Intimacies and Intimations: Storytelling between Servants and Masters in Nineteenth-Century France.

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ABSTRACT

The French reading public learnt at the beginning of the Third Republic that their country still possessed an oral storytelling tradition, thanks to the works of a generation of folktale collectors including Wentworth Webster, Emmanuel Cosquin, Paul Sebillot, Achille Millien and Félix Arnaudin. In every case these folklorists had been introduced to folktales by a female domestic servant in the family's household. For the sons of the rural notability, tale collecting was motivated by nostalgia, as a way back the feminine, dialect-speaking world of hearth and home, before the rupture of boarding school, correct French and public responsibility. It was also a means to create or maintain affective relationships across social barriers. They hoped that such 'real' relationships, untainted by the falseness generated by social hierarchies, might create the cultural space in which to achieve social reconciliation. Folklore publications could promote reconciliation on a national scale. For the servants, tales were a way of preserving kin and class solidarities, negotiating their position within the household, and giving voice to their desires and ambitions. Their stories are, therefore, valuable historical sources for the history of one of the most ubiquitous but enigmatic social groups, the domestic servant. The core of this article is a consideration of what meanings servants such as Stephana Hirigaray, Françoise Vaudin, Vincente Béquet and Augustine Chevance wanted to convey through their storytelling.

KEYWORDS

Servants; rural notables; folklorists; folktales; dialect; Basque; Mother Goose

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Introduction

Historians of French female domestic servants have regularly lamented the absence of sources for these women's voices. According to Pierre Guiral and Guy Thuillier, "We do not possess *lived* sources [sources *vécues*]: servants did not write their memoirs, they did not keep a diary".[1] Two years before Theresa McBride had summed up her difficulties in similar terms:

> servants did not leave a large body of literature which could serve to elucidate the conditions of their work, their aspirations, and their relationships with their employers… what is known of servants is largely derived from their employers' accounts of them. This fact... leaves us with a picture of the servant not as a historical person but as a "problem".[2]

McBride, Guiral and Thuillier were writing in the 1970s, when the subject of domestic service was first beginning to attract historians' attention. Much research has been undertaken in the intervening decades, and yet the same complaint can still be heard. A more recent history of servants in Belgium opens with the statement "Servants themselves leave few traces. They rarely speak out or take up the pen, they are not generators of sources".[3]

There are some obvious explanations for this absence, at least as far as nineteenth-century France is concerned. Female domestic servants were drawn from those social classes and those rural areas, such Brittany and the Morvan, with the lowest levels of literacy. However, at least one strand in the historiography argues that servants did not just encounter practical difficulties in placing their testimonies on record: they were deliberately and forcibly silenced. "It is no accident that they do not speak", claimed Anne Martin-Fugier in another pioneering work from 1979, "they do not have their own voice".[4] Poor, ignorant and far from home, the young servant girl was subjected to a battery of repressive techniques. The effect intended was to reduce her to a voiceless body, dependent on her masters not only for her livelihood but for the few thoughts left in her head. "The servant is an exile, she adopts the bourgeois code with even greater rigour because she is in flight from the countryside and her origins."[5] The almost complete lack of organized resistance, such as servant trade unions, was less the product of servants' dispersal and isolation than the result of an imposed culture of deference and emulation.

The absence of servant-authored sources means that servants appear to have had no agency in their own lives. The hegemony of the literate, culture-producing classes becomes complete as servants are treated not as historical persons, but as blanks onto which middle-class injunctions, desires and fears were projected. But this historiographical viewpoint may be a distortion produced by archival bias; if we had the sources, a different understanding of the master/servant relationship, one in which the servant took a dynamic part, might emerge.

In analogous situations, where subaltern social groups did not, or could not, leave written testimonies of their own, historians have sometimes turned to oral sources. The historiography of slavery in the American South provides one example. Historians have used African-American folkloric material to demonstrate that, even under such oppressive circumstances, slaves had the cultural wherewithal to fashion solidarities amongst themselves

and also to communicate and form relationships with non-slaves, even with slave-owners.[6] Stories, songs, jokes, riddles, these were "weapons of the weak" which taught forms of quotidian resistance such as tricksterism and malingering.[7] They could also articulate a shared identity that countered masters' understanding of what a slave was, not least by keeping alive traditions of a time before slavery. Elements of this oral culture might be introduced to masters' families to intimate resistance, or, even when acknowledging subordination, to offer lessons in slaves' expectations. Storytelling could initiate a relationship, even an intimacy, which slaves could use to negotiate their position. Drawing on this historiography, the anthropologist James Scott has challenged the whole concept of hegemony, arguing that in sequestered places, subordinates developed their own discourses of resistance which, on occasions, were brought into the open. Thus powerholders were never completely unaware of what those below them thought, and were forced to frame their own discourses, and actions, accordingly.[8]

French female servants in the nineteenth century worked for wages according to contracts which, however inequitable, gave them certain rights which they could enforce. And they could resign their positions. An analogy with chattel slavery might seem dubious, even insulting. However, there are some parallels. The conduct literature aimed at the servant-employing classes of the period presented two ideals for the master-servant relationship. On the one hand the servant was a mere instrument, a tool of flesh and blood. "Whatever the nature of the orders... they should be obeyed immediately. Repugnance is absurd, and resistance is criminal", wrote the former conventionnel Jacques-Charles Bailleul in 1812.[9] On the other hand, masters were supposed to be like fathers to their servants with responsibilities to nurture and protect them, and to provide them with moral instruction. In return they should expect, not just filial obedience, but devotion. An ideal of servants as "feudal retainers" who love and protect the family they serve is omnipresent in nineteenth-century literature, even if only to serve as a foil to the lamented mercenary ways of contemporary servants. This dichotomy is also present in nineteenth-century attitudes to slavery.

Another point in common is that, just as the (ex)-slave as storyteller — such as Joel Chandler Harris's Uncle Remus or Charles Chesnutt's Uncle Julius — is a commonplace of Southern literature, so the storytelling servant, and in particular the nurse, is ubiquitous in nineteenth-century European literature.[10] Some French examples will be considered below but just to mention some famous authors who either invoked servants' stories as a prime source for furnishing their own imagination, or who introduced storytelling servants as characters into their fictions, one might cite Walter Scott, Emily Brontë, Elizabeth Gaskell, Charles Dickens, Sheridan Le Fanu, W.B. Yeats, or, to go beyond the British Isles, Fyodor Dostoyevsky.[11]

The servant/slave as storyteller is a literary trope with ancient antecedents: Aesop is only one of several such characters in classical literature.[12] As many scholars have shown, one must be careful about extrapolating from fictional representations of servants to any conclusion about plebeian oral cultures or the historical relationship between servants and masters. Charles Dickens claimed to have been terrified by his nurse's stories, but the language he used came straight from John Locke's warnings about servants' influence over young minds, first published in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* in 1693.[13] The figure was clearly doing "cultural work" for these authors, demonstrating their credentials as spokesmen for "the people", deliminating regional and class differences, and introducing exciting but reprehensible elements of fantasy and superstition. A historian might be

tempted to dismiss such characters as intertextual referents, particularly given how little they changed over time. Yet, in addition to these literary representations, the storytelling servant is documented historical personage too.

The nineteenth-century also witnessed the growth of a new scholarly discipline, folklore. Its earliest exponents' search for performers of ballads, tales, legends, proverbs... often took them first to servants in their own households. That was true in many parts of Europe, but perhaps nowhere more so than in France.[14] In particular, servants' oral narratives, recorded by upper or middle-class folklorists with whom they had a prior relationship, make up a substantial part of the French folktale archive. Despite their fictional form and fantastic contents, and despite the mediation between oral performance and its record in manuscript in print, these are servants' words, servants' voices. They can serve as historical sources to demonstrate that servants could draw on cultural resources in their relationship with employers: they could articulate resistance, but they could also use such communications to insinuate where accommodation was possible. Storytelling as a practice fostered affective bonds between servants and members of the family they served, particularly children; bonds which be mobilized in the servants' interests.

Yet, as folkloristics has become a more self-critical discipline in recent decades, folklorists have become sceptical about some nineteenth-century sources and servants' role in the history of the fairytale genre in particular. The similarity between literary representations and the characters invoked by collectors has created suspicions that the latter are also partial fictions. This scepticism extends to the entire genre of late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century salon *contes* by the likes of Charles Perrault and his niece Marie-Jeanne L'Héritier de Villandon. Although it was once held that these aristocratic writers drew on plebeian storytelling (partly because the authors occasionally said they had);[15] now it is widely argued that the nursemaid storyteller was a rhetorical device, used in order to disguise politically or socially challenging messages. For example, Elizabeth Harries argues that "The myth of the anonymous female teller of tales, particularly strong in the murky legend of Mother Goose, is just that: a myth."[16] It is nonetheless a powerful one, not least because of the innumerable representations of this figure: a lower-class, older woman, presumably a servant, narrating for the benefit of young ladies and gentlemen.[17] Nineteenth-century folklore collectors, and not just in France, knew Mother Goose; they had grown up with her in their nursery reading. Such familiarity no doubt shaped their collections as they sought out narrators who conformed to this model.

Scholars have downgraded the contribution to folklore of famous servant narrators, such as Alexander Pushkin's nurse Arina Rodionovna;[18] others, such as the Grimms' "Old Marie" Müller, have been shown to be transcription errors.[19] The idealized servant-storyteller of folklore collections — rural in origins, elderly, devoted — was also doing "cultural work"; she was a participant in the cultural politics of an increasingly urbanized, proletarianized and democratic society, which challenged the security of the servant-employing classes. So alongside our exploration of the strategic uses to which servants' strategic put folktales, we must also consider the strategic value of collecting and publishing to those who recorded them.

Yet this knowledge does not necessarily undermine the validity of such texts as historical sources; rather these dual examinations oblige us to consider what was at stake for each in the relationship between servant and master. We are witnesses to a dialogue in which both had to grapple with the social vision put forward by the

other. As Sara Forsdyke has argued in relation to storytelling between ancient Greek slaves and masters, "stories play a role not just in articulating the distinctive ideology of *separate groups* but in mediating tensions *between* groups... These stories are a cultural meeting place through which the principles of mutual accommodation are worked out."[20] Or at least that is what I hope to show in the case studies that follow, starting with the strange tale of the hunt for a Basque mythology.

Servants and the Hunt for a Basque Mythology

In the early years of the French Third Republic, the leading scholars of the Basque language were faced with a conundrum. This group — including the Paris-based linguist Julien Vinson, the Oxford professor of Assyriology Archibald Sayce, the explorer Antoine d'Abbadie, and the Anglican chaplain at Saint-Jean-de-Luz the Reverend Wentworth Webster (Uxbridge 1829 – Sare, Basses-Pyrénées 1907) — assumed that Basque was the sole surviving representative of the languages spoken by the pre-Indo-European populations of Europe. They also worked within a Grimmian paradigm which posited that the oral stories were the relicts of myths, and therefore that the tales told by Basques would preserve elements of their pre-Christian religion. In theory Basque folktales would permit access to the belief system of the Neolithic, a major philological and archaeological discovery. Their problem was they did not know how to record Basque folktales. Basque highlanders, they agreed, were proud and suspicious of outsiders and so reluctant to discuss personal matters with them, especially if that discussion trespassed on belief. D'Abbadie had been delighted to receive a tale concerning a Tartaro (a Cyclops, who fulfilled the narrative function of an ogre) from a priest. He rushed to publish it in a local antiquarian review.[21] But that tale was the sum total of reliable Basque folklore in print: and time was pressing, for all assumed that with railways, tourists and paraffin lamps, folktales were disappearing.

