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# Can the "Peasant" Speak? Forging Dialogues in a Nineteenth-Century Legend Collection

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CAN THE "PEASANT" SPEAK? FORGING DIALOGUES IN A NINETEENTH-  
CENTURY LEGEND COLLECTION

by

William Pooley

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

American Studies  
(Folklore)

Approved:

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2010

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## ABSTRACT

## Can the “Peasant” Speak? Forging Dialogues in a Nineteenth-Century Legend Collection

by

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Utah State University, 2010

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The folklore collections amassed by Jean-François Bladé in nineteenth-century southwestern France are problematic for modern readers. Bladé’s legacy includes a confusing combination of poorly received historical works and unimportant short stories as well as the large collections of proverbs, songs, and narratives that he collected in his native Gascony. No writer has ever attempted to study any of Bladé’s informants in detail, not even his most famous narrator, the illiterate and “defiant” Guillaume Cazaux.

Rather than dismissing Bladé as a poor ethnographer whose transcripts do not reflect what his informant Cazaux said, I propose taking Bladé’s own confusion about authenticity seriously. This confusion suggests that Bladé was trapped between three competing models that depicted the authenticity of folklore as residing in either the audience or folklorist, or the tradition, or the performer.

The texts of Cazaux’s legends that Bladé published were not just invented by Bladé, but forged in a dynamic interaction between the folklorist, Cazaux, and the

force of tradition. When Cazaux described his beliefs in witchcraft to Bladé, he did not just reveal his own worldview; he also relied on the power of anonymous forces and silence to threaten and coerce the folklorist. The legend texts that Bladé published are not simply monovocal re-writings of some things Cazaux said; they enact a conversation between the two men about place and time. This conversation is a very limited example of an important question that has occupied historians: the “modernization” of the rural population by national forces. Although Bladé and Cazaux had very different backgrounds and education and only knew each other for ten years, their memories are intertwined for posterity.

(159 pages)

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This thesis would not be here if it was not for the help of several people. Most importantly, I would not have been able to come to Logan at all if the English department at USU had not offered me the first Fife Fellowship in Folklore. This opportunity has opened a whole new perspective in my research, allowing me to attend many folklore conferences and discuss my work with a range of researchers.

Although conferences were important for this, it is really here in the friendly atmosphere of USU that I have profited the most.

Steve Siporin, my first contact at USU, has been supportive, good-humored, and wise in all my dealings with him since the very first time we talked about my flying across the pond to study here. I cannot thank him enough for agreeing to supervise my thesis and chair my committee, despite his own extremely busy year.

I thank Jeannie Thomas not only for introducing me to all sorts of interesting people at the annual American Folklore Society meeting, having me over at Christmas, and generally being as welcoming as it was possible for her to be, but also for being probably my most consistently critical reader. When I am vague, obtuse, or just plain unreadable, Jeannie has always found kind ways to help me be a better writer and researcher. I am grateful for this help, which has reassured me that my ideas *are* sometimes worth grappling with.

I thank Len Rosenband for weekly meetings in his office to discuss theoretical and historical readings. The irony of a historian who sees things “from below” while still towering several feet above me taught me about the flexibility that all writers can

have with their perspectives. His ideas and interests shine through my own work now, demonstrating the importance that Len has had in my intellectual formation.

Other teachers at USU that have answered my questions, questioned my work, and stimulated conversations with me include Lynne McNeill, Elaine Thatcher, Lisa Gabbert, Brock Dethier, and Jennifer Sinor. I cannot do justice here to the guidance and advice these people have given me on writing, reading, teaching, and dressing pets as people.

I have also had the great fortune to have a supportive network of other students. Among those who read and responded to my messy drafts, I would like to mention Andrew Berthrong and John Gilmore, whose skill as writers helped me clarify some of my prose. Finally, this piece would be unfinished, or unsatisfactory, or both if it wasn't for the support of Kate Sirls, who has probably read more of it more times than anyone, myself included. She is also the one who had to put up with my complaining when I was confined underground writing the final draft. I promise to do the washing up for the rest of my time here.

Finally this piece would never have achieved the richness it now has if it were not for the excellent graduate conference "Contact: The Dynamics of Power and Culture," held at Ohio State University in April 2010. My thanks to Cassie Patterson and her organizing committee.

It should go without saying that despite the immense help that all of these people have been to me, any idiosyncracies, errors, and difficulties within my work are ultimately my fault alone.

William Pooley

## NOTE ON TRANSLATIONS

Unless otherwise noted, all excerpts within the text from works written by or about Jean-François Bladé and Guillaume Cazaux are my own translations from the original French or Gascon. The texts of Cazaux's stories are all drawn from the 2008 Aubéron edition of *The Tales of Gascony*.

Bladé's footnotes are included within translated narratives in square brackets, along with some of the more problematic French and Gascon terms.

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## CHAPTER I

THE FORGER OF MEN AND “THE CAUSE OF FOLKLORE:” JEAN-FRANÇOIS  
BLADÉ AND GUILLAUME CAZAUX

## Introduction: The “Grimm of Gascony” and His Most “Defiant” Informant

Jean-François Bladé was born into a bourgeois family in the provincial town of Lectoure in southwestern France in 1827 (Alleman 1930; Courtès and Bordes 1985; Lavergne 1904). Over his lifetime, he worked as a notary and judge and wrote works of fiction and history (Pic 1985), but today he is best remembered as a folklorist whose monumental collections of songs, stories, and proverbs earned him the posthumous title of the “Grimm of Gascony” (Lafont and Anatole 1970, 685). Unlike the Brothers Grimm, however, little has been written about Bladé since his death in 1900. In the 1980s a colloquium was held in his native town of Lectoure, and since 2004 Patricia Heiniger-Casteret has published some articles on Bladé, but aside from this small bibliography, he seems to have been forgotten in academic circles outside of southwestern France (Arrouye 1985; Heiniger-Casteret 2009; Heiniger-Casteret 2004).

Bladé’s name is linked for posterity to that of one of his informants, partly due to the folklorist’s own comments about the importance of this narrator (Bladé 2008, 31-2). The mysterious Guillaume Cazaux was a former servant, born in 1782 in St. Mezard (Archives Départementales du Gers). He died in 1868 in Lectoure, just a year after Bladé left the town for good (Archives Départementales du Gers). One of

Bladé's biographers devoted a whole chapter of her work to this octogenarian storyteller, and the narratives Cazaux told Bladé have even appeared as a separate edition (Alleman 1930, 168-211; Lafforgue 1995). The figure of this informant, who Bladé called his most "defiant," dogs the memory of the folklorist like his shadow (Bladé 2008, 32).

At first glance, the men could not be more different. Bladé attended the seminary in Auch, and then law school in Toulouse and Bordeaux, before going on to Paris (Alleman 1930, 101-135), where he moved in bohemian circles and became a confessed disciple and friend of the poet Baudelaire (Lavergne 1904, 8). Cazaux, by contrast, was completely illiterate. Bladé left an enormous quantity of written work, which often mixed autobiography with other genres of writing. Cazaux was unable to leave any trace of this kind for modern readers, so that all we have to go on are some sparse archival references, and what Bladé told us about his "suspicious," and apparently secretive, narrator (Bladé 2008, 32).

This inequality between the two collaborators has aroused the doubts of subsequent critics. Writers since Bladé's death have frequently questioned the fidelity of Bladé's transcriptions, even going so far as to suggest that Cazaux was merely a mouthpiece for the folklorist (Lafforgue 1995; Salles Loustau 1985; Traimond 1985). If this is true, then Cazaux would be just another "unknown" among the millions in the French archives of births, marriages, and deaths. Any picture we could draw of him today would be as "misleadingly flat" as the historian Alain Corbin's portrait of an illiterate clog-maker named Pinagot from the same period (Corbin 2001, 212).

Using only the government archives, Corbin found himself unable to say much about the humble Pinagot. He could follow his name from record to record, but Pinagot himself left no words for Corbin to draw on.

In this chapter, I will begin by explaining why Bladé's collections are an important example both of the world-view of a nineteenth-century folklorist and also the traditions of rural informants, despite the doubts that have been raised concerning his fieldwork and editorial practices (Heiniger-Casteret 2009; Traimond 1985). First, I will defend the value in calling Bladé a "forger of men" by comparing his life and works to the literary forgers of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England studied by Nick Groom (Groom 2002). This superficially unflattering comparison helps to explain why Bladé's folklore texts are considered so problematic, and why he remains relatively neglected. This is followed by a number of reasons why Bladé's works make a good case study in the history of folklore collecting and do not just represent an example of a romantic regionalist whose works disfigured and travestied the words of his informants.

After this, I will address three models of authenticity that manifest themselves in his life and works. Separated out into three models, the justifications that Bladé offered for the reliability of his collections appear to be contradictory. These contradictions help modern readers frame Bladé's collections as the product of a specific period in the history of folklore collecting. Although Bladé's role as the forger of his informant makes the figure of the "defiant" storyteller difficult to pin down, I will offer justifications for seeing Cazaux's voice and agency behind the

texts. Armed with some knowledge of the contradictory impulses of Bladé's works, the subsequent chapters will be able to address questions about the entangled voices of the two men in the narrative transcriptions that appear in *The Folktales of Gascony*.

The texts we read today are imperfect and rigid records, but they make reference to a dynamic situation of contact between the two men. Storytelling has the rare power to bridge the gap between the highly-educated notary and author, Bladé, and the illiterate laborer, Cazaux, and to show how the two men were similar in many ways, rather than adversarial representatives of the modern "Frenchman" and the archaic "peasant" (Weber 1976).

#### Bladé, the Forger of Men

Calling Bladé a "forger" might seem risky: not only does it appear to question the relevance of his seminal folklore collections, but it also seems to deny his informants, such as Cazaux, any active role in constituting the narratives that modern readers find in the *Folktales of Gascony*. At the same time, there is perhaps no better phrase to describe how Bladé behaved as an author. Always willing to make hyperbolic statements about his own "sincerity," Bladé was actually caught in a state of indecision between different models of authenticity. Like the literary forgers studied by Nick Groom, he appealed to different models of authority to shore up the truth of what he wrote, and, like them, in his vacillations between forms of authentication, he lost all claim to validity (Groom 2002). He forged many different

identities for himself through his different types of writing, but too many identities leave an author with none (Groom 2002, 256-292).

Perhaps, as Bertrand Traimond suggests, Bladé's concept of authenticity was outdated (Traimond 1985), but it is also worth considering that writers such as Deirdre Evans-Pritchard and Regina Bendix suspect that an unhealthy obsession with authenticity continues to dog folklore into the twenty-first century (Bendix 1997; Evans-Pritchard 1986). How different, after all, is a folklorist's transcription from a literary forgery? A literary forgery is a document written in the name of another by an author who does everything in her power to efface herself from the words. Bladé's folklore transcriptions are exactly the same kind of document that relies on a writer who writes in the name of another, and effaces himself from the final text.

Of course, the situation is not exactly the same, and this is by no means to say that Bladé's works are fakes, or inauthentic. Unlike literary forgeries, a folklorist's narrative transcriptions make reference to an original: a performance. This is where the more positive sense of calling Bladé a forger stems from. "Forging" is more than just the verb from the noun "a forgery." To forge something does not necessarily mean to fake, but can mean to give shape to a pre-existing material. In the case of folklore, this could mean shaping an oral performance into a written text. Despite the best efforts of linguistic ethnographers, the perfect "translation" of a performance into a text is an impossible goal, because no system of notation will ever be detailed enough to replace a performance (Tedlock 1971). Such a text would be a performance (Bendix 2000; Dégh 2001, 135-6).

This has led Susan Ritchie to argue that folklore texts need to be recognized as the products of folklorists, rather than seen as the “voice” of their informants (Ritchie 1993). While it is true that absent details such as paralinguistic communication, intonation, breathing, and situational context may have played an important and now unknowable role in the original performance, this is not, however, the same thing as saying that the folklore text only expresses the interests of the folklorist and bears no relation to the intentions and desires of their informants.

This naïve dichotomy between unreachable authentic performances and identities, and the travesty of entextualization needs to be replaced by a more subtle constructivism. Saying that Bladé forged the image of Cazaux and the words that modern readers read is not the same as saying that Bladé is the sole author and creator of both man and stories. As Bruno Latour has reminded sociologists of science, true facts are also constructed, carefully built by scientists doing research (Latour 2007, 88-91). Just because they are constructed does not mean that they are untrue, it simply means that we can trace the process of their formulation. “Constructed,” in this sense, has nothing to do with “inventing,” as in the unhelpful turn of phrase “the invention of traditions,” which suggests that traditions are a matter of perception, and can be thought into existence (Handler and Linnekin 1984; Handler and Linnekin 1986; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983).

Instead, to say that Bladé “forged” Cazaux’s narratives and even Cazaux himself is to recognize the inescapable truth that without Bladé, there would be no written record of the stories, and no description of an informant who could not write

anything down himself. This creative forging of stories and identities may bear a more strict resemblance to a real, historical man and real performances, or it may be a less accurate description, but it is impossible to draw an absolute dividing line between an “authentic” tradition, performance, or transcription, and the “inauthentic” texts or stories that Richard Dorson notoriously called “fakelore” (Evans-Pritchard 1986; Dorson 1976).

