busy at the time working on his book *Adventures of a Ballad Hunter,* so he apparently turned young Alan loose with the Library of Congress's disc recording machine.

> "Since I spoke a few words of French and was eager to prove myself, and since my father was busy writing his autobiography (*Adventures of a Ballad Hunter,* New York: Macmillan, 1949), he turned most of the fieldwork over to me." (Lomax 1988)

It appears nevertheless from the field recordings (1934) that John was present at a number of the sessions. He even recorded in his own voice the mission of the expedition: to make them "…available to the musicians of future generations…" It appears also that Alan did do some of the recordings on his own. His foray into the Jennings / Lake Arthur black Creole community, for example, resulted in the first recordings of *juré* tradition, the unaccompanied black French and English Creole shouts and ring dances that would eventually evolve into what is now called zydeco (Ancelet 1996, Tisserand 1998; Sandmel 1999). There are some interesting indications that young Alan's knowledge of French was challenged by the non-standard Cajun and Creole speakers and singers he was recording. [St. John plantation singer] In an excerpt from his "Folksong Train" national radio program on Mutual Broadcasting from 1948, that Nick Spitzer provided me, Alan gets most of the basic story right, but there are those nagging details.

> We're going to roll on south and west now, down through Alabama and Mississippi and into Louisiana and down onto the Louisiana coast. What we're going to find down there is a kind of a lazy, wild and ferocious waltz. They call it "Jolie Blonde." Cajun *fais-do-do* music and I'll tell you what it's all about, in just a minute. You know, they call this music *fais-do-do,* which means, "Go to sleep." I don't know how they expect you to go to sleep with all that racket… "Jolie Blonde." You know, you might call this music tropical French music. The story is that Evangeline and her people came down from

> Arcadia in the 17th century. They moved into this swampy country and they turned kind of tropical. They changed their language, changed their music and just listen to what happened… Well, let's tell the *fais-do-do* music goodbye and leave Louisiana and skip right on across the gulf to a place where…(Lomax 1948)

I'm not sure how a waltz can be lazy and wild and ferocious. More importantly, his historical and geographical references are off. The Cajuns' ancestors did not arrive in Louisiana in the 16th century. They came after they were exiled from their native Acadia (Nova Scotia) in 1755. And Evangeline was a fictitious character created by Anglo-American author Henry Wadsworth Longfellow in the mid-19th century. Interestingly, he uses Harry Choates newly released version of "Jolie Blonde" in the background, instead of the Breaux Brothers' 1929 version, which is much less commercial and slick, or any of his own Louisiana French field recordings from 1934, many of which are much more "tropical" and "wild and ferocious." He was also already calling Cajun music fais-do-do, confusing the social event with the music played there. He continued to refer to Cajun dance music that way through his *Cajun Country* 1990s documentary for the American Patchwork series. In that film, his translations continue to show his difficulty with Louisiana French. An ancient questing song sung by Canray Fontenot begins:

> Fais trois tours de la table ronde.
> Fais trois tours de la table ronde.
> Allons en chercher, chercher, chercher, chercher.

Lomax's subtitles translate the last line "Let's sashay, sashay, sashay, sashay," despite my own best efforts to persuade him differently. Nevertheless, I am listed in the credits as a language consultant.

By the mid-1930s, when John and Alan first came to South Louisiana, the Americanization of the Cajuns and Creoles was well under way. Traditional accordion-based dance bands began to fade from the scene as string-bands like the Hackberry Ramblers and Leo Soileau's Four Aces drifted toward Anglo-American styles, incorporating western swing, country and popular radio tunes into their repertoires. Rural electrification made sound amplification available to country dance halls producing changes in instrumental and singing styles. Yet, though traditional Cajun and Creole music was pushed underground by new, more popular sounds, the Lomax recordings show that they did not disappear.

Home music, including unaccompanied singing and individual instrumentals, was virtually untapped by commercial recordings which focused on the public mode of Cajun music. The Lomaxes made the deliberate attempt to cover the ground that commercial companies ignored. Unlike the commercial companies which brought musicians out of their cultural contexts to record in urban centers like New Orleans, Chicago and New York, the Lomaxes went to the musicians' and singers' home turf with the Library of Congress recording machine which made aluminum disks in the field.