In 1874, however, Wentworth Webster "unexpectedly discovered a fund of Basque folk-lore". The family's new maid, twenty-year-old Estefanella Hirigaray, normally known as Stephana, from the village of Ahetze, knew no French and could therefore be considered culturally pristine; on the other hand she did know an awful lot of stories. These were, Webster wrote to Sayce, "genuine specimens of folklore which the peasants tell each other while husking the maize etc in winter".[22] The stories that Stephana told Webster were the first tales he recorded for what would become his volume of *Basque Legends*.[23] Stephana Hirigaray's name appears beneath ten of these published texts, three others are identified as hers in the manuscript volume of eighty-nine tales compiled by Webster between 1874 and 1876, and one can surmise that she was the informant for half a dozen others. It is also likely that she introduced Webster to other storytellers, starting with her sister Gagna-Haurra (Jeanne) Hirigaray.[24]

Stephana Hirigaray was the second daughter of landowning, or at least landholding peasants, and her life story, as it can be pieced together from the *État Civil*, illustrates the ups-and-downs for its children of the Pyrenean "House System": a vertically extended or "stem" household type in which three generations shared the same farmstead, and known in Basque as a "baserria".[25] She was born (1853) into a stem family created by the marriage of Marie Laborde, heiress of the farmstead of Maïscoenea, to Michel Hirigaray in 1849. At the time of

the marriage Marie's father surrendered his status as master of the baserria to his son-in-law Michel. It was increasingly common in the Pyrenees for daughters to inherit the landholding — sons had more opportunity to make their own way in the world through migration or marriage — and Stephana would have grown up in the knowledge that she too might be favoured above her siblings. However, the Hirigaray household did not prosper, and after ten years of proudly signing himself master of Maïscoenea, Michel Hirigaray was forced to give up the farm and become a sharecropper. What this meant in terms of status is rendered symbolically on the birth certificate of his only child not born at Maïscoenea (Félix, in 1861): for the first time Michel's signature does not appear because, he declared, he did not know how to write.[26]

It would be a mistake, however, to see Stephana's occupation as maid-of-all-work as the outcome of declining family fortunes. As Marie-Pierre Arrizabalaga has shown, it was the daughters of the landed peasantry who sought places as servants in expanding urban centres like Saint-Jean-de-Luz, whereas the daughters of landless Basques were more likely to stay in the village and marry men of the same background. A woman who had the status of potential heiress would prefer to remain unmarried rather than wed a man beneath her in the village social hierarchy.[27] A servant at least got paid for the same kind of labour that the wife of a poor man performed unpaid. A servant might, eventually, retire back to the family farmstead, as all offspring of the basseria had the right to do if they had not cashed in their inheritance. Stephana's career as a servant, therefore, is typical of the surplus siblings of a Basque stem-family. How long Stephana remained in service is unclear, but in the meantime her parents had forced their way up again among the landed. In 1900, when she was 46, Stephana married Jean Tellechea (35); at the same time the bridegroom took over as master of the farm from her father. The newlyweds lived upstairs, and her parents in a basement apartment: a new, albeit very belated, stem family was in the offing.

Bear this biography in mind when listening to Stephana Hirigaray's tales. Her repertoire mostly consisted of what might be considered "standards" in the western European folktale repertoire, including comic and frightening tales, but she had a marked preference for fantasy stories, including variants of "Beauty and the Beast" (ATU 425C), "Bluebeard" (ATU 312), "The Name of the Supernatural Helper" ("Rumpelstiltskin", but in this case "Marie Kirikitoun", ATU 500) and "The Boy who Understands the Language of Birds" (ATU 517).[28] Servants figure prominently in several of the best known European tale-types, including those mentioned. Because they form part of the common stock of storytellers such narratives cannot be considered autobiographical in any straightforward manner. Nonetheless Stephana's choice of tales, and the manner in which she chose to tell them, reflected on her own circumstances while at the same time serving as a meaningful communication between her and the family by whom she was employed. Webster literally took notes, but he also took note of what Stephana had to say.

Stephana appears to have related her tales in a prosaic manner with little dialogue, and she set them in circumstances that were not so different from her own.[29] For example, her version of ATU 451 "The Maiden Who Seeks her Brothers", does not start with a King and a Queen (as in the Grimms' version) but with a widow sharecropper and her three sons, sharing their house with their landlady, as was not infrequent in south-western France. The sons go off to seek their fortune and end up as servants to Basa-Jaun (the Basque wild man). In the

meantime their little sister grows up, and one day she steals some maize from the landlady's pile and puts it on her own. The landlady spies her and cries "Bold hussy that you are, there is no one like you! You will come to a bad end like your brothers." Thus, for the first time, the girl learns of her brothers' existence; she sets off to find them. She too comes to the house of Basa-Jaun and is engaged as a servant. Every evening the master comes to her room and sucks her finger, so that she gets thinner and thinner. The brothers kill Basa-Jaun to save their sister, but in revenge his wife, Basa-Andre, turns the boys into oxen, and their sister has to drive them into the fields, even though she gets no food from her mistress. One day, however, she forces Basa-Andre to release the boys from her spell, and then brothers and sister live happily together in the Wild Man's castle.[30]

This tale-type encapsulates some of the tensions among siblings within stem-families in which most offspring, especially the sons, would have to leave the farm, and only one, probably a daughter, would inherit. But at the same time one cannot miss its commentaries on the miseries (poor or absent food) and dangers (physical exhaustion and possible sexual predation) that might be attendant on the servant's lot. The vampiric master, sucking the life out of the poor servant, is a recurring motif in servants' stories, as well as in contemporary literature concerning their plight.[31] This does not mean that Stephana was offering a portrait of her own master, rather it illustrates how tales served as vectors for servants' anxieties. Nor need Webster have been too disturbed by the revenge fantasy and the reversal of the social order — the servant in the place of the murdered master — that provide Stephana with her happy ending. This was, after all, a commonplace of the genre. And yet, albeit in the impersonal form of a "once upon a time" story, we are hearing a servant giving a shape to the fear that haunted nineteenth-century bourgeois masters, and on which so much of legislation and conduct literature that entrammelled servants' lives was based, that their outwardly obedient maids secretly wished to do their masters harm.

An even more blatant statement of a servant's fantasy occurs in Stephana Hirigaray's version of "The Kind and the Unkind Girls" (the Grimms' "Frau Holle", ATU480). A woman has three daughters, and the youngest announces that she must go out to service. More than 40 versions of this tale have been recorded in France from oral performance, but no other narration makes the search for a place the central motor of the story.[32] We might deduce, then, that Hirigaray told it thus in order to make a point. Her heroine goes from town to town and meets a woman who offers to employ her. The woman is a lamiña (a Basque fairy). She tells the girl that "I must go from home, but your work is in the kitchen; smash the pitcher, break all the plates, pound the children, give them breakfast [by themselves], dirty their faces, and rumple their hair". Fortunately a dog to whom the girl has been kind reveals that Basque fairies always mean the opposite of what they say, and thus she is able to perform her chores correctly. It also means that when the fairy offers her the choice between a sack of charcoal and a donkey's tail or a sack of gold and a star, she knows to choose the former but receives the latter. Her less kind sister, who sets off to emulate her, does not learn this, and so comes home with a sack of charcoal and a donkey's tail on her forehead. The mother refuses to let the third daughter go into service.[33]

That lamiñak should say the opposite of what they mean is odd (though a well-attested characteristic), because one of their primary roles in Basque folklore was to enforce truthfulness in social relations. Lamiñak were supposed to "live off negation": whenever a Basque householder lied about his property in order to minimize his

commitments under the powerful social expectations of reciprocity that operated in the region, the lamiñak would take the difference for themselves.[34] In the story it is because the first girl respects the "moral community" and gives food to her neighbour (the little dog) that she succeeds in her task. But one also senses some wish fulfilment finds its utterance in the fairy's instructions — the longest piece of reported speech in Stephana's repertoire: these are the actions that a servant might like to perform, even though she cannot. Under the cover of a useful fiction — fairies' back language — words can be said that could not be tolerated in any other conversational scenario between master and servant. We might see this as catharsis, a release of pressure in the relationship without in any way affecting the relative power positions; but stories are not just for the benefit of the teller, they are meant for the ears of the listener, in this case Webster, who might act on what he has heard. Through stories, servants might seek to influence the behaviour of their masters.

Hirigaray told her tales not only in her own language (the Lapurdian dialect of Basque) but also in her own language register. Her tales were not obscene, but they did not flinch from the realities of sex or bodily functions. Her tales could be crude, for instance in the story of the witches who eat excrement and drink urine thinking it was manna from heaven. Webster did not include this incident in the published text of the tale.[35] It is difficult to determine whether Hirigaray told this story in this manner because, in her vernacular, a shit was a shit, or whether she was deliberately attempting to puncture the respectability of her clerical employer. On the other hand Stephana did not tell Webster any anticlerical tales even though these were part of the family's repertoire. We know this because her sister, Gagna-Haurra, felt no such compunction.[36] Perhaps Stephana felt that such stories were not suitable given her position in a clerical household, and so she altered her narrative stock to her circumstances. That would make the stories that she did tell about servants more important, because it implies she had chosen them as appropriate for this particular relationship. Which is not to say that they are the direct reflection of her experience — that Webster was either an ogre of a master, responsible for the bodily destruction of his servant, or a fairy-godfather, showering her with gold — but rather through these fictions Stephana could intimate what she saw as desirable and undesirable qualities *in* a master *to* her master.

And there is some evidence that Webster learnt a lesson. In Webster's initial letter to Sayce he described Hirigaray as a "fund" of folklore, as if she were merely a vessel, evidence of the approach to servants recommended by some manuals whereby they should be treated as tools to an end, as well as a common assumption among folklorists of the epoch that "The folk creates nothing, it only reproduces".[37] However, over time one senses that he became more respectful of her as a person and her talent as a storyteller. In a review he wrote not long after recording her tales, he commented on the claims of another British travel writer, Philip Hamerton, that French servants did not have a clear sense of the division of classes and therefore behaved in inappropriate ways. Webster wrote "on one point we would reverse [Hamerton's] conclusions. It is the French servant to whom you can talk as to an equal and who no more thinks of taking a liberty with you than you with her who shows true self respect, and not the English one with her expression of surprise that you should address her as reasonable being..."[38]

Servants as Sources for Folklore in France and Beyond

Although it took him a long time to realize it, Webster's hope of finding a mummified Basque mythology in folktales was fatally punctured by Stephana Hirigaray's stories. Although the characters and some details were distinctively Basque, her basic plotlines were part of the common European folktale tradition. Various indications suggest a not too distant French source for some of her tales. Therefore, they could not serve as the key to unlock a Basque pre-Christian belief system. On the other hand, for the historian of domestic service such commonalities are suggestive. Almost all the pioneer folklorists who, in the first decades of the Third Republic, revealed to the French reading public that the country still possessed an oral storytelling tradition, had been introduced to folktales by servants in their household: it was their servants' stories that they first wrote down, an initial step in their public careers as folklore collectors. If there are common themes, it may be because they arose within a common social situation, the encounter between servant and master.

To give some particulars: in October 1862 the French law student Emmanuel Cosquin (Vitry-le-François, Marne, 1841 – Vitry-le-François, 1919) wrote to Jacob Grimm enclosing the text of a tale he had originally heard as a child in the house of his great-uncle. He was particularly excited because his text, "Peuil et Punce" ("Louse and Flea" in the local dialect, ATU2022), was evidently related to the story "Läuschen und Flöhchen" in the Grimms' *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*.[39] Jacob Grimm's letter of response, pointing out numerous Indian parallels, would prove to be Cosquin's moment of wild surmise: instead of following his father's footsteps into the law, he dedicated himself to tracing the tales he had first heard on the borders of Lorraine across Europe and Asia to India, which he believed to be their original home.[40] He became, in the process, one of France's foremost orientalists.[41] The tale of "Louse and Flea" was told to him by "an old faithful maidservant, of a kind you do not find today, who has served my great-uncle for at least fifty years. Although without education she is very funny and clever". Cosquin never named this servant, but a consultation of the census shows that his great-uncle was Jean-Baptiste Simonet, the justice of the peace of Montiers-sur-Saulx (Meuse), and that he employed one Françoise Hélène Vaudin, born October 1789, the daughter of the village wheelwright. She would die, unmarried, in 1871, still living in the Simonet house.[42]

A couple of years before Cosquin composed his letter, Paul Sébillot (Matignon, Côtes-du-Nord, 1843 – Paris 1918), then at boarding school, was reading Emile Souvestre's *Le Foyer Breton* ("The Breton Hearth"). Some of its stories reminded Sébillot of those he had heard as a child, and he decided to write a "Gallo Hearth" (Gallo being the name of the langue d'oïl dialect spoken in eastern Brittany). When he returned home home he asked his former nurse Vincente Béquet (Saint-Pôtan, Côtes-du-Nord, 1821 – Matignon, 1886), who was still employed as a servant in the family house, whether she remembered any of her stories.[43] According to Sébillot's autobiography, Vincente Béquet's life history was similar to Françoise Vaudin's: she too had received little or no education, she had entered the service of the Sébillot family when she was fifteen and she was to remain there all her life.[44] Initially hesitant, Béquet, likewise both funny and clever, dictated a handful of tales.[45] Although the significance of these texts would not become clear for some years, this moment too would prove the beginning of an alternative career. Sébillot, like Cosquin, would eventually drop his legal studies to emerge in the 1880s as France's most active folklorist. His very first book, volume one of the *Contes populaires de la Haute-Bretagne* published in 1880, contained four stories he recorded from Béquet.[46]

The biographies of these founders of folklore studies in France are quite similar.[47] They were the offspring of the rural or small-town notability — Cosquin's father was a notary, Sébillot's father was a doctor; their grandparents had all done well out of the revolutionary land settlement. They were all introduced to the pleasures of the oral tradition by a servant — an older female, lower-class member of their own or a relative's household. Having been brought up in a semi-rural, dialect-speaking and largely feminine oral culture of relations and servants, kitchens and nurseries, these men came to the sudden realization that they were destined for another world — the masculine, French-speaking world of public affairs — through the experience of boarding school. Their interest in folk culture in later life was, in part, motivated by nostalgia for the familiar and comforting world of their childhood. And when they realized that there was public interest in such things, they returned to that servant to record her stories.