This might seem like a dangerously relativist position. Novelists such as Honoré de Balzac and George Sand included rural characters in their novels, so it would be possible to argue that modern readers can use the same techniques to read Sand and Balzac's fiction as the mediated words of the rural population. The differences remain important. Bladé made a claim about the fidelity of his transcriptions, and even if it was not one hundred percent true, it is still a different truth claim to the novelists' licence.

If anything and everything can count as folklore, then there is no difference between the folklorist and the literary critic. With this distinction the specific contributions that the study of folklore has made would be lost, contributions such as diversifying the scope of what is considered “aesthetic,” and drawing attention to behaviors and practices that are important and “personal,” yet also “communal” and “common” (Oring 1986, 18). But the advantage of Elliot Oring's remodelling of the boundaries of folklore along the lines of an “orientation” rather than a “definition,” “is that it is productive rather than restrictive” (Oring 1986, 18). The shared interests, rather than a restrictive canon of “authentic” folklore, are what give the discipline its

shape (Feintuch 2003; Bendix 1997). Unlike a literary critic, I am interested in the “performances” that Bladé’s transcriptions are based on and the relationship of these performances to “contexts,” “traditions,” and “identities” (Abrahams 2003; Glassie 2003; Mary Hufford 2003; Kapchan 2003).

Bladé’s collections are neither fully “authentic,” nor fakes, but to say that they are forged will help understand the conditions in which they were constructed so that they can be studied using the tools of the modern folklorist.

### Why Bladé?

If we really want to learn about the lives of men like Cazaux and the sections of nineteenth-century society underrepresented in the history books, Bladé begins to look like a poor source, especially considering the detailed ethnographic methods of other folklorists who came soon after him, such as Félix Arnaudin. There are, however, good reasons not to throw the baby out with the romantic regionalist. For a start, Bladé was a fairly early collector. Although his first collection of narratives, *Folktales and Proverbs Collected in Armagnac*, was not published until 1867, more than fifty years after the Brothers Grimm published the first edition of their *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, it was still one of the first collections of folk narrative in France presented with named narrators and details about the collecting process.

Bladé was published before other eminent folklorists such as François Luzel, Paul Sébillot, Félix Arnaudin, Henri Carnoy, and Wentworth Webster, and his fieldwork dated back to the 1850s. As someone whose works were published

relatively early, Bladé influenced later writers such as Arnaudin (Latry 1985), but there are other advantages to this headstart, as well. Bladé had access to narrators who remembered the French Revolution, most obviously Cazaux himself, who told stories about the Revolution and Napoleonic Empire (Bladé 2008, 340-343, 351-356). As modern folklorists know, folklore is undergoing constant change. They might not agree with the nineteenth-century view of popular traditions that depicted them as a “burning house” from which collectors saved what they could (Belmont 1986; Burke 1978, 15-16), but it remains true that later collectors found different materials.

Being an early collector also carries its penalties. Bladé seems to have been in many ways a transitional figure, positioned between the sharp practices of the early collectors, such as James MacPherson in Scotland and Théodore Hersart de la Villemarqué in France, and the detailed ethnographies of later folklorists such as Arnaudin (MacPherson 1760; Villemarqué 1883; Arnaudin 1994). Folklorists have long recognized that their discipline was born in a strange era, which the historian Marc Bloch has called “mythomaniac,” obsessed with false manuscripts and re-touched collections of oral poetry and stories (Bloch 1964, 94). In fact, folklore might be the only discipline whose founding fathers have almost all been considered fakers, since they played with the idea of the voice of “the people” and the voice of “tradition,” rather than actually transcribing oral performances from real narrators. Bladé did make transcriptions of the narratives he collected (Heiniger-Casteret 2009), but we also know that he believed in a pure, original version of certain narratives.

This belief was his justification for stitching together different versions of folktales into what he called a “rhapsody,” the most complete version (Bladé 1875).

This betwixt and between status makes Bladé an interesting figure in the history of European folklore collecting. Since no-one has attempted to write a revised version of Cocchiara’s history, first published in the 1950s, and since Cocchiara himself did not mention Bladé, there is a gap here (Cocchiara 1981). Although Regina Bendix’s *In Search of Authenticity* targets similar examples, she confines her scope to Germany and the United States (Bendix 1997). The only histories of French folklore collecting are small volumes that choose limited examples (Belmont 1986; Rearick 1974).

There is a lot to be learned from the intermediary status of a folklorist who claimed to be “an honest and pious scribe” (Bladé 2008, 42), yet who subsequent writers have suspected of being more of a literary writer than an ethnographer (Arrouye 1985a, 8; Lafont and Anatole 1970, 365). It is precisely the infuriating slipperiness of these questions that makes Bladé a good example. He is an extreme version of a problem that applies to all of the folklorists of the nineteenth century.

Unlike Bladé, Félix Arnaudin published texts that were clearly verbatim reproductions of the Gascon narrations he listened to. Arnaudin also photographed his informants, and took notes about them. He produced a wealth of ethnographic data about the area of the Landes in Gascony just a few years after Bladé published his own collections (Latory 1985; Arnaudin 1994). The important point is to not to see some unbridgeable caesura between the two collectors. Arnaudin, just as much as

Bladé, constructed, or forged the texts that he recorded. He had an idea of what kind of stories and informants he was looking for, he selected what counted as folklore, and he chose how to present it in his publications. All folklorists forge their informants' texts in this sense, it is just that Bladé's machinations are a little more heavy-handed, and therefore easier to study.

Rather than presenting Bladé as a faker whose collections tell us nothing about his informants, considering his own narrative personas and interests can help to understand what his role in constructing them might have been. The texts can then be understood as the result of a dynamic process of interaction between informant, folklorist, and tradition, an interaction that is more obvious in the confusing case of the exasperating Bladé than in the supposedly more authentic or accurate texts of Arnaudin.

Finally, Bladé's collection has quantity on its side. The Aubéron edition published in 2008 is over 600 pages long, featuring 174 narratives from 54 named narrators. Whatever problems it suffers from as a consequence of Bladé's literary attitudes to folk narrative, the richness of the collection and its potential as a research tool are beyond question. In the final analysis, perhaps the most damaging consequence of the question of authenticity is that it results in a split between authentic and fake, and does no justice to things that fall in between. Unlike purely literary depictions or paintings of rural folk, we have evidence about the individuals that Bladé represented. Even if his transcriptions were not verbatim, they still represent things that real rural individuals talked about: the stories they told.

### Bladé's Problem with Authorship and Authenticity

The colloquium held in Bladé's hometown of Lectoure in the 1980s addressed the many facets of Bladé as an author and as a man (Arrouye 1985). Literary critics, folklorists and historians discussed Bladé's creative fiction (Anatole 1985a), historical works (Anatole 1985b), ancestry (Courtès and Bordes 1985; Castan 1985), and correspondents (Dupuy 1985; Latry 1985), but the majority of articles concerned Bladé's folklore collections (Aribaut 1985; Arrouye 1985b; Eucher 1985; Gardy 1985; Salles Loustau 1985; Scaravetti 1985; Traimond 1985). In the final article in the collection Bernard Traimond summed up the suspicions of many of the other contributions to the volume, arguing that Bladé's concept of "authenticity" does not match up to modern requirements concerning the faithfulness of folklore transcriptions to orally performed narratives (Traimond 1985). The materials he published were too polished, too uniform, in short, too literary to be considered "authentic" folklore.

Traimond's critique is directed against what he calls a "myth" of Bladé propounded by writers since his death who established his collections as important and authentic records of Gascon folklore, but largely did so by drawing on Bladé's own writings (Traimond 1985, 223-5). Traimond has good grounds for his unease. During his own lifetime, Bladé played fast and loose with the conventions of authorial integrity. He published under pseudonyms, such as J.-F. Bédal, or the "Catalan" Bartolomé Herreras (Pic 1985, 157; Bladé 1856a; Bladé 1856b). More damning for his posthumous reputation as a folklorist, however, were the Märchen he published as

pieces of creative fiction. In 1857 “The Flute” appeared as a piece of creative fiction “translated from the Catalan of Bartolomé Herreras” in the *Revue d’Aquitaine* (Bladé 1856a). In the 1885 edition of the *Folktales of Gascony*, a modified version of the same story appears as the transcription of an oral narrative performed by Pauline Lacaze (Bladé 2008, 251-2).

Rather than simply using Bladé’s own writings and biography as evidence for the authenticity of his folklore collecting and publishing methods, as writers before Traimond did, I want to suggest that these inconsistencies call into question the very idea that any folklore transcription could be “authentic” (Ritchie 1993). Bladé behaved much like the literary forgers that Nick Groom has studied: by writing under different names, and drawing on inconsistent models of authentication, Bladé became a multiplicity of author-functions. Instead of one author, he appears to be “no-one” (Groom 2002, 256-292).

During his lifetime he was a performer of traditional Gascon folktales as well as humorous anecdotes (Heiniger-Casteret 2004). Yet this humorous narrator also wrote polemical historical works that savagely attacked the authenticity of historical manuscripts and folklore collections such as Hersart de la Villemarqué’s *Barzaz Breiz* and MacPherson’s *Fragments of Ancient Poetry* (Bladé 1862; Bladé 1869; Bladé 2008, 22). He presented his role in his own folklore collections as an “honest and pious scribe” (Bladé 2008, 42), in contrast to those authors whose folktales and legends “smelt of provincial romanticism from a mile off” (Bladé 2008, 25), yet the

only field-notes ever discovered revealed that Bladé certainly did not note all of the materials he collected verbatim (Heiniger-Casteret 2009).

By examining in turn these competing and interlocking models of authentication we can gain a better understanding of what factors might have contributed to the transcriptions he published. Rather than seeing Bladé as hopelessly unreliable, I would suggest that there are three main ways in which he lays claim to reliability, but they are both internally inconsistent, and compete with one another. The first was the authority of the individual as a witness or audience. This model drew on Bladé's own romantic and nostalgic literary ambitions, but was also buttressed by Bladé's own status as a Gascon, who had heard folktales, legends, and songs as a child, and performed them as an adult.

The second force located authenticity externally, whether in a historical world that could be objectively or scientifically accessed, or in an anonymous and pure tradition "in the nearby distance of the countryside" (Certeau 1984, 131). This second force comes into serious conflict with the authority of the romantic author, as well as the third force, which predominated in his attitude towards legends. This third force encouraged Bladé to believe that the authenticity of narratives belonged to the virtuosity and memory of specific talented narrators.

Bladé was trapped in a three-way paradox: there is no objective existence of a narrative tradition that can be scientifically proved. Such a Herderian idea of the independent existence of tradition is forced to locate authenticity in the shadowy figures of the anonymous "folk," or results in the reification of narratives as "things,"

whose ur-form could be discovered by the diffusionists and or tracked through space and time by the historic-geographic folklorists. Bladé's authority as witness is seriously damaged by his "no-one" status of multiple attitudes to authorship and authority. Finally, there was no way for others to verify the importance of his most famous narrator. By 1868, Cazaux was dead (Archives Départementales du Gers). If each of the models of authenticity contradicted one another, they were also torn apart internally: Bladé was a "witness," but also a narrator himself; the tradition once existed in a pure form, but no longer did; Cazaux was the most important narrator, but would not reveal all of his secrets to Bladé.

The folklore text is neither made up of the pure voice of the "communal" folk (Oring 1986, 18), the creative act of the individual performer (Azadovskii 1974), nor the gaze of the folklorist (Ritchie 1993), but by all of these processes, intertwined as an act of creative forging. Linda Dégh's work on legends suggests that folklorists have always had the most success when they try to balance the three terms of the performer, the audience, and the tradition (Dégh 2001, 206). Bladé's indecision and contradictions about authenticity might be a redeeming feature that allows modern readers to see his texts as the dynamic interaction of the folklorist, the performer, and the tradition.

## The “Witness” and the Narrator

### i. “Haunted by the Demon of Literature”

As a young man Bladé gravitated to Paris, like the provincial heroes and villains of novels by Stendhal, Balzac, and Maupassant. Like so many of these fictional characters, Bladé lived a bohemian lifestyle and entertained literary pretensions. One author remembers Bladé moving in artistic circles, where he knew, and greatly admired, the poet Baudelaire (Alleman 1930, 122-135; Lavergne 1904, 8). In an acerbic poem about one of his many enemies, Bladé suggested that this enemy was “haunted by the demon of literature,” but the epithet perhaps better suits Bladé himself (Lavergne 1904, 14).

As a young man Bladé was recalled from Paris to pursue a tedious career as a local notary, a career which one of his biographers tells us he never enjoyed or excelled at (Alleman 1930, 136-7). The frustrated young provincial had had a taste of Parisian literature that he would never forget (Alleman 1930, 136-7), so Bladé turned to publishing imaginative short stories in local journals (Bladé 1856a; Bladé 1856b; Bladé 1858a; Bladé 1858b; Bladé 1859; Bladé 1860a; Bladé 1860b; Bladé 1860c; Anatole 1985a). These modest literary ambitions have colored the reception of Bladé’s folklore collections ever since, earning him the questionable compliment of being not only the Grimm, but even the Nodier of Gascony (Lafont and Anatole 1970, 365). While Charles Nodier was a famous early nineteenth-century author, his short stories influenced by folk narratives are considered firmly representative of the romantic literary fantastic (Todorov 1973).

As well as the short stories and poetry he wrote as a young man, Bladé owes the tone of the introductions to his folklore collections to these literary influences of a slightly “outdated” romanticism (Anatole 1985a, 14). These introductions emphasize that the “guarantee of any collector lies above all in his aptitude and in his scientific honor, witnessed by the qualified provincial public... above all by the voices of native and specialist critics” (Bladé 2008, 29). However, Bladé provides little evidence of these apparently approving critics, instead founding the authenticity of his collection on what he calls his own “sincerity” (Bladé 2008, 29) as an “honest and pious scribe” (Bladé 2008, 42).