> "'Movable' might be a better word than 'portable' to describe those early recorders. The machine we used in Louisiana weighed about three hundred pounds and included a big vacuum tube amplifier, a speaker, a disc recorder, and two huge alkaline batteries for power. A heavily weighted needle, carried by a worm gear, actually engraved the surface of an aluminum disc. Compared to today's technology, the sound was rather low-fi and noisy, but a hundred years from now, when tape and plastic recordings have turned to dust, the originals of the Cajun discs will be as good as ever, for aluminum is almost as time-resistant as gold." (Lomax 1988)

They recorded ballads, blues laments, drinking songs, and round dance songs, along with a few fiddle tunes and house dance bands. Because they focused on the oldest expressions, the sounds they documented went much further back than the commercial records which tended to capture contemporary styles, thus shedding light on the early roots of Louisiana French music.

> "The juke-boxes in the beer joints and the local radio shows were pounding out a newly minted sound called *fais-do-do,* which strongly resembled the old-timey music coming out of Nashville. Since this new-fangled Cajun good-time music was being commercially recorded and broadcast, we concentrated our recording efforts on the earlier unaccompanied Louisiana styles, which we feared were being smothered by the urbanized, orchestrated sound. Time has proved us right, for the lovely things you hear on these recordings which were then quite easy to find, have now virtually disappeared, while the compelling sounds of *fais-do-do* and zydeco occupy almost all the musical space in the Cajun world… Our disc recording trip only lasted a few weeks. Imagine what we would have found if we had been able to stay longer… Yet, since we were short of money and time, I am glad that we preserved these older styles, since they provide a view of the complex roots of the Cajun and Creole music of today, and, with luck, may fuel a French Louisiana music richer than the present-day zydeco and *fais-do-do.*" (Lomax 1988)

His early field experiences in Louisiana caused Alan Lomax to develop a deep and ongoing interest in the region's fortunes. As he explained later (quoted by Hawthorne 1980), "I had my first glass of wine, my first shrimp creole, my first full-blown love affair and made my first independent field recordings." The fate of Cajun and Creole culture became a prime piece of his cultural equity argument. As a member of the Newport Folk Festival Board, he was instrumental in sending Ralph Rinzler to South Louisiana in 1964. Rinzler eventually contributed mightily to the cause of cultural preservation in French Louisiana, honing Dewey Balfa's skills as a cultural spokesman through extensive festival and fieldwork experiences and by helping to organize the first Tribute to Cajun Music in 1974. In 1980, Alan was invited to give the keynote address at the Louisiana Folklore Society annual meeting. In it, he challenged the legacy of the Council for the Development of French in Louisiana, suggesting that it had perhaps done as much harm as good by failing to

take into consideration cultural and social aspects in its efforts to preserve and regenerate the French language in Louisiana, particularly in the classroom. Quoting from Associated Press writer Woody Baird:

> "I was horrified to discover that the program was being carried into action by non-Cajun speakers," [Lomax] said. "That would be equivalent to having English, if it were a second language, being taught here by graduate of Oxford."
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> Lomax, a research associate at Columbia University in New York, said the effects from such a program are subtle but threatening. "You have a genuine mixture of folk style that could be disturbed and possibly distorted forever if the wrong kind of speaking style is employed in the schools," he said. "Cultural style is one of the main values that human beings create, and the Cajuns have created their own style that has managed to survive over the years. But with the very best of intentions, the Louisiana school system is attacking these values."
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> …Critics like Lomax say CODOFIL could cause as much harm as it has done good if the organization doesn't get over its bias against Cajun French as opposed to standard French. (June 20, 1980)

In his report of the same address, Lafayette *Daily Advertiser* City Editor Miles Hawthorne picked up on Lomaxian terminology, writing his piece under the headline: "Folklorist Seeks 'Cultural Equity." He went on to point out that

> Efforts at teaching European French to Cajun children will result in a dilution of the Cajun culture. "Domengeaux has tried to put Louisiana in the pocket of French critics and culture," Lomax said. Referring to such efforts as "silly centralization," Lomax said this approach has its roots in the court of Louis XIV who dreamed of a "little France on the Gulf of Mexico," adding that "The dream is gone." (June 20, 1980)

He closed with the challenge:

> "We have to defeat Louis XIV," Lomax said, adding with a smile, "You ought not to bow down to these petty tyrants who work for Louis XIV." (June 20, 1980)

With that, he certainly succeeded in stirring the pot. CODOFIL Chairman James Domengeaux was still licking his wounds over the Faulk affair in which a local high school French teacher's attempts to inject Cajun French oriented teaching materials into the region's classrooms exposed CODOFIL's standard French bias, this despite the fact that CODOFIL had sponsored the first seven Festivals de Musique Acadienne (Ancelet 1988). Domengeaux was infuriated by this second attack, this time by what he called an agitator from New York, and actually called Columbia University in an attempt to have Lomax fired. Ultimately, however, the appeal for cultural consideration and linguistic equity in the Louisiana French experiment prevailed, as

the State Department of Education hired Richard Guidry and other local educators who have led efforts to louisianify the teaching of French in the area.

Alan was a demanding and prolific fieldworker. I got to observe and experience his methods in person when he came to Louisiana in the 1980s to work on the Cajun and Creole part of this American Patchwork documentary series. His notion of some things had not changed in all those years. Once he asked if I might not know of some young lad he could hire for a few bucks to drive him around on his fieldwork trips. One of the things he was clearly interested in doing was retracing some of his steps. At one point, we made several trips to Jennings and Lake Arthur in an attempt to track down some of the men who had sung jurés for him in 1934. The lead singers, Oscar Coleman and Jimmy Peters, had both passed away, but he did find one of the back-up singers, a Mr. Brown. When we found his home, Lomax introduced himself and asked if Mr. Brown remembered him. "Yes!" he exclaimed, "I have told people for years that I made a record, and no one ever believed me. Come in right now and tell my family that I did." Lomax went in and corroborated his story, making a hero of the old man.

Alan could also be quite intimidating. Dewey Balfa always cautioned us to be careful of how we dealt with Alan because, as Dewey put it, he had the power, he had lots of influence in the world of folklore. He worked on a scale larger than most. He was always interested in the big picture. Inevitably, however, all big pictures are necessarily composed of lots of little data. As much as his theories of cantometrics and choreometrics have been criticized, they do explain some interesting things about cultural evolution and cross-cultural fusions. Sometimes, however, his interpretations of that data could lead to curious results. He saw much of Cajun and Creole culture in terms of machismo and the sexual and social repression of women. His portrayal of Dennis McGee and his obviously frustrated wife in the American Patchwork documentary made many groan with discomfort. His assertion in the same film that the future of the French language in Louisiana was in the hands of the Houma Indians raised more than a few eyebrows in South Louisiana. His interpretation of the Mardi Gras in the film was similar to the one he expressed at a Smithsonian Institution workshop in 1983, causing Dewey Balfa to lean over to me (we were on the same panel discussion led by Charlie Camp) to whisper, "That's not right. Somebody needs to say something to correct that." I whispered back, "If you've got something to say, say it." Dewey shot back, "No, that's why we sent you to school." So, I offered, as politely as I could, an alternative analysis of the social structure of the Mardi Gras, based on my own years of work in the community. Just as I finished, Charlie declared that time was up and thanked the crowd and us for participating. When we got back stage, Lomax admonished me, "Don't you ever contradict me in public again, you impudent young son-of-a-bitch." I countered, in terms that came from my upbringing on the north side of Lafayette, "Listen, Alan, your mama is finished raising you. If you have something to say, make it your business to say it. I had something to say, and I said it." We patched things up eventually to work on the American Patchwork project together. This sort of confrontational relationship was not at all untypical of the way he operated. I was frustrated to see his interpretation of the Mardi Gras preserved in the film, despite

our many efforts to offer other perspectives on this and other issues, such as the zydeco / pygmy connection, the Acadian / Huguenot connection, and the sexual repression at the heart of high constricted vocals iin Cajun music.

In the field, he incessantly demanded the best of everyone, including himself. He regularly rode cameramen, soundmen and consultants into the ground. He asked musicians and singers to redo their songs before the camera in an effort to get the most perfect performance possible. The result is that he often extracted the best performance ever for the record, but in so doing, he sometimes alienated performers, at least temporarily. I found myself trying to calm Canray Fontenot down one night after Lomax had gotten him to provide a stunning version of his "Barres de la prison" by goading him to redo it numerous times. From Alan's perspective, Canray was a genius and a musical giant who had just given a performance that surpassed all previous efforts.