This pattern of initiation by servants would be replicated in the next generation too, even though by 1900 the nature of the servant profession had changed, and bourgeois employers had become more reliant on long-distance but often short-term migrants from Brittany, the Morvan and Alsace. In the historiographical literature on servants, this transition is often interpreted as the breakdown of traditional rural status relationships (hierarchical but reciprocal, where storytelling might be expected to have a place) towards more class-like relationships dominated by the cash nexus.[48] However, some cultural contact was still possible: Paul Sébillot's son Paul-Yves, started his own career as a folklorist at the age of eleven when he wrote down the twenty-one tales told by his nursemaid, Augustine Chevance, a Breton-speaking migrant to Paris.[49]

Consultation of such folkloric sources may modify our understanding of servants and their relationship to their employers. This can be illustrated by the example of *Bécassine*, the popular cartoon Breton maid created by Maurice Languereau (pseudonym "Caumery") and Joseph Pinchon, and who first appeared in the girls' magazine *La Semaine de Suzette* in 1905. She has frequently drawn the attention of historians of domestic service because she exhibits many of the characteristics ascribed to servants in conduct manuals and literature.[50] For example, she does not keep her own name, rather her mistress, the marchioness de Grand-Air, endows her with one, that of an animal. She is depicted without a mouth, so how can she have a voice of her own (although the stories make clear she can speak)? She is utterly devoted to her mistress and her family, and a fierce partisan of aristocratic codes. And yet, in the fashionable Faubourg Saint-Germain, she is the epitome of the Breton "plouc", superstitious and uncomprehending. Every story exhibits both her "good-heartedness" and her unerring stupidity. According to an oft-repeated story, her origin lay in an actual blunder made by the Breton maid of the magazine's editor, Jacqueline Rivière.[51] As depicted in that first strip, Bécassine is given orders to notify the marchioness when a lobster is delivered for the evening's dinner party. But as Bécassine does not know what a lobster is, the marchioness tells her that that it is red, that she is to check if it is fresh and to put it in the kitchen. Instead Bécassine puts the dinner guests, four colonial officers in their red uniforms, in the kitchen, and informs the marchioness that there are three little lobsters and one large one (the colonel), but that the latter is not quite fresh!

This plot derives from a common folk-tale (ATU 1310). Paul Sébillot collected a version on the coast of Brittany in which the villagers of Saint-Jacut, possessed of a local reputation for stupidity, mistake a lobster for

the devil and finally persuade their priest to deal with it, which he does by eating it.[52] I suggest that origins of Bécassine lay not in an event Madame Rivière witnessed but in a story she *heard* — possibly from her Breton maid. In this scenario, servants still amuse, but less for their idiocy than for their wit, and middle-class literary creativity draws on plebeian oral tradition. In the debates on the history of the salon fairytale, and generally the relationship of servants to their representation in plays and novels, folklorists (and historians) have been advised to recognize that texts are literary constructions and therefore one should be wary of any claim to represent an exterior world, and in particular that they might embody the verbal acts of subordinate social figures. But the example of Bécassine suggests that literary critics (and historians) should also recognize the possibility that the oral voices have manifold ways of influencing the written record, which might reveal something about the cultural transactions between masters and servants.

The Servant-Storyteller confronts the "Silenced Servant"

These texts are all the more valuable because the audible presence of female servants in the folklore record, albeit mediated by male folklorists, is in contrast with their overwhelming silence in the historical record. While the storytelling servant is a longstanding literary trope, in the last few decades the mute servant has become a historical trope. But to understand this we must turn to the history of the history of servants.

Although in all documented periods servants were among the most numerous occupational groups, they were largely ignored, if not actively disdained, by historians before the late twentieth century.[53] As their labour was "unproductive" it did not interest economic historians; as servants were more or less absent from the heroic history of organized labour — unions, political organization, strikes and revolutions — they did not interest labour historians. Indeed there was a feeling, articulated both within labour movements and by their historians, that servants were potential traitors to the cause. Service itself was seen as an archaic social relationship: the personalized form of dominance and deference were a hang-over from Old Regime and therefore not worthy of study when compared to the future-pointing contractual and class-forming relations between capital and labour. All of these assumptions are contestable but they can be found in the scholarship. Last but not least service was neglected because, by the nineteenth-century, the sector was dominated by women, poor women at that, whose history had until then been doubly sidelined. It was only in the late seventies, and simultaneously in Britain, the USA and France, that feminist historians and practitioners of history from below set out to mend this neglect and restore the servant's experience to the historical record.

These pioneers of the history of domestic service in the seventies were, however, stymied at every turn by the lack of servant-authored documents. Inevitably they turned to sources in which servants were not subjects but the objects of others' concern, authority, benevolence, lust… Conduct literature aimed at employers — and occasionally at servants themselves — has proved a key resource, as have judicial, hospital and philanthropic records. Additionally, historians of domestic service have relied much more on literary sources than is usual. Eponymous servant heroines — such as Alphonse de Lamartine's *Geneviève, histoire d'une servante* (1850), the Goncourt brothers' *Germinie Lacerteux* (1864), Felicité from Gustave Flaubert's "Un coeur simple" (1877),

Célestine from Octave Mirbeau's *Le journal d'une femme de chambre* (1900) and of course the cartoon *Bécassine* — have of necessity taken the place of the autobiographical narratives which are available to historians of other occupational groups. But however refined their negative capability, these male authors had no direct experience of service themselves, except as employers.

Historians faced with this unequal representation have responded in different ways. One response is exemplified by Claude Petitfrère who made the imagination of the served his subject:

> We have sought to discover what functions were expected of servants, what qualities were most frequently ascribed to them, what vicious tendencies they were accused of, what feelings, or even what fantasies, they aroused. By reconstructing the archetype of the servant, we have strived to write the history of the masters' subjectivity as much as of the subordinates' objectivity.[54]

Servants were "other", "[t]heir bodies, clothes, laughter, taste, smell, courtship, and language were all evoked as sites of class differentiation".[55] Thus the servant as object became a means to explore the mental world of the servant-employing classes. The servant provides the contrast with which to illuminate the bourgeois home, bourgeois childhood, bourgeois sexuality, cleanliness, savings, church-going… The fears and fantasies engendered by the servant might tell us little about actual servants, but that does not mean they were irrelevant to the latter. The obsession with the servant as thief is very marked among nineteenth-century French moralists, even though court records show that actual examples of criminal servants were rare; still, this irrational fear of domestic crime governed aspects of the relationship between servants and masters.

Another tactic has been, in the absence of servants' words, to chart their actions. Servants, recruited from the countryside, migrated to the cities where they were increasingly integrated into the urban economy. The "venturesome" female migrant "was a crucial link between the traditional agricultural societies from which most servants came and the modern urban societies which they were helping to create".[56] Going into service might not have been much of a choice, but there was still an element of choice and it was one exercised by hundreds of thousands of young women. Service was not only a geographical escape from the limitations of rural society, it also offered the potential of social mobility. Useful skills might be learnt in service, and useful savings might enable servants to set themselves up in urban, aspirant careers such as shopkeepers or restaurateurs. Both skills and savings made them attractive marriage partners. As Leslie Page Moch has recently shown, Breton servants in Paris were more likely to marry up the social ladder than fellow migrants of the same class and gender.[57] Service was a transitional occupation that enabled women to enter the modern, urban workforce. In this historiography, servants learnt less about deference than about positive bourgeois values such as respectability and thrift. Whether she returned to her village or married into the urban population, the servant was a culture broker, a missionary for consumerism and contraception among peasant populations.

This portrayal of service as a modernizing force relies on a model of culture and knowledge that assumes it flows from centre to periphery and from high to low. Nineteenth-century authors likewise assumed that servants were culture brokers, but they worried that the flow was in the opposite direction, from the countryside to the city, from the sixth floor garret to the nursery. The multiple mechanisms devised to stifle the servant and

keep her in her place — legal disqualifications, uniforms, unbroken working hours, separate living quarters — arose from a fear that she was too loquacious and that her words had power — if not over the master then over his children. Servants, if one is to judge by their representation in conduct literature, ruled children with terror and treats, undermining bourgeois self-discipline. Servants sabotaged bourgeois rationality with their superstitions and country proverbs. (Servants' more overt religiosity could fall under this same rubric.) They depraved bourgeois children with their animal sexuality; as Balzac warned, "A mother brings up her daughter correctly, nestles her under her wing for seventeen years, and in a single hour a maid can destroy this long and tedious undertaking with just a word or even a single gesture!"[58] Servants' very language was infectious. Children would pick up bad speech habits, an accent, a dialect, even a different language. We have already seen this effect at work: Wentworth Webster had difficulty in expressing himself in Basque, but his children were fluent in the language, having learnt it from servants. Webster personally did not object to this brokerage, but some contemporaries were more hostile. The servant was a cultural, perhaps even an ethnic other, an alien fifth column sapping the foundations of the social order.

In British conduct manuals and pedagogy, this fear coalesced around the figure of the servant storyteller. From John Locke to Maria Edgeworth (with nods to Rousseau and echoes of classical authors), servants were portrayed as purveyors of fear and ignorance.[59] The British reading public was urged to prevent their children from indulging in her tales of fairies and bogeymen: as the Edgeworths expressed it, taking issue with the more indulgent poetry of Mark Akenside, "No prudent mother will ever imitate this eloquent village matron, nor will she permit any beldame in the nursery to conjure up these sublime shapes and to quell the hearts of her children with these grateful terrors."[60] Maria Edgeworth and Hannah More were at the forefront of a campaign to wrest the imaginative formation of children away from servants and entrust it to mothers. At the same time the latter worked to improve the culture of servants, providing them with moralizing tracts to replace their credulities. Conduct literature taught that the education of servants was the proper task of employers, just as much as the education of their own children.

This campaign was undermined, however, by the simultaneous celebration of the servant storyteller as purveyor of cultural continuity in revolutionary times, as the sibyl of folk wisdom, as the inspiration for vernacular cultural revival, and as the authentic voice of the people in a democratic age.[61] Even domestic reformers held ambiguous views about her relative vices and virtues. And it was undermined by children's own preferences for the kitchen over the schoolroom. Archibald Sayce, whom we last met as one of Webster's correspondents, recalled in his memoirs how a Welsh servant had a brother who was a fairy changeling. "I still instinctively avoid crossing a 'fairy-ring,' a relic of my early teaching that by so doing I should put myself in the power of the fairies and be carried off to another world."[62] For Locke or More this might have been evidence of the danger of "bug-bear thoughts", but Sayce himself did not argue he had suffered irreparable harm from this exposure to servants' superstitious narratives. On the contrary, as folklore, they had become a fit subject for intellectual enquiry.