#### ii. Literary Romanticism: Childhood, Purity, Gender, and Death

To reinforce this personal authority as a witness, Bladé employs all the tools of literary romanticism. He frequently reminisces about his own happy childhood, describing in the present tense, rather than the past, the tale-telling of the family servants ordered to “amuse the baby” (Bladé 2008, 14):

Beautiful tales unfold in the native dialect, bourn by slow and rhythmic voices. They unfold in their sacred and invariable formulas, often arrested by silences when the spinners... mend their broken threads and their distant memories. (Bladé 2008, 14)

This romantic register depicts tradition bearers in terms that emphasize purity, femininity, and death. Bladé regretfully wrote that he knew Catherine Sustrac when she was “young, simple, naïve,” but that the forty-year-old had lost her “most precious gifts” and the “virginal clarity” from her exposure to the world (Bladé 2008, 31). As with many aspects of Bladé’s life and works, this importance of gender was

emphasized by his biographer and great-niece Jeanne Alleman. Although she described him collecting tales from the “mouths of sharecroppers,” presumably male, her most extravagant descriptions were saved for his female informants, the “old ladies with shaking teeth... the pure mouths of young girls” (Alleman 1930, 2). In this, as in other aspects of her biography, Alleman was merely accentuating tendencies already evident in Bladé’s own work.

The importance of feminine innocence to this idea of authenticity finds its most extreme representation in the figure of Sereine, the presumably fabricated young girl who Bladé described in the introduction to his collection of folksongs. “All of the poetry of my *pays*, Gascony, came to life, fresh and rejuvenated, in the soul of this child” (Bladé 2008, I, xxviii). One evening, as they were alone, Sereine told the young Bladé that she would be dead by the next day. Under the influence of his grandmother, Bladé resolved to collect the poetry of his *pays* as a tribute to the now dead girl (Bladé 1881, xxix-xxx).

A full fifteen years before his own death, the introduction to the definitive edition of *The Folktales of Gascony* demonstrates the importance of death and a disappearing world to Bladé’s conception of Gascon tradition. The conception of Bladé the faithful witness is asserted at the very point he revels in romantic nostalgia:

For more than a quarter of a century I have travelled through the pale world of memories, haunted by visions of the ancestors. Many times dreams of the past consoled me for the sorrows of the present. The select few [can author] individual works of genius. Me, I am a good witness. I listen and retell the old songs and legends of times gone by. It is enough to gild my declining life, and to raise a poor researcher to the powerful and calm joys of the great poets. (Bladé 2008, 42)

The importance of romantic themes such as childhood, purity, death, and even poetry to Bladé's authority as a personal witness to the folklore of Gascony has been probably the most problematic idea for subsequent authors to swallow. In foregrounding his own romantic nostalgia as the mark of his integrity as a witness, Bladé, these authors have argued, allowed himself the liberty to re-write the folk narratives he published (Arrouye 1985a, 8; Traimond 1985). The writers Robert Lafont and Christian Anatole did not doubt that he collected from "authentic sources," but the question is how much he "used his arts to touch up and dramatize the prose of the folktales" (Lafont and Anatole 1970, 685). "Haunted by the demon of literature," Bladé seems closer in style and method to MacPherson and Hersart de la Villemarqué than to his correspondents François Luzel and Félix Arnaudin.

### iii. The "Folklorist-Storyteller"

But Bladé's authenticating role as "sincere" witness is complicated by the relative lack of distance between his own identity and the identities he portrayed in *The Folktales of Gascony*. Unlike the Brothers Grimm, who discovered the Märchen as adults, Bladé heard Gascon folktales from family members and servants as a child (Bottigheimer 1987, 3). His personal authority in the quotation above is not just as a "witness," a listener, but also in "retell[ing]" as a narrator. The historian Peter Burke has proposed that the early modern period saw a concerted attempt imposed from above to reform the popular culture of the common people, which resulted in the splitting of popular, largely oral culture, and elite, largely written culture (Burke 1978, 207-243). At the end of the eighteenth century, elite writers such as Herder and

MacPherson took a new interest in the now foreign oral culture, and this process, which Burke calls the “discovery of the people” was the driving force for the folklore collecting projects of the nineteenth century (Burke 1978, 3-22).

As with all well-reasoned but large-scale theories, Burke recognizes that his idea holds well for the general picture, but fails to account for local variations. Bladé was not an elite, divorced from oral popular culture. He grew up learning folklore not only from the representatives of the popular classes that he knew as family servants, but also from his uncle, Prosper Bladé, a local priest, and his grandmother, Marie de Lacaze, a minor noble. There is no direct identification of the folk with one specific social class in *The Folktales of Gascony*. Bladé does refer to the stories and traditions of “our peasants” (Bladé 2008, 35), preferably illiterate (Bladé 2008, 30), but he also recorded stories from literate and educated locals such as the head judge in Lectoure, his uncle, the priest, and his noble grandmother.

Modern readers might find Bladé’s literary romantic nostalgia off-putting when considering the value of his collections, but this distaste risks obscuring the fact that Bladé really did know and identify with many of the narratives he recorded. Rather than a complete outsider to popular traditions, he was somewhere in between an elite and the popular classes, not least because his job as a notary positioned him between the common people and the legal system that they occasionally had recourse to. The historian Maurice Agulhon has drawn attention to this intermediary status of provincial lawyers (Agulhon 1982, 155), which is perhaps not dissimilar to the ambiguous status of other small-town figures, such as the teacher, mayor, or priest

(Singer 1983). Against Burke's general thesis about elite distance from folk practices in the nineteenth century, educated provincials such as Bladé heartily engaged in popular traditions.

Bladé could even be considered a folklore informant himself, since he was known during his lifetime for his magnificent oral narratives (Alleman 1930, 4-11; Heiniger-Casteret 2004; Lavergne 1904, 8-9). Jeanne Alleman, remembers him as a teller of traditional tales, as an old man "under his grey hair, larger and stronger than anyone present [in her home]... He resembled an old Roman" (Alleman 1930, 6). "After dinner, my uncle told tales. Everyone was quiet. Us children watched him with wide eyes. He narrated in a strong, deep voice, with long breaths. And the tales had such beautiful names..." (Alleman 1930, 9).

This identification with and intimate knowledge of the narrative materials he recorded also has its negative implications. After all, if Bladé was such a gifted storyteller, he might have had little need of other informants to compile *The Folktales of Gascony*. Thanks to the lucky discovery of a small number of his field-notes by Patricia Heiniger-Casteret, it is certain that Bladé did do fieldwork of a kind (Heiniger-Casteret 2009). His descriptions of his most important narrators are not pure fantasies, but refer to real individuals.

The ultimate defence for Bladé would be Occam's razor. The variety and quantity of the collection suggests that Bladé was interested in many kinds of narrator. If Bladé wrote all the tales and legends himself, and took very little interest in the performances of his informants, then he would have had to have been master of

ventriloquism. Everything we know about his own narrative performances is different from the style of the collection. Although Alleman refers once to her great-uncle as a narrator of folktales, his other biographer, Adrien Lavergne, chiefly remembers Bladé as a narrator of humorous anecdotes (Lavergne 1904, 9-12), which Alleman herself reproduces throughout her biography. It simply appears more likely that Bladé collected the stories in *The Folktales of Gascony* than made them up.

#### iv. Bladé's Narratives: Humor, Childhood, and Gascon Men

Bladé was no serious narrator of epic tales and supernatural legends like his most infamous informant, Cazaux. According to his biographers, Bladé told amusing stories chiefly about his own childhood rebelliousness, masculinity, and Gascon identity. The problem is that we have too little evidence from Bladé's own writings. Like Cazaux himself, he did not leave written versions of his oral repertoire, apart from the anecdotes so important to his introductions.

One example is the charivari Bladé described in *The Folksongs of Gascony*. The charivari, known in England as "rough music" or the "skimmington" and in America as the "chivaree," was a loud public shaming ceremony performed by members of the local community and directed against individuals who had broken conventions about marriage practices (Davis 1971; Segalen 1983, 41, 53; Weber 1976, 399-406). Bladé describes how, as elsewhere throughout France, the local authorities took a dim view of what they saw as a popular disturbance, and the local police commissioner tried to break up the crowd of boisterous singers. The young

Bladé took this opportunity to throw a firework between the legs of the commissioner, and he was apparently later punished for his audacity (Bladé 1881, vol. II, vii-ix).

This written narrative is typical of the rebelliousness that Jeanne Alleman draws attention to in her biography (Alleman 1930, for instance 140-1). It is also typical in emphasizing Bladé's close involvement with Gascon traditions, which seems to have been the main reason for including the story in the folksong collection. Bladé wrote: "That is how I suffered at an early age for the cause of folklore [*littérature populaire*]" (Bladé 1881, vol. II, x).

The story is less typical in that it was written by Bladé himself. The remaining anecdotes, or Bladéana, as Lavergne called the stories, are reproduced second-hand in Lavergne's short work, and Alleman's much longer work. Most of the examples in Alleman's biography are summaries, but Lavergne tried to reproduce one narrative, entitled "The Otter Skin Cap," in full:

Old Monsieur Alexandre was one of the best cooks in the South in his day, and the owner of the most important hotel in Auch.

Every evening at nine, in the summer and winter, dressed in an otter skin cap the likes of which no-one has ever seen, he went to the café Daroles. The waiter, who knew his habits, simply gave him a deck of cards, which Alexandre used to provoke everyone. But he had beaten the best players so soundly and so many times that no-one dared play him.

One evening, they brought him a young man who had had the imprudence to admit he played sometimes. Alexandre greeted him by touching his hand to his otter skin cap and they set about playing. After a few good hands, Alexandre lost one hand, then another, and kept losing. All the regulars from the café stood round the players in a circle, enjoying the revenge that Alexandre's rotten luck afforded them.

When he had lost all the money he had in his pockets, the young man was going to leave, when they came up with an opportunity for Alexandre to recoup his losses: 'Cau jouga la casqueto!' ("You should play for the cap!").

Faced with such a large sum, Alexandre put down his otter skin cap and... lost it. The traveller didn't want to carry off such a prize: "It was a joke," he said; but his adversary replied in a firm tone with an unanswerable declaration: 'N'ei pas la mio, la boi pas.' ("It isn't mine, I don't want it."). It was winter, Alexandre covered his head with a checked hanky and returned home in a bad mood, [and resolved not to] go out again.

However, around this time carnival was approaching, and the hotel owner thought he should not neglect his long-standing habit of providing a feast for the finest gluttons of the town. In the middle of this meal, a servant brought in a parcel which it proved impossible to discover the provenance of. They took off the lid; it contained a magnificent pie, whose distinguishing feature was a sort of golden brown central dome. The exquisite odour which emanated from the pie encouraged the best opinion of its contents. Alexandre, with a deft slash of the knife, cut around the dome, whipped it off and discovered... his old prized cap!

The same evening, as the clock of the town hall struck nine, Alexandre walked into the café Daroles, dressed in his otter skin cap and beat every player who dared play with him. (Lavergne 1904, 11-12)

This, the only surviving full-length narrative from Bladé's personal repertoire, encapsulates another important theme in Bladé's life and works: competitive masculinity. Despite his interest in female narrators, Bladé's own narrative repertoire, as reproduced by his biographers, includes almost no women. Many of the stories, like "The Otter Skin Cap," are about Bladé's mischievous and masculine sense of humor and the dangerous but ubiquitous underlying tension of masculine competition.

The only narrative that does discuss a woman is instructive. Bladé makes no reference to his wife Elizabeth in any of his writings, and Alleman follows his lead, only mentioning that their marriage was no great source of joy for Bladé (Alleman 1930, 186). However, Alleman also tells one story about Bladé and his wife. According to what Alleman heard from other female family members, Bladé's wife once became infuriated with his disorderly affairs, so she burnt some of his scattered papers in the fireplace:

So then my [great] uncle opened his wife's dresser. He took out her most beautiful laces and calmly burnt them, without a second thought, silently, in order to serve as an example. My [great] aunt let out terrible cries! When they remembered this story, the women of the family took her side. (Alleman 1930, 5-6)

#### v. The Problem with Alleman: Family Folklore and Regional Archetypes

An obvious problem with Jeanne Alleman and Adrien Lavergne as sources for Bladé's narrative persona is that their memories were selective, and designed to give some unity to Bladé's life. Yet this unity is exactly what his authorial combinations of romanticism, scientific history, and ethnographic fidelity calls into question. As a family relation of Bladé, Alleman is most obviously guilty of this. While most of her book is an amplification of comments and stories in Bladé's own works, she also makes a concerted effort to depict the folklorist as an archetypal Gascon, and as an archetypal Bladé.

It is Alleman's memories that provide the evidential basis for her portrait of her grandmother's brother, but these memories are shaped by, and expressed through, family folklore. In her book, Jean-François is made to stand for "a true Bladé" (Alleman 1930, 78), just as the older generation in modern American family stories are depicted as embodiments of the family's values and attributes (Stone 1988, 35). In Alleman's schema, Bladés are strong men, like Jean-François's uncle, the priest (Alleman 1930, 81). If they are not strong, they are at least big, like Jean-François's father, whose gut was so large that "belly of a Bladé" was the local slang for a fat bourgeois (Alleman 1930, 26-7). Bladé more than lives up to these demands of

physical presence. Alleman remembers him as an old man, “larger and stronger than anyone present” in her home (Alleman 1930, 6).