And yet, despite the occasional problems, it is undeniable that the Lomax legacy contributed mightily to the future of Cajun and Creole culture in Louisiana. The influence of the Lomax recordings can be clearly heard in the contemporary music of groups such as Veillée, Feux Follets, Beausoleil, the Magnolia Sisters, and the Mamou Playboys. Perhaps as importantly, insight into the lyrical themes of Cajun music and the stylistic origins of zydeco would be impossible without the recordings they made.

I first became aware of Lomax's collection from Ralph Rinzler who told me that the Louisiana recordings were in the Library of Congress. I inquired as to their whereabouts and eventually obtained a copy of all the Louisiana French material for the new Cajun and Creole Folklore Center at the University of Southwestern Louisiana (now the University of Louisiana at Lafayette). When Cajun fiddler Michael Doucet and I sat in the archives and listened for the first time to the field recordings, we were both stunned by the wealth of information that would force us to reconsider the history and development of Cajun and Creole music. The first major shock was the black Creole *juré* recordings that Lomax had made near Jennings. When I heard them, it occurred to me immediately that these were the origins of zydeco. Some of the songs even included the signature phrase "Les haricots sont pas salés." To be sure, the black Creole musicians, especially Amédé Ardoin, recorded by the commercial record companies in the 1930s were part of the story, but these *jurés* were most definitely the missing link.

> Working with two much-revered spiritual singers had made me sufficiently familiar to the Jennings community, so that one weekday evening some young fellows took me to a local Baptist church and with their friends demonstrated the style of sung dances then commonly performed at church socials. While I set up my microphone and ran the cable out to my Model A where the recording machine was located, some of the boys and girls formed couples and began to dance round and round the church, in a shuffling, body-shaking fashion very much like the Sea Island shouts we've all come to know. The music was made by a trio of singers and rhythm-makers. The lead improvised new lines, the accompanying duo responded in overlap with a

> repeated refrain. Meanwhile all three clapped and beat a red-hot polyrhythmic accompaniment that at a distance sounded like there was an African drum ensemble in the church. Two songs, "Rockaway" and "Feel Like Dying in His Army," had religious texts that were clearly suitable to the setting. "J'ai fait tout le tour du pays," "S'en aller chez Moreau," and "Je veux me marier," sung in Creole French, were secular in character, and are probably full-blown instances of the *juré* style that is now known to have been widespread in the black Creole communities of western Louisiana. (Lomax 1988)

The story of the juré recordings is even more impressive than it appears in Alan's description. He told me that he recorded these Louisiana Black Creole ring shout performances in spite of the local authorities who were suspicious of his interest in that community. He told of having been smuggled into town in the back of an automobile to capture a later performance, which ended in a brawl, the beginnings of which he also captured on disk.

Alan eventually took advantage of the release of some of the Louisiana French material on a double album on Swallow Records to include his perspective to the nearly thirty pages of annotation. He took this opportunity to apply his ethnomusicological interests to his own collection. Writing about Cajun ballad singers, Lennis Vincent and Sidney Richard, from Kaplan, he notes:

> The male duo that performs the big symmetrical, diatonic melodies on "J'ai marié un ouvrier" (III: 7), "Madame Gallien" (III: 8), and "Je m'ai fait une maîtresse" (III: 9), sing in a manner appropriate to these beautiful wedding songs. The delivery is even, the rhythmic coordination is quite good in spite of the frequency of rhythmic ritardandos that accommodates the tunes to the rather flowery lyric verses, and the duo achieves a modest degree of tonal blend, in spite of its rather harsh and masculine vocal qualities. (Lomax 1988)

It would be hard to guess from this description the circumstances of that recording session. Lennis Vincent explained many years later that he and his cousin Sidney met Lomax in Kaplan one Sunday morning. They had borrowed their grandfather's horse to go to church, but they had strayed from righteous path and found themselves drinking in a bar instead. They overheard Lomax there talking about his project. Someone in the bar suggested that he record them. They agreed and Lomax took them outside to look for a quiet place to isolate them from the sounds of the town. They eventually found themselves in a loading chute at one of the local rice mills where they recorded those "big symmetrical diatonic melodies." Both Vincent and Richard explained much later, in the 1980s when I took them copies of their performances, that they had never been able to tell anyone about the recordings because of the circumstances. In fact, Richard only remembered the events after considerable prodding. Upon hearing his own voice in the recordings, he exclaimed, "Why, that sounds like me!"