The storytelling servant is a less central character in French novels and memoirs of the nineteenth century than British ones, though she is still present. At the end of *Sylvie* (1854), a fictionalized exploration of his

own childhood, Gérard de Nerval appended a chapter on "The Songs and Legends of the Valois" which opens: "Each time my mind returns to my memoires of the province of the Valois, I recall with delight the songs and stories that cradled my earliest days. My uncle's house was filled to the rafters with sweet-sounding voices, and those servants that followed us to Paris were constantly singing the merry ballads of their youth."[63] Nerval's romantic enthusiasm would be very influential on the following generation who collected folktales and ballads from servants and others.[64]

Nor does French conduct literature put the same emphasis on servants' storytelling, though the injunction not to leave the education of children to servants is omnipresent. "How can we leave such an essential subject to inattentive, boorish and sometimes even depraved servants?" asked rhetorically Pierre-Joseph Boudier de Villemert.[65] More than a hundred years later the Belgian educationalist Marie du Caju would repeat that one should not leave "one's children with the servants whose bad example might have the most pernicious inflence: besides, because servants' education is so poor both their language and manners are frequently vulgar, which children unconsciously imitate."[66] In the francophone literature the servant's "langue" drew more opprobrium than her "parole".

Yet here too we find ambiguity: the same writer who depicted the servant as an enemy within might on other occasions honour her cultural otherness. Alphonse Daudet, reflecting on the behaviour of wetnurses, warned:

> this savage that you have brought home, and who seems so strange and out of place among the refinements of a Parisian salon, with her rough voice, her incomprehensible patois, her strong aroma of the stable and the hay; you can wash her hide all you like, you can teach her a little French, some notions of cleanliness and proper dress: and yet within any nurse – however dainty, however polished — the brute Burgundian or Morvandelle peasant is always and at any moment ready to reappear. Under your roof, in your home, she is still a peasant, an enemy...[67]

But the same Alphonse Daudet recalled his family's servant "Annou" (Anne Trinquier) with huge affection, not least because she told him stories of her home village Bezouce in her native Occitan. Daudet had been nursed and then cared for by Anne Trinquier's family in Bezouce until the age of six, and it was there that he claimed to have "communed with the people, I experienced their life, their pleasures, their songs, their legends." When in 1855, under the influence of Mistral's *Félibrige*, Daudet attempted to write Occitan verse, it was to Annou that he turned: "Her peasant vocabulary, so rich and varied in tone, provided me with sounds and images".[68]

The terror inspired in Daudet by the unlikely figure of the Morvandelle wetnurse illustrates a recurrent theme in nineteenth-century literature: through service two warring nations, sundered by culture if not by race, met in one house. The imposition of deference arose out of an expectation of defiance, that the servant would bring the class war home. Worse, because her culture was more vibrant, more physical, more attractive, the children of the house would turn traitor against their own kind. She had to be silenced, and with even greater urgency in the nineteenth century because the bourgeois household possessed fewer resources for maintaining status than its aristocratic forebear, and so relied on harsher discipline. Therein lies the explanation for the

absence of servants' voices in the archival record, they had been crushed. However, such imposed mutism raises its own historical conundrums. A recurrent question among historians of social hierarchy is whether imposed deference can become engrained, reflexive, creating a subject class who accepted their subordination and saw it as no more than natural. Or did a show of deference mask undimmed but covert defiance? And if servants were bowed but not broken, did their "true" feelings exist as anything more than unvoiced and inchoate desires, or was there a subterranean shared transcript of revenge, rebellion and usurpation that might, should the circumstances arise, become the script for servants' collective action? What resources did servants possess to devise such a transcript? Although we have lots of condemnations (and a few eulogies) of the servants' proverbs, prayers, superstitions and fairy legends, the manuals do not provide much detail about the kinds of stories and practices that enabled servants to assert their own, independent identity. Had they carried a culture of defiance with them from their rural homes, or was there a specific servant occupational culture?

It should be clear by now that stories such as those told by Stephana Hirigaray might be of some help to historians of domestic service. They could address some of the puzzles that bedevil this field of enquiry. For example, and this question underlies much of the literature on the deference/defiance polarization, when did service cease to carry overtones of feudal relations and become subject to the cash nexus? Was servant migration more a flight from the countryside than the lure of the towns? Did servants sever relations with home as they started on the urban ladder of social mobility? What connections did they form with other servants? What cultural lessons did they learn from their employers? Was there a distinct occupational culture, shared by servants among themselves, linking generations and regions? Where the absence of "sources *vécues*" has resulted in speculation, folkloric evidence may assist.

Intimations: Servants have their Say

It is not, however, that easy to bend what servants had to say to the historiographical agenda, as will be evident from the following summary of the story of "Louse and Flea", told by Françoise Vaudin in Montiers-sur-Saulx, and sent by Emmanuel Cosquin to Jacob Grimm in 1862. One day Louse and Flea went gleaning together, but as the rain approached Louse told Flea, as she could go fastest, to go home and make "gaillées" (a local type of cake). Flea jumps off home, puts the cauldron on the fire, but while stirring she (flea is feminine) falls in and drowns. A little while later the drenched Louse arrives home, demanding his cakes. When there is no answer he goes to fish one out of the cauldron for himself, but instead of biting into a cake he bites Flea's body. "Ah, what a disaster. Flea has bitten the dust? What am I to do? I cannot stay here, I'm off." First he passes a shutter in the street "Val-Derrière", which asks him where he is going. Louse explains that Flea is dead: in which case, the shutter announces, "I'm going to knock". Next Louse passes the cockerel at Father Vaudin's who, when he hears the news, says he's going to crow. Louse has a series of further encounters — with the manure pile outside Loriche's place (which dances), with a woman carrying oil out of Monsieur Sourdat's house (who smashes her jugs), and finally with the village baker, Father Quentin, who sticks his bread shovel up Louse's arse.[69]

This kind of cumulative tale was (and is) primarily told to amuse children. It is not, on the face of it, a likely source for the social history of servants. However, it is in Françoise Vaudin's own voice: Cosquin recorded it in the langue d'oïl dialect of her village, one of only two texts in his collection of more than eighty that makes extensive use of dialect. It was also in her own language register: she employed the word "cû" for "arse", which Cosquin was willing to record in its dialect form but unwilling to spell out in the accompanying French translation. The use of dialect in print carries contradictory connotations. To judge by household manuals, the hostility of employers to anything that smacked of the popular tongue was more pronounced in France than in Britain. The Trinquiers, for example, were forbidden by Daudet père to use their native Occitan when conversing with young Alphonse. Nothing, therefore, more clearly labelled the servant's tale as "low" than this dialectal presentation. On the other hand, for linguists like Cosquin, and Grimm, dialects were of great historical interest; dialects were "rooted", enabling the speaker to make claims on the past and on their place in the world. Vaudin was using the language of her forebears and this too carried connotations. We certainly should not assume that that she spoke dialect because that was all she knew. Lorrainer peasants of her generation were familiar with standard French and used it when the situation demanded. They could also switch from French to dialect to achieve particular effects, for instance in dialect carols when the angels encounter the shepherds, or in riddle games. Even in peasant society, dialect was thought more suitable for certain kinds of talk — for humour, for grosser human functions, and for airing purely local concerns.[70] Vaudin deliberately chose this language for its comic, unconstrained potential, when compared (and the comparison was necessary for the effect) with schoolbook French. Swapping language codes carried meaning, and could be used to create a sense of "us" and "them", an in-group of locals and social equals and an out-group who, though they claim social distinction, were nevertheless *étrinjeux* (strangers).[71] By telling the story in dialect Vaudin was including the young nephew of her employer in her in-group. He not only heard, he understood, so he belonged.

Use of patois was only one of several ways whereby Françoise Vaudin demonstrated that she had not been deracinated or acculturated. The story starts with an assertion of collective customary rights over the property of landowners like her employers: gleaning. The topography of the tale is clearly that of the village, and specifically the *quartier* in which she grew up. Louse runs down familiar streets and passes the homes of named villagers, including that of Vaudin's own father. Even the cakes that Flea makes were local specialities. These elements are the result of the storyteller's choices: Françoise Vaudin wanted to locate the tale in Montiers, in her own past and in that of her village as a collective. Father Quentin the baker was the last operator of the seigneurial bread baking monopoly before it was abolished in the Revolution. As this happened when Françoise was only one-year-old, she was not relying on her own memories but on those of the wider community. Her access to this knowledge made her a part of that community. Through all these references she was asserting her continuing familial and communal attachments.[72]

The *Contes populaires de la Lorraine* probably contains more tales told by Françoise Vaudin, but as Cosquin did not name his informants it is impossible to tell. One might interpret this as another example of silencing the servant, this time by appropriating her culture. It was, after all, Cosquin's name that appeared on the cover: Vaudin was not named once in either volume. He felt entitled to do this because, according to the precepts of the day, tales were not the intellectual property of their narrators but the communal property of all.

The published title ascribed the stories neither to occupational group or individual storytellers, rather these were Lorrainer tales, a collective inheritance that was undivided by social class. Vaudin's narration offered some justification for such a view; she had included Cosquin in the moral community of Montiers-sur-Saulx. Why she might have wished to do so, and why he wished to assert those rights by publishing the story, are matters to which we will return. Yet even at the time Cosquin's editorial practice was becoming outmoded. His contemporaries understood that who told a tale mattered for its interpretation. Paul Sébillot, for instance, always recorded the name of the narrator, and usually other personal details too. Although he started off from a sub-romantic intellectual position, in which oral culture was a collective and unchanging inheritance from the distant past, as a consequence of recording multiple narrators Sébillot shifted towards a socio-psychological interpretation of folktales, in which they were particular expression of a distinct personality (the teller's) communicating in a particular moment and social context. The strong correlation between Vincente Béquet's personality and her repertoire of tales helped him towards this insight.

According to Sébillot, Béquet was so closely associated with the family she served that she was known in their small town as Vincente Sébillot. Other female servants in Matignon were likewise known by the surnames of their masters rather than their own. Vincente's mother had served the Sébillot family before her, and she would serve two generations in her turn. Although the Sébillots were committed Republicans, Paul celebrated this ancien-régime-style fidelity in exactly the same terms as those used by the royalist Cosquin.[73] The enduring bond between the Béquets and the Sébillots naturalized the social hierarchy and created a powerful sense of continuity, rooting the radical doctor's household in the landscape. Vincente Béquet was nurse to one generation of Sébillots while watching over the deathbed of another. Her example would seem to confirm the historiographical model of the servant who abnegates her own personality to identify completely with the house and the family of her employer. However, we will get a different impression of her from her tales.

One of these, entitled "The Sorcerer", she considered a true story which had been told to her by her grandfather: "He was not a man to tell a lie, and here's the account that he repeated to us a hundred and one times." During the dark days of the Revolution, when food was rare and poor folks suffered, a man dressed in the "manner of a *monsieur*" came to the farmyard of her grandmother and demanded lodging "or you'll be sorry". Her grandmother, from Christian charity rather than because of his threats, offered him a place in the stable, which the stranger accepted, but he insisted on putting a parcel of books he carried in a chest, and when it was locked he pocketed the key. One day Béquet's grandmother complained she had no flour because there was no wind to turn the mill. The stranger offered to accompany her husband to the mill, and even though there was still no wind, he insisted that the wheat be put in the hopper. Then he lay down under the sails and as long as he stayed there the mill ground the grain. When her grandmother heard this she was scared, fearing she was lodging the Devil. She went to the priest who came to perform an exorcism. The stranger left and never returned, but when they opened the chest they found it contained *Le Petit Albert*, a well-known book of magic.[74]

Although a very different genre of narrative to Vaudin's "Louse and Flea", this story does some of the same work. Her Matignon neighbours may have considered Béquet a member of the Sébillot household but by naming her grandparents and recalling their virtues she was able to reassert her own family identity. The threat

to her family is not just a stranger by geography but a stranger by class, a "monsieur". His behaviour is at odds with the Christian values of her community, and his knowledge and power are inherently suspect. Thus Béquet puts some narrative distance between herself and the family of "monsieurs", Republicans and agents of book knowledge, by whom she was employed.