There are character traits that make “a true Bladé,” as well. All Bladés are known for their keen sense of justice, which is why so many became lawyers, notaries, and priests (Alleman 1930, 94). At the same time, rebelliousness is also characteristic of his “race,” producing a paradox Elizabeth Stone also found in the modern American family stories she studied: the title of black sheep can be a way to remain within the family and its folklore (Alleman 1930, 105, 140, 149-151; Stone 1988, 231-2). Every family needs its rebels, and rebelliousness can even be a family trait.

As with Bladé’s performances, this family identity shades into a regional or racial identity. The idea of Jean-François as a Gascon, and the Bladé family as archetypal Gascons, is ultimately what ties all of the other themes together: “He was courageous, even daring. All of the faults and qualities of the Gascon!” (Alleman 1930, 164). After all, “[w]hen we say Gascon, don’t we mean pride, courage and military spirit?” (Alleman 1930, 245). The very rebelliousness that caused him so many problems in provincial society is made to stand as evidence that Bladé was Gascon through and through:

He might have changed his mind about many things in the stormy years of his youth. But what never faltered in him was that part of the soul mingled in his flesh where, at a deep level, the forces of the race and his poetry condensed. Opinions change. The earth remains. (Alleman 1930, 39)

vi. Listening and Retelling

Although Alleman's work comes close to over-simplifying Bladé into a type based on family self-definitions and regional identity, most of her ideas are in the spirit of Bladé's own writings. In his introductions he told romantic anecdotes about childhood, feminine purity, and death, which were associated with the sincerity and fidelity of his personal act of witnessing. As an oral performer, his narrative interests were slightly different. There was the same interest in childhood, but the tone of the narratives tended to be much more comic, and the characters were almost always male, and often engaged in competition. If the romantic tone of Bladé as "witness" has convinced very few writers, perhaps this knowledge of Bladé's own storytelling interests suggests one part of his role in forging the stories he collected: as a narrator, he was particularly interested in masculinity, childhood, and rebelliousness, and enjoyed humorous stories, so it would make sense that he sought out storytellers with similar interests, or coaxed his informants into telling stories that appealed to this side of his character.

The problem with this thesis is that this is not what he did. Most of Bladé's informants were women, and they told him stories about men, women, and children. Cazaux was Bladé's only prolific male narrator, and the only narrator he collected from whose stories focussed on adult men. For these reasons, Cazaux played a special part in Bladé's collection.

### i. Objective Truth and Aural Purity

Bladé's roles as listener and re-teller are probably the most complex and contradictory force for authenticity in his works, but many similar themes extend from this first model into Bladé's second model: the idea of a scientific history or an objective tradition. In his historical research, Bladé engaged in long polemics about the authenticity of documents concerning the origins of the Basques, whose separate linguistic and ethnic identity puzzled southern French writers (Bladé 1862; Bladé 1869).

Just as there was an objective standard of truth to manuscripts, Bladé often endorsed an ideal of an independent truth to narrative traditions. Bladé wrote that "Monsieur de la Villemarqué permitted himself to add many things to the veritable traditions of his province. The time has come to put an end to these unacceptable practices" (Bladé 2008, 22). In the introduction to *The Folktales of Gascony*, Bladé declared that these "veritable traditions" belonged to the illiterate "peasants" (Bladé 2008, 29-30). But to claim this was to commit himself to an inescapable paradox: how can the written texts that he published be authentic, when authenticity resides in illiteracy, and naïve simplicity?

The self-defeating answer that Bladé came up with was that the "veritable traditions" had in fact been destroyed by his own work. Bladé suggested the scenario of "a critic... [coming] to investigate my aptitude and sincerity as a collector" (Bladé 2008, 29). This critic would discover all of the tales and legends Bladé collected, but this would be because his published works were so successful that they had been read

to all of the “little peasants” of the département of the Gers (Bladé 2008, 29).

Authenticity resided in the anonymous oral tradition uncontaminated by literacy, but Bladé’s fieldwork itself had now destroyed this aural purity. The critic who heard the stories “would have taken simple echoes for the sounds of the first origin” (Bladé 2008, 29)

Inescapably, the idea that there were “veritable traditions” had to rely once more on Bladé’s authority as a witness. The case of the epic tales is the best example of this. Bladé believed that tales such as “The Man of Every Color” existed as a tradition almost independently of each individual narration. By collecting versions from many different narrators, he believed, like the Brothers Grimm, that he could piece together a more perfect, whole version, which he referred to as a “rhapsody” (Bladé 1875; Bottigheimer 1987, 5). For this reason, the tales in *The Folktales of Gascony* are often attributed to multiple narrators, and Bladé gives no indication of which parts came from which teller, or how he arranged them. He theorizes the independent existence of the most perfect and anonymous version of the Märchen, but his evidence is his own editorial intervention, based on personal notions of aesthetic value and wholeness. Even when he presented texts based on one narration, he made the selection based on the same criteria: “It goes without saying that I reserved the right to choose the best and most complete text from each group of similar narrations from different narrators” (Bladé 2008, 28)

For these reasons of internal inconsistency in the model of authenticity based on an objective truth, it has appeared as the weakest of the three models to subsequent

writers (Anatole 1985b; Traimond 1985). Bladé's historical writings are the most committed to this ideal. Unlike the folklore works where Bladé uses the words "veritable" and "sincere," the historical works are explicitly about the "authenticity" of manuscript documents (Bladé 1869, ii). They are also the least respected of his works, even in Jeanne Alleman's biography. Alleman laments the time that Bladé wasted pursuing chimeras of authenticity in medieval documents (Alleman 1930, 4). When Bladé strayed too far from his own status as a witness, things could get very heated.

#### ii. Masculine Competition and Homosocial Identification

On close inspection, these polemics over documentary authenticity have less to do with the "analytical method" Bladé professed in the introduction (Bladé 1869, i) than a form of competitive masculinity in which Bladé once more professed his own sincerity and honor, while pouring the most inappropriate insults on his literary enemies. Robert Nye has suggested that nineteenth-century French bourgeois masculinity owes more to an aristocratic model of honor and shame than Victorian prudishness and the ethic of hard work (Nye 1993). Bladé's comments about hard work and determination in his historical works seem to fit this model, emphasizing heroic efforts rather than simple laboriousness. Bladé describes his "ardour," the "size of the obstacles" to be overcome, "attacking the difficulties," and the "difficult and perilous" nature of this work (Bladé 1869, i, 364).

Bladé had previously published an article in the *Revue d'Aquitaine* in 1862 where he outlined an argument about the inauthenticity of two Basque songs, and this

article stirred up a storm of criticism, which the later *Study on the Origins of the Basques* was partly designed to address (Bladé 1862). Rather than retracting his claims, however, the later work expanded them, only conceding minor points to his critics. When he did concede a point, he liked to follow it with a pious statement of his own integrity: “my penitent confession will prove, once again, that one should never exaggerate, not even mistrust of apocryphal documents” (Bladé 1869, 448). While appearing to concede, Bladé succeeds in protesting once again his honorable intentions, even going so far as to claim that he is an enemy of exaggeration.

Yet Bladé loved to exaggerate, and if there was one thing above all else that he overemphasized in this historical work, it was the faults of his enemies. In the footnotes to *The Study on the Origins of the Basques*, he refers to his two greatest scholarly rivals, Chaho and Cénac-Moncaut, as variously “old,” “mad,” “infectious,” “liars,” “worthless,” and “beneath criticism” (Bladé 1869, 61, 62, 70-1, 215, 229, 265, 286). He labels their work “mirages,” “trickery,” and “etymological fantasies” (Bladé 1869, 339) At one point, he refers to Cénac-Moncaut’s “innate penchant for falsehood” (Bladé 1869, 465). These vitriolic accusations are constantly tempered by sudden outbreaks of heroic generosity on Bladé’s behalf. He writes, for instance, “M. Cénac-Moncaut is no doubt an excellent man; but it is a complete waste of time trying to discuss any point of political or literary history with him” (Bladé 1869, 449).

Neither were these rhetorical devices limited to his historical works. In the introduction to *The Folktales of Gascony*, Bladé referred a number of times to the unreliable folk narrative collections assembled by Cénac-Moncaut. “Cénac-Moncaut

personifies just the opposite of all of the qualities necessary for any good investigator of folklore [*traditions populaires*]” (Bladé 2008, 26). Bladé the scholar was a warrior locked in combat with his male adversaries.

For every enemy, there was also a homosocial identification with an excellent acquaintance. Bladé proudly referred to both his “valiant friend” François Luzel and his “old friend V. Lespy” in the introduction to *The Folktales of Gascony* (Bladé 2008, 27, 29), but by far the most revered and adored figure in his works was his friend and intellectual mentor Léonce Couture. Alleman describes in detail the affection that the two men who both lived in Lectoure had for one another (Alleman 1930, 136-157). The letter that she reproduces at the end of the chapter devoted to their friendship is filled with passionate declarations of affection: “We are destined to walk side by side together, to help one another... I will tell you my thoughts, and you tell me yours. What do you think?.. You are like my confessor...” (Alleman 1930, 155-6).

The objective truth was not simply out there, it was essentially the property of the best specialists, Bladé’s male friends. As he wrote to Couture, “You are the only one absolutely suited to me thanks to the solidity of your studies and the sincerity of your literary and historical opinions” (Alleman 1930, 155). This was the same idea he expressed in the introduction to *The Folktales of Gascony* when he said that the “guarantee of any collector lies” with the approval of the qualified specialists (Bladé 2008, 29). For all of his talk of “veritable traditions” and the “sounds of first origin” (Bladé 2008, 29), Bladé had a tendency towards radical social constructivism: the

collection was authentic because Bladé's male friends said it was, and any critics who dared question this risked being showered with the kinds of insults he addressed to Cénac-Moncaut.

### The Storyteller: Cazaux

#### i. Good Informants

The final guarantor of authenticity that Bladé presented was the skills and knowledge of his most talented informants, described at length in the introduction to *The Folktales of Gascony* (Bladé 2008, 30-32). Bladé emphasized that certain narrators were better than others, and that he relied on a certain style of performer to compile his collection:

[A]s a very general rule, the weakest and most deformed narrations come from informants with some education, such as primary school teachers, who know too much to remain naïve, and not enough to become naïve once more... it is chiefly among those who cannot read that true informants [*témoins*] must be sought...

At the start of my research, like many of my colleagues, I happened upon that group of narrators who are surely the most numerous, but who deserve very little confidence. For them, the integrity of a story is not safeguarded by any hallowed form. Caring little for style, and above all concentrating on the ideas and facts, they are always long-winded, verbose [*diffus*], and completely incapable of restarting their narration in the same terms. These are very dangerous guides, only good for putting [the folklorist] onto the track of more sober and exact narrations. Those who possess [the more sober and exact narrations] get to the point by the quickest route. If you ask them to restart, each one of them will do it constantly in the same terms. When you ask them to discuss the same theme separately, you will notice only a small number of variations in the theme, and you will recognize many similarities in the style. (Bladé 2008, 29-30)

Of all these “principal narrators” (Bladé 2008, 32) notable for their “sober and exact narrations,” Cazaux earned the longest and most complex description, perhaps because he most forcefully embodied the paradoxes of Bladé's concept of a good

narrator. Bladé praises the “docility” of both Pauline Lacaze and Isidore Escarnot, but recognizes that two of his best narrators, Marianne Bense and Cazaux, draw their very narrative strength from their defiance and reluctance to part with valuable secrets. Marianne Bense, Bladé tells the reader, was “[s]tubborn... and capricious, like all priest’s servants, and would not talk except when she wanted to, denying that she knew things she didn’t want to tell, only to retract later” (Bladé 2008, 31).

From these descriptions it is obvious that Bladé, like other early folklorists such as the Sokolov brothers or Hamish Henderson, had no sense of the intrusiveness and inconvenience that his investigations represented (Boris Sokolov and Yuri Sokolov 1999, especially 82; Kodish 1987). Although he called them his “informants [*témoins*]” or “narrators,” and even said that he “consulted” them (Bladé 2008, 32), it is hard to deny the essentially coercive implications of his language to describe Cazaux. According to Bladé, Escarnot was “one of [his] most intelligent, [and his] most docile informants.” On the other hand, he tells us:

Cazaux caused me much more difficulty.

He was an old man, quite plump, with a muddy complexion, seamed with a thousand wrinkles, with small, lacklustre, and misty eyes, dressed, according to the season in either a grey frock or a coarse, blue woollen outfit, but whatever the weather he wore his otter skin cap. From working with his hands for more than sixty years, this illiterate octogenarian had saved up enough to buy a little garden, so he could live soberly in his small house in Lectoure in one of the little streets next to the place d’Armes. After the death of my poor father, I voluntarily managed Cazaux’s interests, and he never failed to come the day after each payment was due to claim the small amount of income that I collected for him. During one of these visits, I discovered by chance that I was in the presence of a totally outstanding narrator, acquainted with [a large amount of material], superstitious in completely good faith, but more defiant on his own than all my previous informants [*témoins*]. In order to tame him, I made all sorts of submissions and used the treasures of a diplomacy conquered by ten years of practice. But Cazaux never talked except when he wanted to.