When I took copies of the recordings that John and Alan had made of the Hoffpauir family back to family members in New Iberia, I was struck by another aspect of the value of these recordings. Tim Hoffpauir called a family reunion to receive the copies. While listening with the family to Elita Hoffpauir singing a beautiful French ballad that she had learned from her father Julian, I noticed a woman crying silently in the back of the room. "It's an emotional moment, isn't it?" I remarked. "Yes," she answered, "that's my mother. She died when I was young. Everyone in the family told me that she was a great singer. This is the first chance I've had to hear her myself."

Lomax also used the occasion of the release of the Louisiana French material to apply his emerging cantometrics theories:

> Je m'endors" (III:2) is a highly original Franco-American blues-like song. Words here are important and precisely delivered, with considerable embellishment and tremolo, and rhythmic accommodations to the text in rubato-parlando style. However, the big tonal leaps, the blues notes in the descending cadences, give this old European melody a rather bluesy cast. (Lomax 1988)

Past studies of Cajun music have focused primarily on its stylistic elements, as well as on historical and socio-cultural issues related to its evolution (Broven 1983; Savoy 1984; Ancelet 1984; Ancelet 1989). Except for Irene Whitfield Holmes' *Louisiana French Folk Songs* (1939), little attention has been given to the thematic and textual content of Louisiana French song lyrics that would enable comparisons between this music and its sister and cousin traditions in French North America (Québec, Ontario, the Acadian Maritimes, the Old Mines district of Missouri, the old Detroit region, the old Illinois country, and the Franco-American areas of the Northeast) and other parts of the French-speaking world (e.g. France, the West Indies, and the Indian Ocean). This is likely due to several reasons. First, as oral poetry, songs are perceived to be more textually stable than, for example, tales and legends, and thus more resistant to change. Second, the French language of the songs can be difficult for some of today's Cajun music fans to penetrate. Third, contemporary Cajun music is essentially dance music whose lyrics are secondary to the socializing interests of many participants and observers alike. Also, some scholars such as Catherine Blanchet have insisted that there was an essential difference between the older unaccompanied tradition of what has been called "home music" and the more recent public sounds of Cajun dance music, which is so deeply influenced by the creolization process that has occurred in French Louisiana. The percussive improvisational African influence especially sets Cajun music stylistically so far apart from its Acadian and Quebecois counterparts that comparisons have not been tempting.

Yet it would seem unlikely that Cajun musicians invented out of whole cloth all of the dance music lyrics they first began to record in 1928. Louisiana French unaccompanied ballad tradition was recorded extensively by the Lomaxes in 1934, six years after the first commercial recordings of Cajun and Creole dance music, and again as late as the 1960s by Harry Oster and Ralph Rinzler. I have recorded a

considerable number of unaccompanied songs beginning in the 1970s. So a rich textual base was available to draw upon. What is clear from some of the early commercial recordings is that the process of transforming ballads to popular music was indeed taking place in the context of Cajun music at the time. An exploration of other commercial recordings from the 1920s, '30s, '40s and even the '50s shows that this was apparently not an uncommon practice, even though the substantial transformations increasingly obscured their ancestry in traditional sources. The same was taking place in country music as well. Stylistic elements and melodies prove to be the least stable in most cases. But it is the changes in the lyrical content of the songs that have been under considered.

Songs and stories that continue to resonate within a community are the ones that tend to survive. Details can change slightly while the core of the story remains essentially the same. For example, such things as flora and fauna can change to reflect natural realities. Changes in building practices can be reflected in songs about boats, houses and other structures. Historical references can shift to reflect a change in context. In various versions of "La veuve aux deux maris," a man departs to fight in a military campaign soon after his wedding. He promises his new bride to return soon but ends up staying away much longer than expected. Upon his return he finds that his wife assumed him dead and is remarrying that very day. She remarks, "This morning I awoke a widow and now I find myself with two husbands." The time of the husband's absence can vary from ten to twelve years in some French versions to seven years in versions from Quebec to four years in Louisiana versions, reflecting the Crusades, the French and Indian War and the Civil War or the World Wars respectively.