This memorat is fairly typical of the kind of supernatural stories that circulated in Brittany in this period, what the schoolboy Sébillot would have called "peurées" (scaries). But it is not typical of Béquet's repertoire as a whole; in general she had a marked preference for the comic, which Sébillot implied was very much in keeping with her character. One of these funny stories concerned a woman who brought up her daughter so that she had never seen a man, or knew what one was. (This might seem a far-fetched premise, but in this coastal region of Brittany many men were away for long periods at sea, and fishing as an occupation had such a high level of mortality that women substantially outnumbered men on shore even when the fleet was in.) One day though, the adolescent girl did observe a procession in which there happened to be some men. She asked her mother what they were. ""Daughter, they're a sort of animal, ignore them.' 'Mother, those animals there, I'd really like one"".[75]

This story reflects the self-confidence (and occasional gender chauvinism) of female narrators in coastal Brittany. As we have already seen in the story of "The Sorcerer", women were the decision-makers on land; although Béquet learnt the story from her grandfather, nonetheless it was her grandmother who decided whether to receive guests, and when wheat needed to be milled. The tale also recalls the worries of pedagogues that servants' earthy stories would soil the minds of the young bourgeois, introducing notions of sexuality where purity had reigned before. Some such notion had marked Sébillot's youth when he was not allowed to play with other village boys for fear of what such social mixing might lead to. He therefore envied what he conceived to have been Béquet's more free-and-easy childhood spent not in school but out on the moors with the other village children, telling stories and setting bird-traps when they were supposed to be guarding the animals. He also appreciated both her willingness to speak her mind and the manner in which she did so, including her dialect form of speech. When, for instance, she saw seminary students in town she announced "Le monde est-i' fainiant, i's'font tous prêt'es" (The world's that lazy that everyone's become priests).

Béquet's humour had other targets than the clergy. In the story "Le Fin Larron" (ATU 1525 "The Master Thief") the poor widow's son gets one over not only on the priest but also the seigneur and then over the king. In the hands of other narrators ATU 1525 can become an explicit statement of class conflict: the story of "Clever Jack" told by a London workhouse boy to Henry Mayhew is an example.[76] Béquet's version appears to have been told more for the laughs, but nonetheless these are clearly tales of how the poor can triumph over the rich through duplicity. The clever thief's career starts with a trick he plays on his mother. When she refuses to accept his chosen path, she goes to consult the Virgin Mary. The boy runs to the church before her, hides behind the statue, and when his mother asks the Virgin what profession her son should follow, he answers "thief". His first act of larceny is to steal the seigneur's wife's dress, then he steals a farmer's horses, and finally he steals the bread out of the baker's oven. Having established his reputation as a clever and able young man in the country (there is no suggestion that his occupation is disreputable) he decides to try his hand at court. He first steals the

king's sheets from his bed and then his horse from under him. The king is quite tolerant of these initial escapades but gets irritated by being constantly bested, and orders the clever thief to be killed. The thief, by a trick, kills the executioner, and then gets back in the king's good books by delivering him a troublesome priest in a sack. Finally the king, recognizing that the thief is cleverer and more daring than all his courtiers, offers to make him his son-in-law if he succeeds in carrying off his daughter unnoticed. The thief wins this bet by disguising himself as a kitchen boy (a servant) called "La Sauce". When, in the night, the princess calls out that the sauce has got hold of her, that the sauce is choking her, her parents simply tell her that it is her own fault for eating so much. The thief becomes a prince, and his mother comes to live in the palace, another nod towards enduring kinship loyalties.[77]

In this story, as in so many other folktales, stealing from the rich, even when employed as their servant, is not depicted as in any way reprehensible, on the contrary duplicity is evidence of a superior intelligence. The fear that male servants threatened the virtue of nice young girls is fully confirmed, but rather than leading to punishment the thief's ravishment of the greedy princess leads to social elevation. In comic stories of this kind the social order exists to abuse and invert. Although by no means a revolutionary text, this was not the kind of improving story that Hannah More thought suitable for children. The young Sébillot, however, lapped it up.

An air of the servant as feudal retainer hangs around Françoise Vaudin and Vincente Béquet: Augustine Chevance, the maid employed by Paul Sébillot in the summer of 1896, was representative of the new experience of service in the nineteenth century. She was a long-distance, linguistically foreign migrant employed on a short-term contract; she does not resemble the literary archetype of Mother Goose. Yet in crude numerical terms she was responsible for more recorded narratives than any of the servants we have encountered so far. With two exceptions — one of them a cumulative tale similar to "Louse and Flea" — the twenty-one stories she told Paul Sébillot's son were all "peurées", short moralizing narratives of supernatural encounters with ghosts and demons which she herself apparently accepted as factual. They are precisely the kind of nightmare-inducing tales that pedagogues had warned against. And she explicitly used them to control her charge, finding he was more tractable when he was listening. The following summary offers a typical example of the genre. A farmer and his wife whose affairs were not prospering became freemasons and worshipped the devil. Every evening the devil in the form of a baby would bring them a purse of money, and the farmer's wife would take him on her knee and feed him gruel. The farm servants observed this through the floorboards, and the devil threatened to blind them. The farmer's wife interceded on their behalf and the servants fled. The pair lived well and long, but when they died their souls went to hell.[78] Here servants are the representatives of Christian morality, testifying against the wickedness of their employers. Although not all of Chevance's tales depict such a clear cut alignment between social inferiority and moral virtue, "monsieurs" always signalled danger in her imaginative world (just as they did in Béquet's). They were the devil in disguise.

The tales described so far give the impression that servants retained some cultural resources which were separate from, and provided the means to articulate opposition to, the culture of their masters. These might be only the "small arms of the class war" but they still undermine assertions of the hegemony of bourgeois expectations. Servants not only possessed a different set of norms, and a contradictory set of ambitions to those expected by the master, they were able to voice them in the master's home. They brought their different language

— Basque, Breton or dialect — into the house, and with it their customs and superstitions. In literature, superstition is the "*sine qua non* of any extended servant characterization": according to Bruce Robbins, it is "the necessary camouflage for a popular distrust of the legal order; ghosts are called in to enforce an oppositional code of justice".[79] Robbins is here referring only to fictional servants as they appear in Le Fanu's and Mrs Gaskell's short stories, but on the evidence of Stephana Hirigaray and Augustine Chevance, real servants narrated ghost stories to achieve exactly the same effect.

The servants' continuing connections with their home and their kin were constantly on display. Whether these relationships were in reality in such good repair is less important than what servants wished to communicate when with their masters. (This does not mean, to recall another familiar literary type, that servants did not put on acquired bourgeois airs when visiting home: they had different things to communicate in different contexts.) They remained part of a community that extended beyond the house, and they could bring its judgements inside. Whether Paul Sébillot was a freemason I have not been able to establish, but he certainly knew many freemasons through his political and scientific connections (his brother-in-law, employer and sometime landlord, Yves Guyot, was a prominent member of the flagrantly anticlerical Lodge *Le matérialisme scientifique*) and shared the views associated with them. No doubt Augustine Chevance's accusations of Masonic Satanism raised no more than smile from Sébillot; nonetheless he had been told what she thought, albeit wrapped in the unobjectionable insulation of a traditional tale.

Readers may recognize similarities with slave narratives. Servants, too, use tales to communicate their interpretation of "good masters", and their understanding of proper relations between them. It may seem contradictory for slaves to both assert paternalist obligations while at the same time indicating their cultural autonomy, but stories are by their nature protean, conveying different messages to different audiences through minor details of performance, so that they might simultaneously communicate "resistance in accommodation and accommodation in resistance", in Genovese's famous formulation.[80] They could be playful, not to be taken seriously, but at the same time enabling servants to mock their masters. By subverting the latter's position within the family, servants might bend them to their will. Tales were "an indirect or disguised message to the powerful".[81]

However, there is this difference, that while "Brer Rabbit" and "Anansi" stories are specifically tied to the experience of slavery, the tales told by these servants circulated in many other contexts as well. The "Cinderella" tale may once have been given voice to the experience of service in the way that the animal fable was implicitly connected to the experience of slavery, but that had ceased to be the case by the time Hirigaray's version was recorded, as by then Cinderella existed in multiple books, plays, prints... Undoubtedly servants brought narratives from their own home into their masters' house, that is from an agrarian or "peasant" context into a bourgeois culture, in the same way that house slaves brought "Brer Rabbit" and company into "the big house". However, the situation is not an exact parallel because servants' stories were not unique to subaltern populations. Some servants' narratives were acquired from church, from school, even from print sources: they circulated among many social groups, not just the peasantry. In the case of servants neither storytelling as a practice nor specific narrative genres can be thought of as the exclusive cultural property of the subordinate.

The servants' repertoires considered above do not amount to a servant-specific occupational counter-culture. There are commonalties between the repertoires examined here, but not sufficient to form a specific genre or a coherent cycle of narratives. The exercise of common right invoked by Vaudin also plays a role in the stories of Béquet and Chevance, drawing attention to the imperatives of a moral economy in which "mutual accommodation" between unequal social players should be met. Scatological humour was deployed by Hirigaray, Vaudin and Béquet to subvert claims to social distinction, just as it was in the *Life of Aesop*. Hirigaray and Chevance even share the motif of the vampire daily sucking the life-force out of the hero — a lesson to masters on the limits of exploitation, or "resistance in accommodation". But there are also marked differences between these women's tales. Vaudin's repertoire is too small to draw clear conclusions, but Béquet told her stories primarily to amuse while Chevance's narratives gave the shivers. Hirigaray told both scary and funny stories, but the core of her repertoire were "rise" stories of ambition in which a low-born hero ascends the social ladder. All reflect on some aspect of the master-servant relationship, but they cannot be made to speak for the servant class as an undifferentiated whole. Instead these women emerge through their performance choices as distinct personalities in their own right, not a minor finding given the urgings of conduct literature to crush any signs of servant individuality.

For Scott, "Brer Rabbit" stories were a muffled or disguised version of a hidden transcript of overt defiance which, for fear of retribution, could only be articulated by the subordinate in "sequestered places", away from the eyes and ears of the powerful. This is an obstacle in the application of his argument to servants' tales. It is not clear what sequestered places were available to female servants. They all left a farming household at a young age, exchanging one patriarchal domain for another. Not just conduct manuals but the full force of the law insisted on framing service as a continuation of domesticity, with the master assuming a parental role. Subservience was not a novelty for them; it was translated from one household, one relationship, to another. Servants' counter-insistence on the contractual basis of their relationship was already a form of resistance. In this case, and I suspect many others, it was the worker rather than the bourgeois who actively pursued cash payment as the "sole nexus of man to man" precisely to escape claims to patriarchal authority.[82] Most of the storytelling women considered here were single servants in small households, or one of only a handful. But even where many served together, a servants' hall was no sequestered place either but another arena of power relationships based on status, gender and seniority. Maids may have spoken differently about their masters there than above stairs, but they remained on their guard about what, and how, one communicated to whom.

Women and children, usually the subordinate members of agrarian societies, were necessarily practiced in using fictions to mediate tensions within the hierarchies of the household. They had no need to develop new arts of disguise when speaking to masters, they brought them with them from the experience of family life.[83] The calculation of benefits, the game-based metaphors that underpin the social science language of "strategy", "project" and "agency", can reveal much about household relations, particularly when, as on a farm, the unit of reproduction was also the unit of production, controlling access to all resources. But the family was a field of affective relationships as well as relations of power, and storytelling was also a means of creating and maintaining affective relationships. This practice too could transfer between sites of patriarchal power, further complicating any straightforward reading of servants' narratives as a rebracketing of the domination/resistance equilibrium.

When Françoise Vaudin told Emmanuel Cosquin the story of "Louse and Flea" she was speaking of, and from, her community of origin. In language and register she was establishing her autonomy from the culture of her masters. But she was including the Cosquin within her community. An affective relationship was being created, one that clearly mattered to the young master. It is no great stretch to interpret such actions as strategic — the servant was forming alliances within the household that might be of mutual benefit. This is a common plot motif in fiction: think of how Anfisa mobilizes her relationship with the Prozorovas in Chekhov's *The Three Sisters*.[84] Vaudin's identity as a beloved aged retainer also meant that she kept her place in the Simonet household (now overseen by the son of her original employer) after her working life was over; indeed in her last years she had a servant of her own! Affective relations might also serve the interests of masters on occasions, for instance when they wanted to borrow money from their servants (a surprisingly common occurrence). Yet affective relationships can generate behaviours that undercut exclusive calculations of interest.