During the warm weather, we would meet, every evening, on the corner of the road that comes off the end of the Esplanade, which dominates the vast countryside, closed off in the distance by the vague blue line of the Pyrenees. Once he was certain that the two of us were alone, Cazaux grew thirty years younger. His gaze lit up. In his slow, serious voice, he dictated, with ample and serious gestures, sometimes silencing himself in order to gather his thoughts, or cast a suspicious look around us. I wrote rapidly, and later corrected the texts under the sometimes tyrannical control of my narrator. I know for certain that Cazaux held back from telling me things and that he died thinking me unworthy of noting half of what he knew. (Jean-François Bladé 1885, 31-2)

It seems not to have occurred to Bladé that Cazaux's reluctance may have been well-founded, and that in asking for his stories, Bladé was offending the octogenarian, who may well have understood that Bladé considered him "superstitious in completely good faith." Reading Bladé's colorful description of the old man, it is easy to see the ways in which the folklorist essentially forged the memory of the narrator.

Cazaux, he tells us, was a man of the land who had worked with his hands for more than sixty years. Cazaux not only wore coarse rural clothing and the signature otter skin cap, but he embodied the defiance that Bladé and Alleman's writings both insisted were typical of the Gascon race. Most of all, Cazaux was a great narrator, whose repertoire was so rich that Bladé was "certain" he did not tell him "half of what he knew." This was the image of Cazaux that Bladé forged for posterity: a "superstitious," earthy, and "defiant" peasant. But we do not have to entirely take Bladé's word for it.

ii. Cazaux's Traces

There is a major difference between the two forms of authenticity represented by Bladé as witness and the objectively documentable tradition and the last model of authenticity, located in the figure of the informant, Cazaux. There is, as we have seen, no way to prove Bladé's sincerity, and no way to access the pristine sounds of the oral tradition. Cazaux, by contrast, has a documented existence independently of Bladé, which previous researchers writing about the two men have not even consulted.

Cazaux was a real man, born in 1782 to parents Mathieu Cazaux and Jeanne Bragayrat in the small village of St. Mezard, just a few miles from Lectoure (Archives Départementales du Gers). His death certificate states that he was a *domestique* or servant during his lifetime, but this could mean that Cazaux occupied anything from the lowly position of a day-laborer to the more prestigious title of foreman (Archives Départementales du Gers). The death certificate also states that he was a bachelor, and he left his belongings to nieces and nephews (Archives Départementales du Gers).

This information might seem sparse, but its importance should not be underestimated. It establishes Cazaux in a localized context. From his mother's death certificate, we know that his father was a farmer in the tiny commune where he was baptised (Archives Départementales du Gers). From Cazaux's birth certificate we can discover that neither of his parents could write, a pattern that recurs throughout all of the archival documents relating to Cazaux's family (Archives Départementales du Gers). Not only was Cazaux illiterate, as Bladé had claimed, but it seems that most of his close relatives were.

It also establishes Cazaux in a historical time frame. Bladé had vague ideas about the old man's age, as did Cazaux's death certificate, which suggested that he was 88 when he died (Archives Départementales du Gers). In fact, he was only 86, having been born in 1782. This means that Cazaux was 7 when the Revolution began, and lived his teenage years under the Republic, and then the Napoleonic Empire. He would have been 20 in 1802, and eligible to be conscripted into the Imperial Army. Cazaux must have had personal memories of the French Revolution and Napoleonic Empire, as well as the Restoration and subsequent regimes.

The document drawn up to divide his belongings among his inheritors nuances Bladé's description of Cazaux. Bladé insisted on his informant's secretiveness, and suggested that Cazaux did not want to be seen telling him stories (Bladé 2008, 32). It would be possible to interpret Bladé's fortuitous discovery of the narrator as a sign that Cazaux was not known in his own social milieu as a storyteller. However, Bladé's portrait of Cazaux emphasizes the old man set apart from his peers, while the documents relating to his belongings show a man engaged in numerous financial and benevolent relationships.

For a start, Cazaux had left specific orders about which belongings would go to which of his nephews and nieces. He must have had relations with his niece, Catherine Larribeau, to whom he left 1000 francs, as well as his nephew Rémy, to whom he left some land that Rémy had been cultivating before Cazaux's death (Archives Départementales du Gers). These nieces and nephews all lived in St-Mézard, Cazaux's birth commune. They belonged to a tightly-knit social group. To

offer one example, Cazaux's niece was married to the son of one of the witnesses to Cazaux's mother's death in the Year XIV (Archives Départementales du Gers).

Among Cazaux's possessions was a table and four chairs. Far from an isolated and secretive loner, the archival records reveal that Guillaume Cazaux was part of a dense social network. Retired bachelors have little use for four chairs unless they are accustomed to receiving guests.

Neither was Cazaux very poor. By the time he died, he owned a lot of land, as well as personal belongings. In addition, the notary who had written up his will, Palanque, had also been arranging Cazaux's finances. Palanque made various loans to farmers in the surrounding countryside on Cazaux's behalf, which amounted to 3,900 francs, a small fortune for an agricultural laborer.

The importance of all of this is that we learn that Cazaux could very well have been a narrator in his social milieu where he probably possessed no small amount of respect and power. If some of Bladé's informants were docile servants, perhaps the defiance that Bladé emphasized in his description of Cazaux should be understood as the consequence of Cazaux's relative independence. Bladé might have forged the portrait that we have of Cazaux today, but Cazaux himself had some ability to manipulate the folklorist, who was, after all, employed by Cazaux as his notary.

Conclusion: The Folklorist, the Narrator, and the Tradition

In this chapter, I have concentrated on Jean-François Bladé's personas as a literary author, historian, folklorist, and oral storyteller. Bladé's heritage is similar to that of a forger, in that he wrote and performed under different names and with different intentions. He even abandoned his baptised name of Zéphyrin, preferring to be known as Jean-François for most of his life.

This slipperiness has tarnished the reputation of Bladé's most important works, so that his folklore collections are sometimes considered inauthentic. The three important but contradictory models of authenticity in Bladé's life and works reveal that rather than a default of authentication, Bladé's writings were obsessed with purity, sincerity, and integrity. Unlike previous writers who have sought to disentangle the truth of Bladé's accuracy, this over-determination of authenticity could serve as a warning. There is no way to prove how faithful his transcriptions were, but these competing models feed into the forging of polyvocal texts. However skilled Bladé was as an oral performer, and however powerful the self-forged image he left to posterity, he could not create another man out of nothing. To say that he forged Cazaux is in no way to say that he invented him, since Cazaux was clearly a real man.

It seems that Bladé had a different attitude to purity and individual creativity when it came to tales and to legends, and this difference is apparent in the texts he published. In the following chapters, I will try to understand some of Cazaux's legends and beliefs as both expressions of the narrator's worldview and also responses to the folklorist. In some ways, the texts can be read as a dialogue about authenticity

or credibility between the two men, so that the two most powerful models of authenticity in Bladé's writings, the role of the personal "witness" and the importance of the skilled narrator, are in conversation with one another.

This mediated conversation is the justification for calling the figure of the folklorist central to the history of nineteenth-century Europe. The folklorists were what Bruno Latour calls "mediators," exchangers of information who did not simply communicate messages between different groups, but re-interpreted and changed the information that they mediated between the classic, dualistic poles of nineteenth-century Europe; orality and literacy, rural and urban, local and national. A capital city such as Paris is not as central to the histories of the interactions between these poles as is the folklorist who always occupies this middle position. This position of the provincial academic, which Dorothy Noyes has called "humble" is not to be scoffed at (Noyes 2008). As Noyes points out, this middle position renders folklorists better-suited to answering "How-questions" than "Why-questions" (Noyes 2008, 41).

In the case of Bladé and his informants, these kinds of questions of transmission and tradition on the very small scale of two men begin to suggest some of the ways that the folklorist and his rural informant oriented themselves to one another, not just relying on some pre-existent identity or social context, but actively constructing them. These processes are the subjects of the following chapters, but mention needs to be made of a path not followed. If Bladé's model of the authenticating "witness" and Cazaux's role as the skilled narrator are in a

conversation about credibility and authenticity, focusing exclusively on them brackets the intermediary model: the tradition, quasi-independent of either witness or narrator.

Tracing the existence or dissemination of a tradition, as the diffusionists and Finnish historic-geographers found (Burns 1986, 5-11), is a Sisyphean struggle that relies on meticulous documentation, most of which is lacking for past periods. The bracketing of “tradition” is more a sign of the difficulty of following up this lead, than a denial of the importance of the third figure that stands between the narrator and his audience: the story.

CHAPTER II

CAN THE “PEASANT” SPEAK? WITCHCRAFT AND  
SILENCE IN GUILLAUME CAZAUX’S “THE MASS OF  
SAINT SÉCAIRE”

Introduction: History and Folklore

Much has been written on the relationship between the methodologies and source materials for the study of history and folklore, and yet, in many ways, the field is still underdeveloped. Social historians such as E.P. Thompson, Keith Thomas, Eugen Weber, George Rudé, and Richard Cobb who wanted to rediscover the worlds of ordinary men and women had a natural interest in folklore sources. The problem with the attitudes that these ground-breaking and influential writers had to popular traditions is a recurring tendency to see in them some kind of unified, although not necessarily static, culture. Eugen Weber’s magisterial history of nineteenth-century rural France, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, is exemplary of this problem, often seeming to pit two irreconcilable worlds, that of the “peasant,” and that of modern France, against one another (Gerson 2009; Weber 1976).

On the other hand, more recent writers have reacted against this “popular history” by declaring that the source materials for the study of popular culture or rural folk traditions are essentializations. This distrust of the ethnographic encounter, a distrust perhaps bred more in libraries than in the field, obscures the complexity of the nineteenth-century folklore collecting projects as situations of contact, in which

folklorists and rural individuals could, and did, speak to one another, and in so doing, not only reflected social realities, but also constructed new ones. Historians can follow the lead of historians such as Peter Burke and David Hopkin, and folklorists such as Bengt Holbek and Timothy Tangherlini, who have all recognized the problems with nineteenth-century folklore collections, but striven to overcome them in order to demonstrate their rich potential (Burke 1978, 73-4; Hopkin 2004; Hopkin 2003; Holbek 1987; Tangherlini 1994).

Even better, historians can make the apparent weaknesses of these sources into strengths. The entanglement of the folklorists' forging of the folk with rural, oral traditions is the point of contact where both the "modern" Frenchman and the "archaic" peasant were given shape. A close reading of one of the transcriptions Bladé recorded from Cazaux's is offered here as a limited attempt to show what can still be learned from silent, dead texts. While the folktales Bladé recorded were often combinations of different versions, stitched together into a "rhapsody," he presented the texts recording beliefs, which Bladé called "superstitions," as the words of specific narrators.

"The Mass of Saint Sécaire" is a little different from the other legendary material Cazaux told Bladé, because it takes the form of a report, rather than a narrative. Since this report explicitly refers to the relationship between the two men, one way to understand it is as an interpretation of this relationship, which can better help us understand the rest of Cazaux's legend repertoire, treated in the next chapter.

To simply put a text like this back into a “context,” as Ruth Bottigheimer has noted, often teaches historians nothing, only offering them a “parallel source” to the archives and historical narratives that they already know (Bottigheimer 1989, 346). Instead, this approach follows folklorists who have used performances to illuminate contexts, relationships and issues of wider social significance, rather than the other way around (Bauman 2004, 33; Stekert 1996; Thomas 2007, 26). The text shows the ways in which not only Bladé, but also Cazaux, constructed roles for one another.

### Cazaux

Cazaux was illiterate, and came from a section of society that was predominantly illiterate, as is clear from the comments of almost all of the records of births, marriages, and deaths of members of his family. We have also seen, however, that Cazaux was far from poor when he died, and that the picture of Cazaux as an isolated individual that Bladé presented is questionable. As a gifted and prolix narrator of both fictional Märchen and believable legends, including personal experiences, it would be surprising if Cazaux did not have opportunities to tell stories.

The question of where Bladé fits into this world is thornier. What is a regional judge, whose bohemian youth saw him cavorting in Paris with Baudelaire, doing collecting stories from an illiterate old bachelor (Lavergne 1904, 8)? Bladé’s own writings present him as a native Gascon who knew the tales and songs of his collections from his own childhood (see Chapter I). He explained that he met Cazaux

fortuitously, having inherited from his father the job of managing Cazaux's modest income (Bladé 2008, 32).

We can speculate that Bladé arranged loans for Cazaux in the same way as the notary mentioned in Cazaux's testament, a man named Palanque. If this was the case, then the relationship between the folklorist and the informant needs to be treated delicately. In a sense, Bladé was actually Cazaux's employee, but, like the well-educated but poorly-paid schoolteachers and priests of the period (Singer 1983), his ability to read and write sets him in a strange intermediary position: he might officially be Cazaux's social superior, both in wealth and learning, but his legal knowledge was on sale to Cazaux. This is far from being a clear-cut case of the literate representative of the judicial state "modernizing" the illiterate and powerless "peasant."

This chapter gives a brief overview of some problems with the historical literature on the modernization or essentialization of rural "peasants," before presenting the text of the narrative itself. The subsequent analysis will address the possibility that the informant Cazaux uses the importance of silence in the discourse where witchcraft meets ethnography to threaten the folklorist, Bladé. A close reading of the text suggests a register of bodily antagonism and subtle attempts by Cazaux to construct a role for his audience, Bladé, through a critique of the legal system and an appeal to a patronage system of honor. Finally, an attempt will be made to provide a defence against accusations of editorial impropriety on Bladé's part.