Versions of "La belle qui fait la morte" have been recorded throughout much of the French-speaking world. Typically, the song tells the story of a young girl who is kidnapped from her father's garden by three young captains. In all versions, the youngest takes her by her white hand (a ballad commonplace and a symbol of purity and innocence) and puts her behind him on his gray steed (symbolic of a loss of innocence). In the French version, they take her to a Paris hotel where she is to spend the night with them (Robine 1994). In the Louisiana version that Lomax recorded Julian Hoffpauir singing in New Iberia, she is to spend the night with only the youngest captain. (Lomax 1988) There is more possibility in the Louisiana version that the kidnapping could have been motivated by love. Nevertheless, in all versions, she feigns death to save her honor. When the captains find her apparently dead, they ask themselves, "Where shall we bury her?" In all versions, they decide to take her back to her father's garden where they found her. In the versions from Quebec and Louisiana, they will bury her in her father's garden specifically under the three *fleurs de lys.* She later wakes to console her grieving father, explaining her ploy. What is interesting is the detail concerning the *fleurs de lys*. In another Louisiana French version, from Creole singer Alma Barthelemy as recorded by Ralph Rinzler in the 1960s, the maiden is initially found among the *laurier blanc* but taken back for burial under the *fleurs de lys.* While her father's garden could be a flower garden, why the specific reference to *fleurs de lys* in the North American French versions, a detail that is conspicuously missing from the French version? And why especially three *fleurs de lys?* Taking history into consideration, the three *fleurs*

de lys were the symbol of the French royal flag, a detail that has disappeared in the contemporary version of the song as recorded in the French Republic. After the French Revolution guillotined Louis XVI, images and references to the reviled monarchy were erased, even abolished from popular culture. But the people who became the Cajuns and Québecois left France in the 17th century, long before the Revolution. And in French North American communities, the *fleurs de lys* have endured as a symbol, not of the monarchy, but of Frenchness. They are on the flags of Québec and Acadiana; they are in business and governmental signs. And they are preserved in this song.

Pursuing the clues further, if the young girl is to be buried under the three *fleurs de lys,* the French flag, then she is undoubtedly French. If those who kidnapped her can be reasonably considered her adversaries, then who are they? It is not unlikely that they would be thought of as English. Why then did the symbol survive? Because it resonated, because it conveyed an element that the singers and their audiences would have understood, if not overtly, at least subliminally. Consider the fact that there is not one song in the traditional Cajun repertoire that addresses the Acadian exile of 1755 directly. Yet many Cajun songs reflect the pain and suffering, the separation and alienation, the broken families and lonely wandering that were the result of the exile. There are no songs in traditional blues that address slavery directly, but much of the blues reflects its unhappy results.

The traditional element of Cajun and Creole music would have acted as a conservative influence. Things change, but in ways that make sense and that feel culturally appropriate. As many have pointed out, Cajun and Creole music are the result of a remarkable process of cultural evolution. But it is not unlikely that lyrical material in active memory contributed to the development of dance music lyrics. It seems clear that texts evolved to reflect changing contexts. And the Lomax collection has made it possible for us to explore this evolution. Without it, it might appear that Cajun music was born around the turn of the 20th century in South Louisiana. With it, we can see that it went through a major transformation during that time, but that it has thematic and lyrical roots that go much further back. With the juré recordings, the origins of zydeco would remain a mystery as well.

