This book traces a number of common themes relating to the representation of Irish Travellers in Irish popular tradition and how these themes have impacted on Ireland's collective imagination. A particular focus of the book is on the exploration of the Traveller as 'Other', an 'Other' who is perceived as both inside and outside Ireland's collective ideation. Frequently constructed as a group whose cultural tenets are in a dichotomous opposition to those of the 'settled' community, the book demonstrates the ambivalence and complexity of the Irish Traveller 'Other' in the context of a European postcolonial country. Not only have the construction and representation of Travellers always been less stable and 'fixed' than previously supposed, these images have been acted upon and changed by both the Traveller and non-Traveller communities as the situation has demanded. Drawing primarily on little-explored Irish language sources, the book demonstrates the fluidity of what is often assumed as reified or 'fixed'. As evidenced in Irish-language cultural sources, the image of the Traveller is inextricably linked with the very concept of Irish identity itself. They are simultaneously the same and 'Other', and frequently function as exemplars of the hegemony of native Irish culture as set against colonial traditions.

A Numic Migration? Ethnographic Evidence Revisited
Catherine S. Fowler

This chapter reviews the ethnographic evidence for and against the hypothesis that speakers of languages of the Numic branch of the Uto-
Aztecan language family expanded/migrated within the last 1,000 to 2,000 years into the Great Basin of Western North American from a homeland somewhere in the southwestern corner of their present geographic range. The evidence reviewed includes documentary records, indigenous oral traditions, and cultural patterns (culture traits, material culture, cultural processes, naming). It concludes that the hypothesis remains viable, although the evidence is slim, and suggests several points to investigate for the future.

**Travellers as countercultural**

Micheál Ó hAodha

in ‘Insubordinate Irish’: Travellers in the Text

Published in print: 2011 Published Online: July 2012
Item type: chapter

Irish oral tradition had a range of beliefs concerning the existence of countercultures made up of beggars and various types of wanderers. The countercultural motifs incorporating the idea of a ‘pagan’ marriage ceremony provided a link connecting the construction of Travelling people with an imagined sexual licentiousness and a romantic concept of ‘freedom’. Apart from the Tinker Questionnaire, most of the Irish Folklore Commission (IFC) references to fighting by Travellers pertain to challenges and single combats. According to the IFC respondents, Travellers utilised two forms of secret communication. One involved a spoken language known as Cant or Gammon, and the second, a sign language that took the form of physical ‘markers’. The notion of a separate ‘Travelling society’ that was presided over by its own rulers, and which was the subject of separate and secretive practices and taboos, had very old roots in the European imaginary.

**Anti-Traveller prejudice: The narrative within the Irish imaginary**

Micheál Ó hAodha

in ‘Insubordinate Irish’: Travellers in the Text

Published in print: 2011 Published Online: July 2012
Item type: chapter

This chapter describes the influence of folktales in the Irish tradition, and their influence on popular beliefs and attitudes regarding Irish Travellers,
also making links to similar folktales as they exist in the European tradition. The folktales discussed here are tales that are referred to as the ‘Nail’, ‘Pin’ and ‘Bar of Gold’ tales. The Traveller is accused of inhospitality and a lack of courtesy in the ‘Pin’ legend. The ‘Bar of Gold’ legend depicts the Traveller as an untrustworthy good-for-nothing who is always capable of sharp practice, while the ‘Nail’ legend accuses the Traveller of complicity in the worst crime anyone can commit: deicide. These narratives undoubtedly had a certain psychological power for their audience. Travellers are the instigators of a powerful form of symbolic inversion in which their ‘Other’ status is shown to be a disguise for their function as ‘holy people’ or shamans.

The counter-tradition and symbolic inversion
Micheál Ó hAodha

in ‘Insubordinate Irish’: Travellers in the Text

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This chapter describes what may be termed a ‘counter-tradition’ to that which proposes an anti-Traveller discourse in Irish tradition. This counter-tradition manifests itself in a story entitled Ortha an Ghreama (‘The Stitch Charm’), in which Jesus and Mary act as shamans or healers, ‘outsiders’ who morally arbitrate on the actions of the settled community. In Ortha an Ghreama, Travellers in the guise of holy people rebel against their marginalisation from the dominant discourse through their role in a countercultural healing process that incorporates both the physical and psychic healing of society as a whole. Folktales such as Ortha an Ghreama form a discourse in which Travellers are seen to subvert their assignation of ‘outcast’ or ‘negative Other’ as incorporated in ‘anti-Traveller’ folktales. The Traveller as depicted in Ortha an Ghreama is a figure indicative of an attitude of creative disrespect, engaged in a re-ordering of long-established discourses and imaginaries.

La Guiannée and Its Heritage
Anna Servaes

in "Franco-American Identity, Community, and La Guiannée"

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La Guiannée celebration eludes the historical colonial context, but is documented in France as early as the twelfth century. It is most likely a derivative of a Celtic tradition and belongs to a category of begging quests throughout the Carnival season, typically November-March or April. Similarities between the disguises used in twentieth century Prairie du Rocher and twelfth century France creates a strong cultural connection. Other festive elements such as masking, singing, drinking, and the giving of gifts have significant importance for the maintenance of socio-cultural relationships. Throughout the Midwest, La Guiannée is the one festive celebration that maintained its continual French presence since the founding of these communities. Newspaper and personal accounts describe in detail the twentieth and twenty-first century celebration and its evolution from medieval to colonial disguises.

Foodways
Anna Servaes

in "Franco-American Identity, Community, and La Guiannée"

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This chapter considers food along the Guiannée’s journey on New Year’s Eve. Traditionally, food was offered during the carnival time to nourish the community, including the indigent, during the winter months when no crops were available. The prepared meals and other foods are offered in exchange for the performance. In the Midwest, the main communal meal is a chicken bouillon, a chicken soup. Offering and sharing food during the carnival season renews the solidarity among the members through forgiveness of past conflicts. Sharing meals also contributes to the collective imagination and cultural transmission through the stories or information recalled at these communal meals.

Cultural Activism and Sexuality in Feminist Performance
Christine L. Garlough

in Desi Divas: Political Activism in South Asian American Cultural Performances

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This chapter offers an ethnographic account of an emerging feminist performance movement called Yoni Ki Baat (Our Vaginas Speak).
Across the United States, a growing number of South Asian American women have found more progressive and politically resistive ways to engage with South Asian cultural traditions. By playing critically with folk dress, narratives, songs, poetic forms, dance, and material culture, these women engage in debates about sexuality and gender in their communities. Put simply, Yoni Ki Baat can be characterized as a South Asian American version of The Vagina Monologues, wherein the performances serve as an opportunity for young women to embed personal testimonies within traditional cultural forms as a way to address controversial issues connected to ethnic essentialism, sex positivity, and sexual violence, to name a few.