### Essentialization and Modernization

The reflexive turn within the discipline has taught folklorists to be wary of the idea that their transcriptions “speak for” their informants. In a piece in *Western Folklore*, for instance, Susan Ritchie has drawn on the article “Can the Subaltern Speak?” by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak to argue against the dangers of “representation” (Ritchie 1993; Spivak 1988). Ritchie points out that the voices of other cultures that folklorists claim to relay are merely hollow ventriloquism, all of which “issues from folklore’s single disciplinary throat” (Ritchie 1993, 367).

This kind of suspicion would seem very appropriate in the case of Bladé and Cazaux. No fieldnotes survive of any of the material that Bladé collected from Cazaux, and writers since Bladé’s death in 1900 have questioned the relationship between the published, French-language text of his *Folktales of Gascony* and the words actually uttered by his informants, who spoke the regional dialect, Gascon (Heiniger-Casteret 2009; Salles Loustau 1985; Traimond 1985). Bladé probably touched up phrases to give all of his narratives more stylistic purity, and, in a wider sense, like other folklorists of the time (Bourguet 1976; Lehning 1995, 4-5), he could easily be suspected of essentializing the rural population whose traditions he recorded. In the notes accompanying the published texts, he often referred to beliefs that “our peasants” still knew, as if the rural population were an undifferentiated mass (Bladé 2008, 35).

This argument about the essentialized rural populations makes its appearance in historical narratives about nineteenth century France, as well. Historians since

Eugen Weber have described the the nineteenth century as a period of “modernization,” a process that turned “peasants into Frenchmen” (Weber 1976). In the 1990s James Lehning updated the terms of the debate by suggesting that the concept of the “peasant” was itself an essentialized invention of these modernizing forces (Lehning 1995). Lehning himself, and other important historians, such as Alain Corbin, believe that this renders nineteenth-century folklore collections unusable as sources (Corbin 2001). The problem that faces historians still interested in a nuanced account of “history from below” is that between the idea of “modernization” and that of “essentialization,” there remains little room for real rural individuals, and the history of nineteenth-century rural France risks remaining the history of the French state’s attitude to rural France (Gerson 2009).

Against Susan Ritchie’s criticism of “speaking for” folklore informants, and against Weber and Lehning’s story of the peasant’s powerless silence in the face of modernization or essentialization, this narrative, “The Mass of Saint Sécaire” shows some of the ways that a “peasant” like Cazaux could speak back to a “Frenchman” and representative of the judicial state, Bladé. To argue this demands that great care be taken not to fall into the pitfalls of simple conceptions of “representation,” which have overemphasized resistance to authority, reified the distinctions between literacy and orality, and essentialized the rural population through the use of terms like “peasant.” In its subject matter of witchcraft, silence, threatened bodies, religion, honor, and justice, as well as in its structure as an emergent performance, “The Mass of Saint Sécaire” offers a more fluid way to understand the interaction between

folklorist and informant. The text draws attention to the material reality of Cazaux's speech, but also shows some of the subtle ways the informant could manipulate the folklorist.

The overly romanticized concept of resistance in the work of James C. Scott has come in for criticism from several writers (Abu-Lughod 1990; Gilman 2009; Scott 1985; Scott 1990). Rather than romanticizing all resistance to any forms of power, assumed to be authoritarian and repressive, however, this analysis will show some of the ways in which positive identifications and conflicts between the folklorist and his informant that might seem contradictory, are nonetheless intertwined. The question of who could be manipulating who is what makes the nineteenth-century texts interesting to study, but they do not simply present a case of valiant resistance to repressive power.

It should hardly surprise us that the folklore collecting situation is considerably messier than this, because it involves a productive relation. If the folklorist, Bladé, fully controlled the informant, Cazaux, which is a dangerous assumption in itself, then the sign of this domination would be the informant's volubility. Commanded to speak, Cazaux obeyed by dictating, and any resistance that he might have expressed was dependent on this preliminary compliance. Knowing that the folklorist himself had quite a ribald sense of humor, and often described himself in terms emphasizing his own Gascon identity (Heiniger-Casteret 2004), there is much evidence in the text of the story to show ways in which Cazaux and Bladé might have got along with one another, despite Bladé's firm belief, expressed in the

introduction to the collection, that Cazaux was a “defiant” storyteller who withheld materials (Bladé 2008, 32).

This analysis also seeks to avoid over-emphasizing the distinctions that it is possible to draw between orality and literacy, or sound and vision (Ong 1982). While historians are well-known for fetishizing texts and have generally resisted the influence of other sources, including the oral, what needs to be guarded against is accepting a facile dichotomy between oral and written sources. It is clear from the work of Dell Hymes that sensitive approaches to written texts can give them back some of their oral dynamism (Hymes 1975; Hymes 1981). The aim in studying a transcription is neither to lament the ways that writing covers over the lost voices of orality (Certeau 1984, 131-153), nor is it to celebrate distinctions drawn from phenomenology about the difference between a text and an aural event (Ihde 1976; Baumann 1992). Instead, a modern reading can attempt to treat the text as an imperfect record of a more holistic performance situation, about which it is necessary to speculate in order to understand the transcription (Burke 1978, 66, 73-4).

Finally, this approach needs to defend itself against the criticism of the term “peasant” within the field of anthropology. While it may be true that in Anglophone scholarship the idea of the “peasant” has served to contain, essentialize and marginalize rural populations (Kearney 1996), it must be remembered that in the French context, the word *paysan* was not just a label imposed from above, but also used by rural individuals with some degree of pride (Davies 2004, 121-2; Rogers 1987). At the root of the French term lies an identification with the *pays*, a vague

concept which mixes landscapes and local social identities. The use of the term “peasant” borrows this ambivalent term in order to insert the analysis of “The Mass of Saint Sécaire” into a largely Anglophone historiographical discourse. For better or for worse, the history of rural nineteenth-century France remains in many ways dominated by Weber’s question of the process by which “peasants” became “Frenchmen” (Gerson 2009).

Rather than seeing either of these categories as monoliths, folklorists studying this contact have the advantage over historians in dealing with a more intimate level: real men, face to face, constructing their own social relations of power. The ways in which writing and verbal performance interpenetrate one another, and identities can be both conflictual and consensual between speaker and listener complicate any simple reading that insists on unidirectional essentialization. Rather than the dyad of the folklorist and the folk, or Paris and the *pays*, this reading turns to the third term that articulates the relations between these dichotomies: narrative performance.

#### “The Mass of Saint-Sécaire”

“The Mass of Saint Sécaire” is a short description by Cazaux of two different types of witchcraft. The words appear to be directly addressed to Bladé, and at points Cazaux digresses to talk to Bladé about the shared world of the small town of Lectoure that they both lived in.

There are people who don’t dare boldly attack their enemies, and who don’t dare poison them, out of fear for the law. He who kills merits death, and the executioner cuts off his head.

So what do certain good-for-nothings do? They go off to find witches, to cast evil on their enemies. In the olden days, witches were burnt alive on the judges' orders. Now, these guttersnipes can do what they want, and the people in power won't get mixed up in it. Luckily, more than one of these harridans have been put in the oven, without the law ever knowing anything about it, nor heard of any witnesses, who would be badly found if they spoke.

There are other ways to guard against this vermin, without the law being able to punish you. If you know that a witch wants to cast evil on you, watch her carefully. When she comes near you and puts out her arm to do her evil work, say to yourself:

“May the Devil blow in your arse.”

This way, the witch will suffer a hundred times worse than you would have suffered, and you will have nothing more to fear from her. The same thing will happen when you see her coming from a long way off, if you say, still to yourself:

“I doubt you.  
I fear you.  
Fart without leaf,  
Climb up the chimney.”

Now you are warned, and you know what you have to do.

There is something much rarer, but also much worse than the evil cast by witches. This is the Mass of Saint Sécaire. The man for whom the mass is said dries up bit by bit, and you don't know how or why, and doctors can't see a thing.

Very few priests know the Mass of Saint Sécaire; and three quarters of those who do will never say it, for gold nor silver. Only bad priests, damned beyond remission, will take on such a job. These priests don't stay in the same place for two days in a row. They walk, always by night, to go today into the hills, tomorrow in the Grandes Landes of Bordeaux or Bayonne.

The Mass of Saint Sécaire can only be said in a church where it is forbidden to hold services, because it is half demolished or because things took place there which Christians shouldn't do. These churches are paradise for the hawk owls, the grey owls and the bats, and gypsies sleep there. Under the altar, there are loads of toads croaking.

The bad priest brings his mistress with him to act as his clerk. He must be alone in the church with this sow and have had a good dinner. On the first strike of eleven, the mass starts at the end, and continues backwards, to finish bang on midnight. The host is black and has three corners. The bad priest doesn't bless any wine. He drinks water from a fountain where an un-baptised

dead baby has been thrown. The sign of the cross is always made on the ground, with the left foot.

Other things happen at the Mass of Saint Sécaire, things which no-one knows, and which a good Christian cannot see without immediately becoming blind forever.

That's how certain people go about drying up their enemies bit by bit, and you don't know how or why, and doctors can't see a thing.

You understand that the bad priests and the people who pay them for this job will have a large account to pay on the day of the last judgement. No priest, nor bishop, not even the arch-bishop of Auch, has the right to pardon them. This power doesn't belong to the pope in Rome who orders, for their whole life, penitences worse than deepest Hell. But very few of these scoundrels want to submit to this, and most die, damned without remission.

There is, however, a way to guard against the Mass of Saint Sécaire, but I don't know the counter-mass you have to say. You can believe, Monsieur Bladé, that if I had been taught it, I would gladly teach you. Your poor father (God bless him!) was a good, brave man, who did me more than one favor. Try to be worthy of him. I've heard say that you speak French as well as the lawyers of Auch, and even Agen. Still, you aren't a *francimancant* [Footnote: "This is said of a man who takes on the language and manners of a Northern Frenchman.'], and there isn't a sharecropper who knows [the] *patois* [local dialect] better than you. Nowadays, many of the bourgeois of Lectoure, who have twenty four hours of leisure a day, spend more than half reading short stories and arguing about who to nominate for the elections. They pretend not to believe in warlocks and werewolves. But I know some that tremble in bed at night when they have blown out their candle.

All that, Monsieur Bladé, is to tell you that if I knew the counter-mass of Saint Sécaire, I would tell it to you gladly, for you to write down, because I believe that you are incapable of misusing it. Note, though, that the counter-mass has the power to dry up little by little the bad priest and the people who have paid him. They die, and you don't know how or why, and doctors can't see a thing.

[Bladé writes] *Dictated by Old Cazaux, from Lectoure. The belief in the Mass of Saint Sécaire is still widespread in Gascony. Cazaux is the only person to speak to me of the counter-mass.*" (Bladé 2008, 325-327)

It is clear from the text that Cazaux believed in the witchcraft he described, and this should hardly be considered surprising, since research continues to show that permutations of witchcraft remain relevant as ways of explaining misfortune in various parts of France today (Blécourt and Davies 2004; Davies 2004; Favret-Saada

1980; Gijswijt-Hofstra 1999). However, what this apparent continuity masks is the diverse roles that talk about witchcraft could play in social situations.

Such beliefs seemed exotic to the folklorists, anthropologists, and historians who “discovered” them both in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Witchcraft was seen by Bladé himself as a “survival:” he noted at the end of “The Mass of Saint Sécaire” that “*The belief in the Mass of Saint Sécaire is still widespread in Gascony.*” James George Frazer was only too willing to include this information in *The Golden Bough*, where he presents “The Mass of Saint Sécaire” as a belief that belongs to the “Gascon peasants” (Frazer 1950, 62). The problem with this attitude to the belief is that, as a tradition, it takes on its own amorphous identity, and both Frazer, and Bladé before him, could be said to have missed the wood for the trees, by paying too little attention to the conversational and relational context where Cazaux pronounced the words to Bladé.

After all, the “belief” was indeed collected by other folklorists in the region, such as Félix Arnaudin, but Arnaudin’s text is nothing like Cazaux’s. Where Cazaux’s report is an explanation of what witchcraft might involve, the text Arnaudin collected from Marichoun Bouzats around fifty years later is a narrative about men using the Mass to punish a petty criminal (Arnaudin 1994, 278-280).

It is hard to know what Bladé’s attitude to the witchcraft beliefs in the text was, although he does refer to Cazaux as “superstitious,” and does not seem to have believed in the witchcraft under discussion. Perhaps Bladé’s attitude was somewhat similar to Frazer’s idea of the belief as a kind of object that could be passed from

individual to individual, like a fixed item. In *The Golden Bough* Frazer does not reproduce the text, but simply summarizes the procedures involved in the mass itself, omitting the descriptions of other forms of witchcraft and the personal comments that Cazaux addressed to Bladé. Frazer believed that the Mass of Saint-Sécaire was a shared and somewhat static belief, rather than a contextually manipulated set of ideas that could be used in face-to-face interaction.

### The Power of Silence: Witchcraft and Black Masses

The text Bladé published could be subdivided into rough sections. The first is a description of witchcraft in general, the kinds of dishonorable individuals who use it, and its historical relation to the legal system. After this, Cazaux relates a way of warding off attacks by female witches. Next comes another measure, again specifically against female witchcraft. Only after this does Cazaux begin his description of the mass. Next he discusses the punishment in store for the bad priests who perform the mass. At this point, Cazaux appears to digress, making an appeal to Bladé to be worthy of his father, who Cazaux knew before his death. After this appeal comes Cazaux's final declaration that he does not know the counter-mass to cure the Mass of Saint Sécaire.