They may help account for the similarity in the mechanism by which both slaves' and servants' tales entered the print record. Children brought up by or among slaves retained a nostalgia for their stories which led them to seek out such narratives and record them when they reached adulthood. The role of masters in putting both the slave's and the servant's tale into the public domain of print is likewise difficult to square with the notion of a "hidden transcript". None of the masters considered here were attempting to silence the servant-storyteller; on the contrary they were encouraging her. Alphonse Daudet and Paul Sébillot did not want their nurses to abnegate their ties of kinship, they actively solicited stories about their home villages. Storytelling might even be an expected duty of servanthood; Bladé's grandmother instructed her servants to amuse the infant heir of the house. This practice may have run counter to the advice dished up in domestic manuals but then it is difficult to assess whether conduct literature shaped actual practice or was ignored as the rantings of monomaniacs. What is clear is that some masters flouted the advice and invested the servant's word with cultural significance. Yes, the storytelling servant was defiant and gave every appearance of enjoying her ability to "speak truth to power", however momentary. She celebrated the servant who stole from, killed and took the place of her master. She undermined the master's pretensions and even accused him of crimes, under the guise of fiction. Yet some masters at least were avid to hear such stories of their proximate degradation. Storytelling was a moment of shared pleasure that undercut social distinctions even as it articulated them.

Intimacies: Affairs between Servants and Masters

The relationships between servants and masters, and between servants and children, were power relationships that had to be negotiated. But they could also be emotional relationships, and when trying to understand how and why oral culture reached print at the end of the nineteenth century, the affective associations of folklore also need to be understood. This can be illustrated through the histories of two further folklorists, Achille Millien and Félix Arnaudin. As with the other French folklorists of the Third Republic, their awareness of oral culture came through their interactions with female domestic servants. However, their involvement with servants was more intimate than those considered so far.

An only child, Achille Millien (Beaumont-la-Ferrière, Nièvre, 1838 – Beaumont-la-Ferrière, 1927) was born into the same generation and, on his father's side, the same rural notability as the other folklorists mentioned above.[85] His uncles and cousins were notaries, his father was a tax-collector and successful land speculator. His early experiences also followed a familiar pattern: the rupture of boarding school succeeded by expectations of a legal career. However, the death of father when he was only twenty-one, and his succession to a respectable fortune, enabled Millien to pursue the alternative path of literary fame. He became a moderately well-known poet in the 1860s.

His mother, Anne Boutheau, came from a different class. An illiterate servant from a peasant family, she had been his father's housekeeper. Achille was the outcome of an illicit union; he was only legitimized in 1842 when his parents married. Although the trajectory of Millien's career was largely determined by his father, his emotional attachments were on his mother's side, and the world which she represented in his imagination. The character of his muse, which constantly emphasised the presence of past and the vestiges of tradition in contemporary life, centred on the village, the fields and the woods. One gets a fair idea of his inspirations from the titles of some of his poetry collections: *La Moisson* ("The Harvest", 1860), *Chants agrestes* ("Bucolic Songs", 1862), *Légendes d'aujourdhui* ("Legends of Today", 1870), *Chez nous* ('Down our Way', 1896)...

In addition to his poetry, Millien was probably the most assiduous folklorist of the Third Republic. Between 1877 and the late 1890s, he toured the whole department of the Nièvre collecting folk material in a series of planned campaigns. He noted over 900 prose narratives and 2,600 songs (the latter with the assistance of the musician Jean-Grégoire Pénavaire). However, although his tours took him far from home, he started his collection with the songs and tales of his immediate family and village neighbours. It was accompanying his mother on visits to local women in Beaumont that he first became aware of the existence of folk songs and stories; it was his mother's acquaintances in the village, such as Marie Moreau "La Balette", that would provide his first sources when he turned seriously to collecting.[86]

Folklore collecting was, for Millien, a salvage activity, a way of preserving the rural culture which was so crucial to his own identity, if only in the form of a literary museum. It was also an attempt to recover the domestic and feminine intimacy of his early years, to reunite cultures divided by class. Folklore, however, was not the first means he had employed to reproduce the circumstances of his childhood. In 1876, the year before he started collecting folksongs, a child was born to Marie Grémy, the daughter of a neighbouring farmer and the Millien family's servant. However, unlike his father, Achille refused to recognize the child, Céleste, as his own. Later in life he confided to a priest-friend that he could not be sure that the child was his. However, by comparing photographs of Céleste Grémy and Achille Millien, there can be little doubt about the genetic connection. The affair was a scandal: Marie was dismissed and Céleste sent to board with nuns from a very early age. There is a poignant letter in Millien's archives, dated 1878 and apparently written by Marie. The French is so broken as to be almost indecipherable, but the gist is her pleading with him to take her back again.[87] It is possible that it was this collapse of this relationship which led him to seek out folksongs and tales as an alternative means to re-enter his personal "land of lost content".

Céleste Grémy grew up and left the nunnery to become, in turn, maid-servant to a silk manufacturer in Indo-China. Before she left in 1901 she sent the first of what would be a series of letters to Millien with a request to let her see him:

> Please believe me, monsieur, perhaps you will never know what I have suffered and what I continue to suffer from the isolation in which you have left me... However, only the tiniest thing, an occasional word from you, would be all it took to satisfy me. My affection for you, does it matter so little to you that you would disdain it thus? How much this thought pains me.

Céleste Grémy's letters from Indo-China are long, detailed and, I suspect, quite deliberately literate, attempting to engage Millien's interest as a writer. (She also used some more obvious ploys to engineer a meeting, such as offering to bring him a Siamese cat.) At some point this letter-writing campaign paid off because by 1907 she was addressing Millien not as "monsieur" but as "Dear father".[88] At some point too, some relationship between Millien and Céleste's mother was renewed, as she was living in the Millien household in the 1920s. However, there were always people around Millien who wanted to deny or obstruct these relationships, either because they felt that as a regional treasure he should not be troubled with such scandalous associations, or because they had a financial interest in his property. Marie Grémy left the house a few months after Millien's death 1927, whether of her own free will or not is unclear: she ended up in the local asylum. Céleste Grémy did in fact inherit a third share in Millien's (much reduced) property, which she immediately offered to give up in favour of a museum to her father's memory; but problems with the co-inheritors, especially Céleste's bête-noire, Millien's god-daughter Germaine Bodichon, prevented this from happening.[89]

An even more striking example of folklore's intimate and erotic associations is provided by Félix Arnaudin (Labouheyre, Les Landes, 1844 – Labouheyre, 1921). Arnaudin was another son of the rural notability, though from a more precarious ascendancy than those considered so far: his father was the agent for the Pontex forge-masters at Labouheyre station. Arnaudin's childhood was spent among the sharecropping tenants of his parents, before he too was sent off to boarding school at Mont-de-Marsan.[90] Thereafter, however, Arnaudin's career petered out, and by the time he was thirty he was already writing about himself as someone whose time had come and gone, finding him wanting:

> I have no position, no fortune, and no strength to get one. I've no friends any more... Who will think of me? Now others are favoured who yesterday were only children to whom one paid no attention, but today are handsome and proud young men with a future, on the right track. They are welcomed, petted, admired, and life is good to them — because they walked upright and wanted to be *men according to the form*.[91]

These thoughts were brought on by a crisis, the apparent termination of his love affair with a young maid in the Arnaudin family's service, Marie Darlanne (Commensacq, Les Landes, 1856 -- Labouheyre, 1911). We can follow this relationship through Félix's diaries, although the volumes for some crucial periods are missing. Hence we do not know when Darlanne came to work for the Arnaudins, nor when the affair started, but by some later allusions we may deduce that the relationship became a sexual one in 1870, when she was fourteen. The diaries

only recommence four years later, when knowledge of the affair became semi-public. Both sets of parents disapproved: the Arnaudins feared for their social position; the Darlannes, one suspects, had planned that Marie's marriage would bring a son-in-law as male labour into the family (her father was a blacksmith but he had no sons). Both sides tried to separate the lovers, and Marie was forced to return to her parents' house. But neither would give up the other, and week after week Félix travelled up to forty kilometres at night over the moors for the chance of an assignation with Marie. After two years of these night visits, which had become the subject of gossip, the families seem to have relented, and Darlanne returned to the Arnaudin household, but still in the capacity of the servant. She remained there, as Arnaudin's housekeeper and mistress, until she died.

At its height the relationship between Arnaudin and Darlanne was a full-blown romantic love affair, with the complete plot of domineering patriarchs, secret assignations, go-betweens, love letters, and suicide threats. It was fed by their shared reading of such romantic classics as Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther* and, in particular, Lamartine's 1852 tale of love across the class divide *Graziella* (which, as one might anticipate, does not end happily for the lower-class woman). But while Arnaudin made full use of these literary authors to fashion his self-presentation in his diaries, he associated Darlanne with an oral, Occitan-speaking culture. One of the first surviving entries in his diary, when the threat that she would be sent away was most present, shows the intense connection between his love for Marie and the origin of his interest in folklore. This was in 1874, before he had started his career as a collector. Marie had come to his room at night to tell him that her father planned to send her away to Capbat, where her uncle lived:

> to Capbat, the lonely quarter. There her life will be laborious, but tranquil. There will be work in the fields, days passed cutting broom on the moor... then, in winter, the long evening wakes, the wakes spent spinning in a circle, telling legends and things from long ago... She will collect them for me, oh! the dream is too beautiful.[92]

His last written evocation of Darlanne, thirty-eight years later (1912, a year after her death), likewise associated her with his collecting habits. In a letter to a relative of one his informants, the singer Jennie Duverger, he wrote "A few days before the death of my poor Marie, [Jennie] came to give me some songs. They laughed together beside the fire!"[93] Over the intervening period Darlanne had been one of his most important informants, not only providing him with songs and sayings, but also introducing him to other singers and storytellers, and acting as arbiter of the reliability of their contributions.

Darlanne, in Arnaudin's romantic imagination, stood for more than herself: she was the embodiment of the landscape he loved, the Landes de Gascogne, the great flat sandy plain that stretched south of Bordeaux towards the Pyrenees. Arnaudin was a talented nature writer and knew well how to invoke the open skies, the horizon broken only by a lonely pine, or a shepherd on his stilts. He was also a landscape photographer, and indeed he is better known today for his photographs than as a folklorist.[94] But when he invoked "that sweet horizon" it was with a thought to Marie, because she lived in that direction. Her beauty made him think of the land, and vice-versa. So, for example, this diary entry for October 17, 1875: Arnaudin had walked the eight kilometres over the moors to reach her temporary home at Commensacq. He entered her room by the window at midnight, and opened the shutters again at 2:00am to leave: "the moon, reduced to a half, shone behind the heads

of the lofty pines: in that silent, luminous night, the stars shone around her; pale rays reached here and there to the ground. A picture. We watched this spectacle together in silence. Before these ineffable beauties of nature her own beauty seems to become more ideal".[95] This identification of Marie Darlanne with the land itself reached its climax on the occasions when he had sex with her (or to use his own terms, "possessed" her) under open skies.[96]

These invocations of lovers in a landscape were made all the more poignant for Arnaudin because his was quite literally a disappearing world. In his lifetime the moors where only a few shepherds and hunters wandered were transformed into one great man-made forest. Arnaudin loathed this blight and, if he did not actively seek to prevent the transformation, he did all he could to record the moors before the coming of the industrial pine. Photography was one part of this project, but it was not just visual, it was also about the culture of the shepherds and the small sharecroppers who used the moors, and in particular their Gascon language, Darlanne's language, which was disappearing almost as rapidly as the moor itself. The landscape was not just visual, it had a phonic form. Again this is a romantic trope; Lamartine in *Graziella* made the same associations between the visual and phonic landscape, as well as between the song of the fishermen and the body of the fisherman's daughter, desired by the hero. However, it is also true that the landscape was, for Arnaudin, alive with sounds: on his night excursions across the moors Arnaudin was guided by noises — the hunter whistling up his dogs, the shepherd playing his hand-hewn flute, a dance party on an isolated farmstead, the church bells, the birds calling by the ponds. Landscape, sound, song, legend, and the female body all merged into one and found their expression in folklore.[97]

One reading of these love affairs is as an abuse of the power that a bourgeois employer held over a young, female employee. This was a very common story in nineteenth-century France: the law protected the male abuser while the woman was abandoned to her fate, which all too often included infanticide, prostitution and prison. Millien and Arnaudin were not the worst offenders; they maintained some form of long-term relationship with Grémy and Darlanne. There is also some evidence that the women loved them and were not just their victims. However, in neither case was the man willing to cross the boundaries of class and marry his lover: their servants became their mistresses but never mistresses of their households. It would be fascinating to hear the women's verdicts on their masters' behaviour, if not in the form that allows us access to the men's versions of events — diaries, letters — then in the form that servants' habitually communicated with and commented on their employers — in songs, tales and proverbs. Unfortunately, it does not appear that the Millien folklore archives contain any contributions from Marie Grémy. Marie Darlanne's presence in the Arnaudin archive is probably much more substantial, but it is difficult to be certain as Arnaudin simply marked her contributions as 'M', a designation he also used for his mother's texts (a Freudian interpretation presents itself unwilled). Some of the material which has tentatively been assigned to her would provide a wonderfully satirical counterpoint to Arnaudin's idylls of rural labour, but this awaits further investigation.