The process of turning earlier unaccompanied songs into dance music is still going on today, though not exactly the same way. Previously, long story ballads were compressed into relatively short dance music lyrics intensifying the message in small symbolic and impressionistic kernels. Long narrative songs elaborating the troubles of the French *malmariée,* for example, are compressed into the tight dance music lyrics of "Jeunes filles de la campagne." The traditional French ballad, "J'ai fait faire un bateau sur mer," describes a man who asks a young girl for her hand in marriage. She rebuffs him, but gently, explaining that she is too young to consider marriage. Shirley Bergeron's "La valse de la belle" is expressed in remarkably similar terms, including the recurring reference to the girl as "la belle" though much more briefly in order to function as dance music lyrics. Now, however, groups are actually reviving early songs, preserving the lyrics and fitting them all into an elongated dance song. Michael Doucet and Beausoleil have transformed several ballads from archival collections into contemporary Cajun music, including Lanese Vincent and Sidney Richard's "Madame Gallien," from the Lomax collection, which

became Beausoleil's "Pierrot Grouillet et Mademoiselle Josette" (1987), by developing hard driving dance band arrangements for the previously unaccompanied lyrics.

Since then, other bands have been inspired to revive and retool material from the Lomax collection. That these old songs would be recycled to become new again would at least be interesting to John and Alan Lomax. Their clearly expressed intention was to preserve the material so that it would be available to subsequent generations. I'm not sure that Alan would have approved of the songs being arranged and pressed into service as dance music lyrics, but through this process they are still alive. He would have undoubtedly approved of another recent trend, however. Marce Lacouture, The Magnolia Sisters, Steve Riley and the Mamou Playboys and Feu Follet have recently included in their performances and on their recordings unaccompanied versions of the old songs.

4. Belle (Mr. Bornu)
5. Belle (Beausoleil)
6. Chanson des Savoy (Sonniers and Brasseaux)
7. Chanson des Savoy (Steve Riley and the Mamou Playboys)
8. Six ans sur mer (Elita Hoffpauir)
9. Sept ans sur mer (Magnolia Sisters)
10. Six ans sur mer (Feu Follet)
11. Les clefs de la prison (Elita Hoffpauir)
12. Les clefs de la prison (Feu Follet)

Some zydeco musicians, such as Lynn August, heard about the jurés and have begun to explore this forgotten part of their musical heritage (August 1992).

Finally, if Alan Lomax misunderstood some of the cultural effects he observed, he also understood and cared lots about how cultures function, interact and survive. He could be difficult in the field and in the scholarly arena, but he never strayed from his unwavering dedication to the principle of cultural equity. And when he was on the trail of an equity issue, he was relentless. Every time he called me over a span of about ten years, he never failed to ask if we were teaching Cajun French in the schools yet. His notions about the importance of cultural and linguistic diversity have been affirmed by many contemporary scholars, including Nobel prize-winning physicist Murray Gell-Mann who concluded his recent book, *The Quark and the Jaguar,* with a discussion of these very same issues, insisting on the importance of "cultural DNA" (1994: 338-343). His cautions about "universal popular culture" (1994: 342) sound remarkably like Alan's warning in his "Appeal for Cultural Equity" that the "cultural grey-out" must be checked or there would soon be "no place worth visiting and no place worth staying" (1972). Compare Gell-Mann:

> Just as it is crazy to squander in a few decades much of the rich biological diversity that has evolved over billions of years, so is it equally crazy to permit the disappearance of much of human cultural diversity,

> which as evolved in a somewhat analogous way over many tens of thousands of years…
>
> The erosion of local cultural patterns around the world is not, however, entirely or even principally the result of contact with the universalizing effect of scientific enlightenment. Popular culture is in most cases far more effective at erasing distinctions between one place or society and another. Blue jeans, fast food, rock music, and American television serials have been sweeping the world for years. (1994: 338-343)

and Lomax:

> …we have grown so accustomed to the dismal view of the carcasses of dead of dying cultures on the human landscape, that we have learned to dismiss this pollution of the human environment as inevitable, and even sensible, since it is wrongly assumed that the wak and unfit among musics and cultures are eliminated in this way…
>
> Not only is such a doctrine anti-human; it is very bad science. It is false Darwinism applied to culture – especially to its expressive systems, such as music language, and art. Scientific study of cultures, notably of their languages and their musics, shows that all are equally expressive and equally communicative, even though they may symbolize technologies of different levels…
>
> With the disappearance of each of these systems, the human species not only loses a way of viewing, thinking, and feeling but also a way of adjusting to some zone on the planet which fits it and makes it livable; not only that, but we throw away a system of interaction, of fantasy and symbolizing which, in the future, the human race may sorely need. The only way to halt this degradation of man's culture is to commit ourselves to the principals of political, social, and economic justice. (2003 [1972]: 286)