This is a curiously lop-sided narrative. The first three sub-sections deal with female witchcraft, yet Cazaux has nothing to say about what this witchcraft actually involves. Instead, he discusses its relationship to justice, and offers two ways to ward off attacks. The act of witchcraft itself, assumed to be female, remains completely

obscure. The next sections, by contrast, feature an elaborate description of the diabolical mass of the title that can cause an enemy to “[dry] up bit by bit, and you don’t know how or why.” Although Cazaux can describe this second type of witchcraft, the mass, at length, no cure is offered.

Cazaux either knows nothing, or will say nothing, about the first type of witchcraft except how to protect against it, while with the mass itself, he seems to know the intricate details of performing the mass without knowing any way to protect against it. Instead, he only hints that such a protection does exist.

While the significance of this hinted, but unknown or unsaid power hangs, he addresses Bladé’s honor:

There is, however, a way to guard against the Mass of Saint Sécaire, but I don’t know the counter-mass you have to say. You can believe, Monsieur Bladé, that if I had been taught it, I would gladly teach you. Your poor father (God bless him!) was a good, brave man, who did me more than one favor. Try to be worthy of him.

This narrative may not simply be a reflection of a widespread continued belief in witchcraft in Gascony: it could be a veiled threat directed by Cazaux at Bladé. They were, after all, in a potentially difficult relationship. Bladé discovered Cazaux’s skill as a narrator by chance because he was responsible for paying the eighty-year old retired laborer his pension (Bladé 2008, 32). This must surely have been an extremely problematic meeting: Bladé had control over Cazaux’s economic well-being, as well as the legal authority that comes with being a judge, and the social resources of being an important man in the town. Cazaux, by contrast, had some of the authority of age, and even more crucially, in Bladé’s eyes, the right to speak for Gascon tradition. In

his description of Cazaux, Bladé emphasizes the richness and quantity of the stories that he knew, seeming to present him as his most prolific narrator (Bladé 2008, 31-2).

Despite what subsequent writers have assumed (Lafforgue 1995), this was not, in fact true, since Bladé named Pauline Lacaze as the primary or sole narrator for 27 of the stories in his *Folktales of Gascony*, while Cazaux only told him 19 (Bladé 2008). This makes it clear that Bladé thought of Cazaux as a particularly important, or special narrator, and not just because of the sheer number of stories he collected from him.

Contrary to what modern critics of nineteenth-century folklorists have thought, we cannot just assume in this situation that it is Bladé who dictates what is possible. After all, Cazaux is the one who is literally dictating, while Bladé writes. Moreover, it is hard to tell if Bladé, as a partial outsider, a Gascon who had spent his youth socializing with Baudelaire in Paris (Lavergne 1904), really understood the messages Cazaux was communicating in talking about witchcraft. Modern anthropologists know that, in witchcraft, knowledge is power. To even ask about witchcraft is often interpreted by informants as a threat. After her experiences with unwitching specialists in Normandy, Jeanne Favret-Saada declared that “Anyone talking about [witchcraft] is a belligerent, the ethnographer like everyone else...” (Favret-Saada 1980, 10; Toelken 1996).

If the comparison holds, then we can discern an implied threat in “The Mass of Saint Sécaire.” Cazaux knows how to cast the Black Mass, but cannot, or will not, tell Bladé the cure. All he will pronounce is the short paragraph flattering the

folklorist. Be worthy, Cazaux suggests, or you may find yourself drying up “bit by bit.” As if to prime him for the threat that is about to be suggested, Cazaux states: “Now you are warned, and you know what you have to do.” This threat is all the more chilling because of the shared, intimate world that Cazaux refers to when addressing Bladé, a face-to-face world in which Cazaux knew Bladé’s father before him.

The threat of the mass in this interpretation is dependent on what Cazaux does not say. Obviously, modern interpretations might be a little too free to fill lacunas in written texts as they please, but the best defence against this objection is a close reading of the text itself, and the ways that this reading, or theoretical listening, helps to explain Bladé’s description of Cazaux in the introduction to the collection. In this description, Bladé insists that, unlike the “docile” storyteller Escarnot, Cazaux was “...more defiant on his own than all my previous informants...” (Bladé 2008, 32). But reading the surface of “The Mass of Saint Sécaire,” this defiance is hard to pinpoint: in fact Cazaux seems compliant, even flattering Bladé, and apologising for the gaps in his own knowledge. However, Bladé himself recognized that Cazaux’s defiance had less to do with things done or things said, than reticence itself: the description Bladé provides in the introduction touches on precisely the question of what Cazaux withheld. Bladé wrote that: “In order to tame him, I made all sorts of submissions and used the treasures of a diplomacy conquered by ten years of practice. But Cazaux never talked except when he wanted to... I know for certain that Cazaux held back from telling me things and that he died thinking me unworthy of noting half of what he knew.” (Bladé 2008, 32).

Because of the paradox of the folklore collecting situation, which represents a relation of dominance that involves demanding that the dominated speak, the most powerful way for Cazaux to frustrate Bladé was to remain silent. By reproducing just the colorful details of the Black Mass itself, Frazer may have missed the most important part of Cazaux's narrative: what he refused to say.

### Bodies and Animals

This idea of how Cazaux could hint at his power over Bladé could be extended into the forms of communication that accompany verbal speech. Sadly, Bladé was not in the habit of noting the paralinguistic features of Cazaux's narration, but the text itself is full of references to bodies, and this thematic content hints at silent, bodily threats as part of a register of unspoken antagonism.

The female witchcraft practices that open the narrative dwell on the dangers of bodily proximity. To guard against the proximity of the witch, Cazaux dictates a lewd magical formula: “When [the witch] comes near you and puts out her arm to do her evil work, say to yourself:

‘May the Devil blow in your arse.’”

We will never know how Bladé responded to talk that emphasized the dangers of proximity like this, considering that the two men must have been sitting close together. Was Cazaux trying to scare the folklorist, or offend him with his language and bodily references?

Bladé was fond of making statements about the moral and sexual purity of the peasants of Gascony, so it is important to wonder what this kind of material is doing in Cazaux's narrative. Rather than acting as an entirely negative prohibition (Foucault 1990), it is as if the form of censorship that Bladé performs in his introduction actually solicits the transgressive speech from Cazaux (Butler 1997). Cazaux must have known the folklorist well enough to perceive any discomfort at this kind of register, yet, by openly embracing a strict Christian morality, Cazaux could metaphorically fart and fornicate in his presence, evoking the world of the "lower bodily stratum" (Bakhtin 1968).

Rather than assuming that this transgression is a victory for Cazaux over Bladé's prudishness, it would be possible to argue for some dimension of collusion in this descent into the grotesque. In his own autobiographical writings, Bladé often stressed his transgressive and ludic performances (Heiniger-Casteret 2004). In the introduction to his *Folksongs of Gascony*, for instance, he told how as a child he enthusiastically participated in a local *charivari*, which culminated in the young Bladé throwing a firework between the legs of a local authority figure (Bladé 1881).

However, if Bladé's autobiographical stories were often transgressive, he never went as far as the confusion of blasphemy and illicit sexuality that characterises Cazaux's description of the Mass:

The bad priest brings his mistress with him to act as his clerk. He must be alone in the church with this sow and have had a good dinner. On the first strike of eleven, the mass starts at the end, and continues backwards, to finish bang on midnight. The host is black and has three corners. The bad priest doesn't bless any wine. He drinks water from a fountain where an un-baptised

dead baby has been thrown. The sign of the cross is always made on the ground, with the left foot.

Whatever shared identities this bodily register may have allowed the two men to negotiate, danger underlies all of the references to bodies in the text. Bodies are under constant threat, from the inexplicable drying of the body that the Mass causes in its victim, to the consequences of witnessing the bad priest perform the Mass: “Other things happen at the Mass of Saint Sécaire, things which no-one knows, and which a good Christian cannot see without immediately becoming blind forever.”

At its most extreme the narrative threatens a link between animal bodies and human bodies, so that the priest’s mistress is so debased that she is a sow, and the bourgeois of the town tremble at night at the thought of the ultimate confusion of animal and human: the werewolf. If the words that Cazaux addressed directly to Bladé were superficially flattering, this crude bodily idiom suggests a more antagonistic relationship where bodily vigor and sexuality were contested. In other legends that Cazaux told Bladé, he came back again and again to the links between semi-human, semi-animal outsiders, in a close landscape which he shared with Bladé, as if masculinity, regional Gascon identity, language, religion, and the bestiality of the human body were enduring concerns for Cazaux, and concerns that he could enter into a conversation with Bladé about.

The fact that Bladé depended on Cazaux to provide materials afforded Cazaux a limited amount of agency to construct roles for himself and for Bladé. A narrative such as “The Mass of Saint-Sécaire” is not just embedded in the context of a relationship or a culture; it is the active invention of this relationship by the speaker, and, in more subtle ways, the listener. In particular, Cazaux’s narrative bypasses the obvious power that Bladé represents, the power of the judiciary, and proposes a system of honor in its place. In this way, Cazaux constructs his relation to Bladé as one of patron and client.

The critique of legal justice Cazaux pronounces is literally incendiary:

In the olden days, witches were burnt alive on the judges’ orders. Now, these guttersnipes can do what they want, and the people in power won’t get mixed up in it. Luckily, more than one of these harridans have been put in the oven, without the law ever knowing anything about it...

This is not mere bluster: Bernard Traimond’s research into legal cases involving witchcraft in a nearby area a few years before Bladé and Cazaux met emphasizes that plenty of suspected witches met their end by fire during this period (Traimond 1988, 40). Cazaux boldly critiques the judicial system Bladé stands for, even veering towards a defence of murder, which at least has the advantage of being courageous. The thematic content of his narrative gives all the more force to the words he pronounces to Bladé, “Now you are warned[.]”

The sub-text of the whole narrative is undoubtedly a system of honor that seems to consist in “good Christian” practice, as opposed to the sexual transgressions of the “bad priest” and his “mistress.” It also relies on open-dealing, in opposition to the “good-for-nothings” and “vermin” who “don’t dare boldly attack their enemies,

and who don't dare poison them, out of fear for the law" preferring witchcraft. If the description of the mass itself is an implied threat, as argued above, then this open and honest honor system represents a kind of surface level of the text. Cazaux's direct message flatters the honor of the folklorist, while his indirect message threatens another role Bladé could be called upon to play: the victim of Cazaux's dark knowledge.

In constructing this honor system, Cazaux seems to be appealing to a closed, corporate sense of village community, strongly reminiscent of the society of the nearby Var which Maurice Agulhon evoked in *The Republic in the Village* (Agulhon 1982, 16, 122). This is an intimate system of patronage where Bladé must be, in Cazaux's terms, "worthy" of his father. Cazaux's power to speak in this situation did not just depend on these relations: it invented them.

The language of witchcraft is a peculiarly strong way to talk about diffuse agencies attributed to others, because it focuses on malevolent intentions in a society where "good" is perceived to be "limited" so that all individuals and groups are in competition with one another (Foster 1965). Yet within this world of diffuse agency, witchcraft can also be a way for the speaker, Cazaux himself, to lay claim to power and authority, as historians of witchcraft have long known (Briggs 1996; Roper 1994). In this discursive contact, Bladé was not the "top" of a top-down power relation, who handed out "power" like he distributed Cazaux's pension, and Cazaux's agency was not something that trickled down from above: the content and structure of

what Cazaux had to say constructed the attitudes that the two men could have towards one another and invented the image of them that modern readers read.

As with the other questions of contestation and identification in this narrative, however, the story may not be as simple as a desire on Cazaux's part to engage in a patronage relationship with the judge. There is something that remains a little suspicious about such direct flattery of Bladé's linguistic skills or the praise addressed to his dead father. Was the rose-tinted honor and patronage system of the narrative more a consequence of an agreement reached between the two men about their roles, or might it have been what many modern writers have suspected, a romantic fiction cooked up by an author that Richard Dorson would have called a "fakelorst" (Dorson 1976)?

#### Authenticity Again

The question of Bladé's role as the fieldworker and editor is finally inescapable. His authorial voice might not speak directly in the text of "The Mass of Saint Sécaire," yet, as the editor of the entire collection, ultimately Bladé's unknowable choices produced the text that we read today. Up until last year, none of his fieldnotes were even thought to survive. When Patricia Heiniger-Casteret finally discovered a sheaf of Bladé's fieldnotes, her findings were mixed. It seems that Bladé noted some materials verbatim, while he only jotted outlines of others (Heiniger-Casteret 2009).

The fieldnotes that Bladé based “The Mass of Saint Sécaire” on were not among those that Heiniger-Casteret discovered, so we will probably never have much idea how close the relationship between what Cazaux said and what Bladé published really was, but there are four reasons why the text could still be said to be useful. First, we could go on what Bladé himself said, since he insisted that his relationship to Cazaux was special, and in particular that Cazaux controlled his transcriptions: “I wrote rapidly, and later corrected the texts under the sometimes tyrannical control of my narrator...” (Bladé 2008, 32). Second, as we have seen, it seems that Bladé’s attitudes to different narrative genres played some role in his editorial practices. He presented the belief narratives and reports as conversational performances, unlike the Märchen, which he trimmed of all extraneous references.