It is customary in writing history to take an "objective" stance and not to condemn the behaviour of people in the past whose norms were different from those applicable in contemporary society. Millien and Arnaudin were not alone, far from it. But perhaps because I have spent so much time in their company, I cannot help being disappointed in them, and angry on behalf of the women and girls they abused. Yet their examples are

instructive because they reveal something about the motivations for folklore collecting in the nineteenth century more generally. I do not mean the opportunities for sexual gratification, though there is more to say on this. Rather, they demonstrate that it was not only servants who desired to transcend, or at least re-evaluate social distinctions through storytelling. Masters might also want to put aside the "artificial distinctions of society" (the term was a commonplace of nineteenth-century thinking) and communicate directly as human-being to human-being, without suspicion on the one hand, or disdain on the other. Rural notables had, in their youth, experienced a time when they "communed with the people" in Daudet's words. Through folklore collecting, they were attempting to rejoin this world.

This was not just an exercise in personal nostalgia. Folklore promised access to a mythic time when there were no classes, when the people were one and shared a common culture. There was a political dimension to publishing folklore. To do so either implicitly or explicitly revalorized popular culture, and proffered it as the basis of a renewed common culture in a more democratic age.

But there were always limits. Cécile Grémy's last letters to her father were filled with her attempts to find him a suitable servant.[98] Félix Arnaudin's last mention of his love for Marie Darlanne came in a letter to a friend, begging him to help get rid of the servant foisted on him by his sister-in-law, and arrange for someone more suitable instead.[99] Being served remained a central preoccupation for these bourgeois representatives. It never seems to have occurred to either of them that another way to overcome social divisions and (re-)discover a golden age of authentic relationships between the classes and the sexes was by hewing their own wood and drawing their own water!

Conclusion

These examples were not meant to overturn the existing historiography on servants. I accept that the realities of social power affected servants' lives more than most. Nowhere is this more obvious than in the means by which their words reached the public domain. It was the bourgeois folklorists who took their stories, gave them a title and canonic form. It was they who ascribed meaning to them, whether as evidence of pre-Christian mythology (in the case of Webster), proof of influence of an Oriental heritage (in the case of Cosquin), or as the basis for a regionalist cultural programme (in the case of Sébillot and Millien). Whatever financial or reputational benefits arose from publication accrued to the folklorist. Even those elements of presentation through which the folklorists' demonstrated their attention to the voice of the servant, such as their attempts to represent her dialect on the page, were double-edged, for in a dominant culture that placed high value on a standardized use of the national language, the servant's patois merely confirmed her marginality.

Bruce Robbins' conclusion to his study of the literary servant seems equally applicable in this case: "There is no place outside the power of the masters and their language where the truth of "the people" could be known in its purity."[100] This is because stories exchanged between servants and masters were told within a field of power relations. They could not, therefore, be a pure statement of an autonomous subaltern culture. However, if we consider the tales less as position statements of a calibrated resistance and more as invitations to enter into an

ongoing dialogue in which no one had the last word, one can perceive elements of the servant's contribution to that conversation. Stories were communications, and storytelling a means of moulding an unequal relationship so that these communications could take place. Of course we only have access to these in the manuscripts or printed works of male members of the bourgeoisie: what we possess are mediated texts. Nonetheless, they do bear some resemblance to servants' speech. The folklorists certainly had their own objectives in mind when they recorded servants' narratives, and these determined how the stories took written form. But Hirigaray, Vaudin, Béquet and Chevance are not ciphers or myths: the stories they told were in some sense their own.

Power was at stake in these communications, but so also was respect, appreciation, affection, love even. And even in terms of power relationships perhaps more was going on here than mere assertion and counter-assertion of social and cultural authority. Folklorists were frequently motivated by the myth of a simpler and more harmonious society in which all relationships were personal and authentic, not distorted by "artificial" social barriers; nostalgia for a feminine, dialect-speaking environment experienced as a child played a large part in this vision of what was "authentic" and what "artificial". The servant-employing classes had separated themselves through a learnt culture of social and linguistic distinction, seduced by courtly affectations and cosmopolitan fripperies, but, according to folklore theory, the "People" remained the guardians of the common culture. That common culture had bonded "the People" in a time before class divisions, it might so again. If "the People" was to become a reality in an age of mass politics, then elites would have to rediscover a shared language, and make it the basis for modern cultural production.

Of course such ambitions did not preclude others, nor do they prevent the servant's tale serving other discourses which shored up and naturalized claims to authority. The same master who wanted at one moment to overcome the barriers of condescension and mistrust might, at another, demand to be obeyed. Still, the storytelling space within the household was one where servants spoke and masters listened. Unequal in other ways, storytelling offered the possibility to resolve social tensions and to form more affective relationships. A masters could learn that a servant was, in Webster's words, his "equal", with her own thoughts, desires and expectations which warranted his attention. One might view the conversion of servants' oral stories into print as a flawed but still worthy attempt to transfer social reconciliation from the private to the public sphere.

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[1] Pierre Guiral and Guy Thuillier, *La Vie quotidienne des domestiques en France au XIXe siècle* (Paris, 1978), 14.

[2] Theresa McBride, *The Domestic Revolution: The Modernisation of Household Service in England and France, 1820-1920* (London, 1976), 10.

[3] Valérie Piette, *Domestiques et servantes. Des vies sous condition. Essai sur le travail domestique en Belgique au 19e siècle* (Brussels, 2000), 20.

[4] Anne Martin-Fugier, *La Place des bonnes. La domesticité féminine à Paris en 1900* (Paris, 2004 [1979]), 213.

[5] *Ibid* 199. Even on the evidence that Martin-Fugier produces herself this claim appears exaggerated, but more nuanced versions of this argument are put forward by others. For example, Sarah Maza argues that, in the eighteenth century, because servants were isolated from other workers, they had no choice but "to play the roles assigned to them by their employers": *Servants and Masters in Eighteenth-Century France: The Uses of Loyalty* (Princeton, 1983), 153-4.

[6] Historians such as Eugene Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York, 1974); and Charles Joyner, *Down by the River Side: A South Carolina Slave Community* (Urbana, 1984).

[7] See, for example, the stories of Anansi the trickster: Emily Zobel Marshall, *Anansi's Journey: A Story of Jamaican Cultural Resistance* (Kingston, 2011).

[8] James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven, 1990).

[9] *Moyens de former un bon domestique*, quoted in Claude Petitfrère, *L'Oeil du maître: maîtres et serviteurs, de l'époque classique au romantisme* (Brussels, 1986), 60.

[10] There is an extensive literature on slaves' (and black servants') storytelling in Southern literature: see Sarah Gilbreath Ford, *Tracing Southern Storytelling in Black and White* (Tuscaloosa, 2014).

[11] There is also an extensive recent literature on servants as sources and characters in British literature, from historians as well as literary scholars; for example, see Carolyn Steedman, "Servants and Their Relationship to the Unconscious," *Journal of British Studies* 42 (2003): 316-350. On Yeats' relationship with his uncle's housekeeper Mary Battle see Sean Heuston, *Modern Poetry and Ethnography: Yeats, Frost, Warren, Heaney, and the Poet as Anthropologist* (New York, 2011), chap. 1. On Dostoyevsky's relationship with Alena Frolovna see Linda Ivanits, *Dostoevsky and the Russian People* (Cambridge, 2008), 9-10, 148-151.

[12] See Graham Anderson, *Fairytales in the Ancient World* (London, 2000), and on Aesop in particular, Leslie Kurke, *Aesopic Conversations: Popular Tradition, Cultural Dialogue, and the Invention of Greek Prose* (Princeton, 2011).

[13] Dicken's nurses stories appear in "The Uncommercial Traveller," *All The Year Round*, 8 (1860). However, as Michael Slater has pointed out, "Master Uncommercial Traveller" is not a straightforward autobiographical representation, so we cannot ascribe these stories with certainty to his nurse, Mary Weller: "How Many Nurses had Charles Dickens? The Uncommercial Traveller and Dickensian Biography," *Prose Studies: History, Theory, Criticism* 10 (1987): 250-258.

[14] The largest contribution to Giuseppe Pitrè's collection of Sicilian folktales was provided by a former servant in the Pitrè household, Agatuzza Messia: Italo Calvino, *Italian Folk Tales* (London, 1980), xxiii.

[15] Lewis C. Seifert, *Fairy Tales, Sexuality and Gender in France, 1690-1715: Nostalgic Utopias* (Cambridge, 1996), 73-75.

[16] Elizabeth W. Harries, "Fairy Tales about Fairy Tales: Notes on Canon Formation," in Nancy L. Canepa (ed.) *Out of the Woods: The Origins of the Literary Fairy Tale in Italy and France* (Detroit, 1997), 159.

[17] On the influence of this imagery see: Ségolène Le Men, "Mother Goose Illustrated: From Perrault to Doré," *Poetics Today* 13 (1992): 17-39; Willem de Blécourt, "Fairy Grandmothers: Images of Storytelling Events in Nineteenth-Century Germany," *Revue électronique de littérature française* 4 (2010): 174-197.

[18] Yuri Druzhnikov, "Pushkin's Hallowed Nurse," in Yuri Druzhnikov, *Contemporary Russian Myths* (Lewiston, 1999).

[19] Heinz Rölleke, "The 'Utterly Hessian' Fairy Takes by 'Old Marie': The End of a Myth," in Ruth B. Bottigheimer (ed.), *Fairy Tales and Society: Illusion, Allusion, and Paradigm* (Philadelphia, 1986). Rölleke's re-attributions of the Grimms' tales to middle-class young ladies of Kassel does not, however, completely eliminate "Old Marie" as a source: Hermann Rebel, "Why not 'Old Marie'... or Someone very much like Her? A Reassessment of the Question about the Grimms' Contributors from a Social Historical Perspective," *Social History* 13 (1988): 1-24.

[20] Sara Forsdyke, *Slaves Tell Tales: And Other Episodes in the Politics of Popular Culture in Ancient Greece* (Princeton, 2012), 41.

[21] Antoine d'Abbadie, "Légende du Tartaroa ou Tartarua," *Bulletin de la Société des Sciences et des Arts de Bayonne* 2 (1874): 133-136.

[22] Bodleian MS Eng let. d. 62, Sayce letters, 4 February, 1875, F 148 r. Some letters between Webster and Abbadie discussing the problem are also preserved in Bodleian Webster Ms Basque e 9. All three mention Vinson as another member of this epistolary discussion group.

[23] Rev. Wentworth Webster, *Basque Legends: Collected, Chiefly in the Labourd* (London: 1877).

[24] Webster's original manuscript is preserved in the Bibliothèque municipale de Bayonne, Ms 88. The Library also holds Julien Vinson's transcription of the tales in Basque and this manuscript resolves some of the confusions about attribution in the original: Bibliothèque municipale de Bayonne, Ms 720.

[25] The "Pyrenean House System" is a concept regularly found in the literature on household types from Le Play onwards: see William A. Douglass, "The Basque Stem Family Household: Myth or Reality," *Journal of Family History* 13 (1988): 75-89. The importance of house identity is manifest in the records of the *État Civil*: in Ahetze, when the mayor indexed the registers at the end of the year, he did so by house name, not family name as elsewhere in France.

[26] Details of the Hirigaray family derive from the *État Civil* for the commune of Ahetze, 1843-1900, available online from the Archives Départementales des Pyrénées-Atlantiques: http://earchives.cg64.fr/. I am grateful to Patrick Rezola and other members of the Généalogie Pays Basque facebook group for helping track down the Hirigaray family.