The sound recordings and videotape footage he collected over half a century constitute a treasure trove that Alan insisted be available to the cultures that provided them. He was delighted to hear years ago that the best material from his Louisiana French collection was being issued on a Swallow double album set (subsequently reissued and enhanced by Rounder). He generously provided an extensive statement for the notes. He was more delighted to hear that the recordings were influencing the next generation, contributing to what Dewey Balfa called "the very life of the culture." As important as the collection he left has proved to be, Alan did more. It was he who insisted that the Newport Folk Foundation send fieldworkers to Louisiana. Ralph Rinzler and Mike Seeger went and Dewey Balfa was among the Cajun musicians who performed at the festival in 1964. Our own annual Festival de Musique Acadienne in Lafayette is the direct result of the standing ovation Dewey Balfa experienced in Newport. He, along with Ralph Rinzler and Mike Seeger, were what Charles Seeger called "cultural guided missiles" directly influenced by Alan Lomax.

He was always interested in understanding the big picture. He was willing to hazard a theory to get at the reason for the way things are. Even in the cases when he was obviously wrong, he inspired those around him who were frustrated by his opinionated wild guesses to find out the real story to prove him wrong. When he announced that those who left France to become the Acadians in 1632 must have been Huguenots fleeing religious persecution in Poitou, a hotbed of France's religious wars, some of us sensed that this could not be right since the Acadians were eventually deported from their homeland by the British in 1755 partly due to their refusal to abandon their Catholic faith. Cajun historians and folklorists were driven to explore other possible reasons for the settlement of Acadia and discovered a complex set of them, including the incidents surrounding the curé of Loudun, Urbain Grandier, who was found guilty of witchcraft and burned at the stake in 1632. As Carl Brasseaux has pointed out, well over 50% of those who became the Acadians came from a twenty-mile radius around that same town and left for the New World in that same year. Brasseaux also describes aspects of the economic, social and political climate that contributed to the exodus. Thus, Alan was apparently wrong but nevertheless contributed directly to the discovery of the truth by taking a stab at it.

In a recent letter to the *New York Times* responding to Jon Pareles' obituary "A Man of His Time, Voices for All Time," Nick Spitzer insisted that Lomax was "hardly an isolationist," that "he wanted traditional performers to be able to compete within the economic and political realities of modern society" (August 11, 2002). I agree; Lomax was dead serious about cultural equity and the responsibility of the folklorist to the folk.

> We have become in this way the champions of the ordinary people of the world who aren't backed up by printing presses, radio chains, and B29's. We believe in the oral tradition, we believe in the small cultural situation, we think that some of these folk of the world have something worthwhile culturally, morally, etc…
>
> Now I propose that we should be two-way bridges and form a two-way intercommunication system. We, who speak for the folk in the market place here, have obligations to the people who we represent. (2003 [1950]: 115-116)

In Louisiana, he tried to enable and encourage Cajuns and Creoles to work toward a future in which Cajun music and what would later come to be called zydeco could survive and compete with the forces that once threatened to wash them out. The wide popularity of Cajun and Creole musicians today give reason to think that the effort may have succeeded. That this may be a mixed blessing is another matter, but it would be hard to deny that Cajun music and zydeco definitely have a life of their own. As do the scholars that have emerged from the culture. Those of us who worked with him learned much about how to read cultural effects, how to establish and argue a case, and how to infiltrate popular culture with tradition. Those of us who enjoy seeing Cajun music at Carnegie Hall and zydeco in the Library of

Congress owe a debt of gratitude to Alan Lomax. And the Lomax family tradition of generosity to French Louisiana continues. His daughter Anna Chairetakis recently offered to donate all of the Louisiana footage from the Patchwork project to U.L. – Lafayette. Repatriating such invaluable material and placing it at the service of the cultures that they represent is in the best tradition of reciprocal scholarship. Some of us who sometimes found ourselves enduring Alan when he was alive recognize that his contributions to our understanding of our own communities endure as well. If you spent any time at all with him you couldn't help but learn about the meaning and value of folk culture, some of it the hard way admittedly, but much more from participating with him in the deep exploration of what things mean. When you're dancing close, you can sometimes step on your partner's toes, but at least you're dancing.

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