[27] Marie-Pierre Arrizabalaga, "Pyrenean Marriage Strategies in the Nineteenth Century: The French Basque Case," *International Review of Social History* 50: supplement (2005): 93-122; Marie-Pierre Arrizabalaga, "Basque Women and Urban Migration in the 19th Century," *The History of the Family* 10 (2005): 99-117.

[28] ATU numbers refer to the Aarne-Thompson-Uther typological catalogue of folktales used by folklorists: Hans-Jörg Uther, *The Types of International Folktales: A Classification and Bibliography. Based on the System of Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson*, Folklore Fellows Communications nos 284–286 (Helsinki, 2004).

[29] Webster was at the beginning of his career as a bascologist, and his mastery of the language was not complete. He first made a phonetic transcription of Stephana's words; then with the help of his bilingual landlady he effected a translation into French, and then into English; finally Vinson wrote up a corrected Basque version. Some verbal nuances may have been lost along the way.

[30] Webster, *Basque Legends*, 49-53.

[31] Martin-Fugier, *La Place des bonnes*, 162.

[32] Paul Delarue and Marie-Louise Ténèze, *Le Conte populaire français: catalogue raisonné des versions de France* (Paris, 1963), Vol. 2, 188-199.

[33] Webster, *Basque Legends*, 53-55.

[34] Elena Arana Williams, "Basque Legends in their Social Context," in William A. Douglass (ed.) *Essays in Basque Social Anthropology and History* (Reno, 1989), 110-115.

[35] Compare the text of "The Witches and the Idiots" in Webster, *Basque Legends*, 67-69, to that in Bayonne manuscript, f 84-92. This tale combines elements of "Fool as Custodian of Home and Animals" (ATU 1681B), "The Robbers under the Tree" (ATU 1653), and "The Two Travellers: Truth and Falsehood" (ATU 613).

[36] Webster published one of these, "The Duped Priest" (*Basque Legends*, 154-155), a variant of "The Rich and the Poor Peasant" (ATU 1535); the other, entitled "The Priests" in his manuscript (f 33-36) a variant of "The Entrapped Suitors" (ATU 1730), he must have deemed unsuitable given the implication of clerical sexual misdemeanours. Webster's position in the Basque country was made easier because of his good relations with the local Catholic clergy.

[37] Hans Naumann, *Primitive Gemeinschaftskultur: Beiträge zur Volkskunde und Mythologie* (Jena, 1921), 3.

[38] Bodleian Webster MS Eng misc d 104. WW "Nile Diary. Reviews 1876 to 1881," F45, review of P.G. Hamerton, *Round My House. Notes of Rural Life in France in Peace and War* (London, 1876).

[39] Nicole Odette Stein-Moreau, "Les frères Grimm, conteurs, et la France au dix-neuvième siècle," *Bruder Grimm Gedenken* 1 (1963): 545-588.

[40] Johannes Bolte, "Jacob Grimm an Emmanuel Cosquin," *Zeitschrift für Volkskunde* 21 (1911): 249-251.

[41] Robert Irwin, *The Arabian Nights: A Companion* (London, 2004), 69-70.

[42] The family histories of the Simonets and Vaudins can be followed in the *État Civil* for Montiers-sur-Saulx and the censuses, which are consultable on line at: http://archives.meuse.fr/ .

[43] Vincente Béquet's personal history can likewise be traced through the online archives of the Département des Côtes-d'Armor which provides access to the *État Civil* and censuses for Saint-Potan and Matignon: http://archives.cotesdarmor.fr/index.php?page=registres-paroissiaux

[44] Paul Sébillot, "Mémoires d'un Breton de Paris," *Le Breton de Paris*, serialized from 7 December 1913 to 2 August 1914. They are available online (unpaginated) at: http://www.berose.fr/document/spip.php?article267

[45] Paul Sébillot, "Notes pour server à l'histoire du folk-lore en France," *Revue des traditions populaires* 28 (1913): 52.

[46] Paul Sébillot, *Contes populaires de la Haute-Bretagne I: Contes merveilleux* (Rennes, 1998 [1880]), 209-217, 227-229, 283-284.

[47] Raymonde Robert, "Emmanuel Cosquin et les contes lorrains," in Roger Marchal and Bernard Guidot (eds), *Lorraine vivante: Homage à Jean Lanher* (Nancy, 1993), 201-7; Postic, Fañch (ed.) *Paul Sébillot, un républicain promoteur des traditions populaires* (Brest, 2011); Jean Arrouye (ed.) *Jean François Bladé (1827-1900)* (Béziers, 1985).

[48] McBride, *The Domestic Revolution*.

[49] Paul-Yves Sébillot, "Contes et legends du pays de Gouarec," *Revue de Bretagne, de Vendée et d'Anjou* 18 (1897): 57-68.

[50] Martin-Fugier, *La Place des bonnes*, 150-155; Leslie Page Moch, *The Pariahs of Yesterday: Breton Migrants in Paris* (Durham, 2012), 73-76, 145-148.

[51] Marie-Anne Couderc, *Bécassine inconnue* (Paris, 2000), 33; Francis Lacassin, *Pour un neuvième art. La bande dessinée* (Paris and Geneva, 1982): 143.

[52] Paul Sébillot, *Contes comiques des Bretons* (Paris 1983 [1910]), 60-63.

[53] The figures are hard to establish with accuracy for France, not least because many different types of activity might be described as "service", including farm service. Guiral and Thuillier offer a figure for France of 1,156,000 for 1881, overwhelmingly female. This represents about 1 in 14 of the active population. As it was often a life-cycle occupation many more women had experience of service: *La Vie quotidienne des domestiques*, 10-11. The 1906 census, which does distinguish between farm and domestic service, suggests that eleven per cent of the active female population worked in the latter, a

much lower figure than for Britain in the same period, but still the largest occupational group, after agriculture: 1906 French Census, INSEE.

[54] Petitfrère, *L'oeil du maître*, 10.

[55] Lucy Delap, *Knowing their Place: Domestic Service in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Oxford, 2011), 20.

[56] McBride, *The Domestic Revolution*, 90.

[57] Moch, *The Pariahs of Yesterday*, 200.

[58] Honoré de Balzac, *Albert Savarus: Une fille d'Ève* (Paris 1853 [1842]), 297.

[59] Celestina Wroth, "'To Root the Old Woman out of Our Minds': Women Educationalists and Plebeian Culture in Late-Eighteenth-Century Britain," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 30 (2006): 48-73. The same warnings were prominent in Italian conduct literature: Raffaella Sarti, "Dangerous Liaisons: Servants as 'Children' Taught by their Masters and as 'Teachers' of their Masters' Children (Italy and France, Sixteenth to Twenty-first Centuries)," *Paedagogica Historica* 43 (2007): 565-587.

[60] Maria Edgeworth and Richard Lovell Edgeworth, *Practical Education* (London, 1815), 286.

[61] Anna Wierda Rowland, *Romanticism and Childhood: the Infantilization of British Literary Culture* (Cambridge, 2012), 161-193.

[62] Rev. Archibald H. Sayce, *Reminiscences* (London, 1923), 9.

[63] Gérard du Nerval, *Les Filles du feu* (Paris, 1856 [1854]), 155.

[64] Paul Bénichou, *Nerval et la chanson folklorique* (Paris, 1970).

[65] Pierre-Joseph Boudier de Villemert, *L'ami des femmes* (n.p. [Paris?], 1758), 198.

[66] *Manuel d'économie domestique, d'alimentation et d'hygiène* (1889), quoted in Piette, *Domestiques et servantes*, 219.

[67] Alphonse Daudet, "Les Nounous," *La jeune mère, ou l'éducation du premier âge* 17 (1889-90): 132. Wetnurses posed a particular danger of "contamination": Marie-France Morel, "Images de nourrices dans la France des XVIIIe et XIXe siècles," *Paedagogica historica* 46 (2010): 803-17.

[68] Marcel Bruyère, *La Jeunesse d'Alphonse Daudet (Nîmes – Lyon –Alès) 1840-1857* (Paris, 1955), 40-43.

[69] Emmanuel Cosquin, *Contes populaires de Lorraine, comparés avec les contes des autres provinces de France et des pays étranger* (Paris, 1886), vol. 1, 201-207.

[70] David Hopkin, *Voices of the People in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge, 2012), chap. 3.

[71] Claude Karnoouh, "L'Étranger ou le faux inconnu, essai sur la définition spatiale d'autrui dans un village lorrain," *Ethnologie française* 1 (1972): 107-122.

[72] There is another way in which this tale was "local" of which she was unlikely to be aware. This version of ATU 2022 is a regional ecotype, specific to Lorraine: in versions of the story recorded elsewhere in France, and indeed in other parts of the world, the surviving partner communicates news of the death only to the first in the chain of mourners who subsequently pass it on to the next; only in versions collected in Lorraine does a bereaved Louse inform all.

[73] Paul Sébillot, "Mémoires d'un Breton de Paris," dimanche 11 Janvier, 1914.

[74] Sébillot, *Contes populaires de la Haute-Bretagne I*, 283-284.

[75] Sébillot, *Contes comiques des Bretons*, 170.

[76] Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor* (London, 1861-62), vol. 3, 189-190.

[77] Sébillot, *Contes populaires de la Haute-Bretagne I*, 209-217.

[78] Sébillot, "Contes et legends du pays de Gouarec": 68.

[79] Bruce Robbins, *The Servant's Hand: English Fiction from Below* (Durham NC, 1993 [1986]), 182.

[80] Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 598.

[81] Kurke, *Aesopic Conversations*, 11.

[82] Thomas Carlyle, *Chartism* (London, 1858 [1840]), 66.

[83] Hopkin, *Voices of the People*, chap. 4.

[84] Anton Chekhov, *Five Plays* (Oxford, 2008: first performed in 1901), 169-238.

[85] Daniel Hénard and Jacques Tréfouël, *Achille Millien: Nivernais passeur de mémoire* (Saint-Bonnot, 2005); Pierre Marcotte, "Achille Millien (1838–1927): Une enterprise folkloriste en Nivernais," Masters thesis, École nationale des Chartes, 2011.

[86] Achille Millien and Paul Delarue, *Contes du Nivernais et du Morvan* (Paris 1953), 241.

[87] AD Nièvre, Fonds Millien, 82 J 369, "correspondants non identifiés." Sébastian Langlois, of the Archives départementales de la Nièvre, has tentatively identified the author of some of these letters as Marie Grémy.

[88] AD Nièvre, Fonds Millien, 82 J 160, correspondant Céleste Grémy. The first letter is dated 18 August, 1901.

[89] The fallout from Millien's death and testament can be followed in the correspondence assembled by the priest of Beaumont-la-Ferrière: AD Nièvre, Fonds Bougnot 1 J 43.

[90] Guy Latry, "Introduction: Arnaudin à la lettre," in Félix Arnaudin, *Correspondance*, ed. Guy Latry, *Oeuvres complètes de Félix Arnaudin* 5 (Bordeaux/Mont-de-Marsan, 1999).

[91] Félix Arnaudin, *Journal et Choses de l'ancienne Lande*, ed. Jean-Yves Boutet, Guy Latry and Jean-Bernard Marquette, *Oeuvres complètes de Félix Arnaudin* 8 (Bordeaux/Mont-de-Marsan, 2003), 64.

[92] Ibid., 69.

[93] Arnaudin, *Correspondance*, 389-390.

[94] Jacques Sargos, Bernard Manciet, Pierre Bardou and Guy Latry, *Félix Arnaudin. Imagier de la Grande Lande* (Mont-de-Marsan, 1993).

[95] Arnaudin, *Journal et Choses*, 103.

[96] Ibid., 95.

[97] I owe much of what I know about Arnaudin and Darlanne to Will Pooley, whose own exploration of the Arnaudin manuscripts will be published next year: *The Blood-Stained Sand: Body and Landscape in Nineteenth-Century France* (Oxford).

[98] AD Nièvre, Fonds Millien, 82 J 160, correspondant Céleste Grémy. The two letters are dated 15 July and 2 September. Although no year is indicated, they are certainly later than the other letters in the collection.

[99] Arnaudin, *Correspondance*, 389-390.

[100] Robbins, *The Servant's Hand*, 225.