Against justifications such as these, it is easy to be cynical. As Chapter I explored, Bladé was publishing folklore in the intermediary age between MacPherson’s Ossian and the development of stricter rules about ethnographic transcriptions. A third reason to believe in their usefulness stems from empirical confirmation from other sources, such as the work of Bernard Traimond, Jeanne Favret-Saada, Christian Desplat and Owen Davies on French witchcraft (Davies 2004; Favret-Saada 1980; Traimond 1988; Desplat 1988). As noted above, some of the details Cazaux referred to, such as burning witches in ovens, and even the “Dry Mass” itself were known many other places in France (Weber 1988, 414).

A final reason for believing in the usefulness of Bladé’s transcription could try to draw on the third model of authenticity that has remained in the background of this

discussion. In addition to Bladé's role in the text as a listener, and Cazaux's role as an authoritative narrator who knows more about the Mass than any of Bladé's other informants, there is a power to the tradition of the "Dry Mass" itself. As Dorothy Noyes put it during her closing comments at the Ohio State University and Indiana University joint graduate conference in April 2010, we might need to focus more attention on the assumption of "responsibility" in Richard Bauman's seminal definition of performance (Bauman 1977; Noyes 2010). The tradition, as Noyes put it, is a responsibility assumed by the narrator in performance, but this responsibility also weighs on a good audience. The third pole between listener and teller is the tradition. "The Mass of Saint Sécaire" is gripping, might it not have gripped both Cazaux and Bladé?

There may have been some dishonesty in the ways Bladé manipulated the materials he published, but it would be a mistake to underemphasize Bladé's own statements about the power that songs and stories held over him. While we may be dealing with a romantic register, it is worth considering that Bladé's role as the sincere witness is also a testament to the independent power of tradition:

For those rare few, the personal and brilliant works. I am a good witness. I listen and re-tell the old songs, the legends of yesterday. It is enough to gild my declining life and to raise up a humble researcher to the powerful and calm joys felt by the great poets. (Bladé 2008, 42)

Avoiding the lure of "authenticity" in Bladé's collections means avoiding a sterile dichotomy: his texts are *either* "authentic," reproduced verbatim by a "pious and honest scribe," as he himself liked to claim (Bladé 2008, 42), or they are just the play of shadows on his own romantic imagination. It seems entirely more likely that

the texts Bladé published are something in between these two extremes. If he might have touched up the materials or purified the prose, one thing remains certain: he could not invent everything, and the gist of what he published is probably what his informants really said.

#### Conclusion: Lost Voices

Rather than seeing the mass as evidence that witchcraft “survived,” I have presented it as evidence of antagonisms and identifications in the relationship between the two men. There is something deeply personal about this text, and Bladé noted that Cazaux was the only person to mention the counter-mass. Perhaps Cazaux half invented the counter-mass in order to communicate the subtle threat he directed at Bladé. This text, which is one of nineteen tales and legends that Cazaux told Bladé, is not just evidence of what the rural populations of that time and place believed, it is both evidence to explain-- and the event that constructed-- the relationship between the two men. It is a reading of the repertoire Cazaux performed to Bladé as a whole.

In linking up the language of witchcraft to the intrusions of legal justice into the countryside, and emphasizing the relationship between Christian identity and separation from the bestial, the narrative begins to give clues about the ways that a population targeted by programs of education and “modernization” might have reacted to these intrusive powers. The relationship between the two men appears as a site of both identification and resistance, and the two forces may be as hard to separate here as they are in the psychoanalytic language of the family.

Michel de Certeau has written that:

We no longer believe, as Grundtvig (or Michelet) did, that, behind the doors of our cities, in the nearby distance of the countryside, there are vast poetic and “pagan” pastures where one can still hear songs, myths, and the spreading murmur of the *folkelighed* (a Danish word that cannot be translated: it means “what belongs to the people”). These voices can no longer be heard except within the interior of the scriptural systems where they recur. They move about, like dancers, passing lightly through the field of the other. (Certeau 1984, 131)

Many folklorists would agree with Certeau that there is no “pure” oral culture to be discovered outside of the texts that are our only record of nineteenth-century folklore. Nonetheless, I am convinced that if we do not try to listen to the voice of a real individual like Cazaux in the “scriptural system” in which it is found, and speculate a little about what this “peasant” thought and felt, the history of nineteenth-century France will remain a lop-sided view through the eyes of the forces of modernity. To return to Cazaux’s narrative, it is hard to resist noting how many times the humble “peasant” used the first person pronoun.

Cazaux speaks. His voice offers modern readers an unparalleled opportunity to listen to the other half of a conversation that has too long been dominated by the perspectives of modernization, represented in the text by the silent but omnipresent figure of the folklorist, Bladé. The next chapter extends this discussion by looking at thematic continuities in Cazaux’s legend repertoire as a dialogue between the two men.

## CHAPTER III

## DIFFERENTIAL NOSTALGIA: DIALOGICAL LEGEND TEXTS

## Introduction: Imaginative History

As an unfortunately endangered academic species, folklorists can be both overly defensive of their terrain and too sceptical about their discipline's origins. This can result in two claims that are paradoxical. The first asserts that historical folklore collections are poor sources, even "fossils," and that folklorists should therefore concentrate their attention on doing fieldwork in the present (Dégh 2001, 95, 102-3, 207), and the second takes an extremely dim view of outsiders, untrained in folklore methods, who try to interpret archival collections (Bottigheimer 1989). While it might be an unfair caricature, there is certainly some suggestion that the folklore collections of the nineteenth century are not good enough to be used by modern folklorists, yet must be defended against the intrusions of inexpert outsiders (Darnton 1985, 9-74).

This is where folklorists stand to learn something from some of the more daring attempts to write "history from below" or the history of "popular culture," associated with the *History Workshop Journal* and the Italian micro-historians. Carlo Ginzburg famously brought the mental world of a sixteenth-century Italian miller back to life using the records that the Inquisition kept from the miller's trial for heresy (Ginzburg 1992). Other writers have tried similarly daring explorations into the psyches of individuals accused of witchcraft in early-modern Germany (Roper 1994), or the day-to-day life of peasants in an Occitan village in the fourteenth-century (Le

Roy Ladurie 1978). These imaginative efforts have revealed riches where records appeared to be silent.

But this inventiveness has also earned them criticism from modern ethnologists, who have emphasized that these feats of imaginative reconstruction are too lenient on the problems of the sources (Rosaldo 1986). Renato Rosaldo's critique of Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie does raise important issues with these kinds of approaches, but Rosaldo's critical attitude also ignores the alternative: without imaginative reconstruction, the historical record would not just be wrong, but nonexistent. Historians making use of these problematic sources do not take naïve attitudes to their genesis, and many of these authors are better than Le Roy Ladurie at explicitly addressing the problems.

Peter Burke, for instance, notes: "We want to know about performances, but what have survived are texts; we want to see those performances through the eyes of the craftsmen and peasants themselves, but we are forced to see them through the eyes of literate outsiders" (Burke 1978, 65). For Michel de Certeau, historiographies were "scriptural tombs" for the past: both a monument to its importance and a recognition that it is fundamentally unrecoverable, dead (Certeau 1988, 1-80).

The legends and tales collected in the nineteenth century are too important a source to abandon. Like Certeau, we need an approach that explores the importance of these sources, yet recognizes the impossibility of fully recovering their meanings. In this chapter, I will look at Cazaux's legend repertoire in the light of how modern folklorists have described the thematic content, style, functions, and contexts of

legends to suggest that, while the texts suffer from many problems, imaginative reconstruction can have a role in overcoming some of their lacunae.

The first section explores how modern folklorists have characterized and interpreted legends and explains both the defects of Bladé's texts as well as some of the ways that they could be brought back to life. After this, I will present an example of a legend Cazaux told Bladé, which centers on the exploits of Cazaux's uncle during the French Revolution. In the interpretation of the legend that follows, I will explore ways in which the footnotes Bladé inserted into the text can help us better understand the story as the result of a dialogue between the two men about social recognition, regional knowledge, time, and nostalgia.

The final section of this chapter suggests that both men were changed by this contact. In sketching some of the broader movements that incorporated folklore into politics after the publication of Bladé's works, I am not trying to suggest that they need to be seen in this "context," but that the material reality of Bladé and Cazaux's meeting is more important in some senses than the generalizations about the fate of folklore or the "peasant" that writers have made. The conclusion suggests that this small start with two men is the foundation for larger, but more arduous work ahead.

#### Modern Legend Scholarship and Cazaux's Repertoire

In an important book on the nineteenth-century legend collection of Evald Tang Kristensen, Timothy Tangherlini defined legend as "a traditional, (mono)episodic, highly ecotypified, localized and historicized narrative of past events

told as believable in a conversational mode” (Tangherlini 1994, 22). Bladé printed ten texts of this kind based on material that Cazaux presented as true, many of which were explicitly about nearby places and historical times. Of these ten texts, two will not be considered here. “The Mass of Saint Sécaire” is not a narrative, but a report about what Cazaux believes and a warning to his audience (see Chapter II). In the case of “God and Saint Peter,” Bladé attributed the text to two narrators (Bladé 2008, 283). Since he gave no idea whose version the narrative is based on, it has been excluded along with the description of witchcraft that made up the subject of the last chapter.

#### i. Thematic and Stylistic Similarities of Cazaux’s Repertoire to Modern Legends

The remaining eight texts match up to many of the statements that folklorists have made about the style and thematic content of modern legends. Cazaux carefully defends the truth of the stories he tells. Like modern tellers, he gives “all supporting evidence [he] can find to satisfy [his] audience’s curiosity” (Dégh 2001, 220). In the case of “My Uncle from Condom,” for instance, Cazaux refers to reliable witnesses, whose authority bolsters the truth of the account (Bladé 2008, 351; Dégh 2001, 3; Goldstein 2007, 70-78). The stories are also highly localized, making frequent reference to rivers, towns, and specific hamlets (Goldstein 2004, 100-115; Hopkin 2010; Tangherlini 1994, 136; Thomas 2007, 44; von Sydow 1948, 44-59). “The Thirteen Flies,” for instance, is set in the hamlet of Mounet-du-Hour. This setting has a specific significance. According to Bladé, this is a place known for its witches (Bladé 2008, 375-7).

The stories are also set in an everyday world (Goldstein 2004, xv; Tangherlini 1994; Thomas 2007). Although some do feature extreme encounters with incredible supernatural beings, in many of them something “only *slightly* dramatic” happens (Thomas 2007, 29). The hero of “The Sirens,” for instance, almost falls prey to the dangerous Sirens of the title while he is going about his everyday task of fishing in the nearby river. The Sirens are clearly very dangerous, but the dramatic tension relies on the threat of danger, rather than any actual violence. The fisherman escapes (Bladé 2008, 369-371).

At least two of the legends are highly personal to Cazaux (Bennett 1999, especially 39; Dégh 2001, 3, 58-70, 204-310, 211). “The Green Man” is a memorate, or personal experience narrative about Cazaux’s childhood encounter with the Green Man of Lectoure (Bladé 2008, 343-5). “My Uncle from Condom” could also be considered a memorate according to Gillian Bennett’s definition, since it is presented at second hand (Bennett 1999, 3-4; Bladé 2008, 351-6). As the title suggests, Cazaux claimed to have heard the narrative about cannibals and fairies from his uncle. A third narrative, “The Seven Beautiful Fairies,” is a more complicated case (Bladé 2008, 340-343). Cazaux does not give the name of the Napoleonic Deserter who is the hero of the legend, but it is certainly worth considering that Cazaux himself must have faced the conscription lottery in 1802 when he came of age.

Despite this personal investment in the stories, there is also a sense that many of the narratives are traditional, making reference to supernatural beings that are known in many different times and places (Dégh 2001, 158, 221; Tangherlini 1994,

18, 22). Cazaux told Bladé all that he knew about spirits, first orienting his beliefs with reference to many different types of ghost, before telling Bladé a story to which he claimed little personal authority. In this legend an unfortunate miller is terrorized by some evil spirits as he travels through a night-time forest. Bladé simply titled the text “Ghosts [*Les Esprits*]” (Bladé 2008, 329-331). Bladé certainly considered Cazaux’s legends traditional, often footnoting them with comments about the fact that other people in the area believed in the Mass of Saint Sécaire, cannibal charcoal-makers, and the fortune-telling fairies.

#### ii. Thematic and Stylistic Differences

The styles and themes of Cazaux’s legend repertoire match what modern researchers have found, but there are some important omissions. Unlike modern legend traditions, there are very few fragments in the repertoire (Dégh 2001, 111). It is easy to suspect that Bladé, like many other nineteenth-century collectors (Dégh 2001, 53-4), was most interested in coherent and well-formed narratives. One possible exception to this trend might be Cazaux’s description of Gargantua:

Gargantua was not from this region, but he passed through. They say he came from Bordeaux, and went to Spain.

He was a man seven times taller than the tower of Saint-Gervais [Footnote: “The cathedral in Lectoure.”]. He was so tall that he had only to open his mouth in order to swallow the birds from the sky.

Gargantua ate everything in his path, even wood, even stones, when he could find nothing better to satisfy his appetite. Often he ate up to cartloads of thorns.

When he went through the [forest at] Ramier, all of the felled wood went into his stomach.

Luckily, Gargantua didn’t stay with us for long. There’s no reason to wish for him back. However, I never heard tell that he was malicious, nor that he had wronged anyone.

[Bladé writes] *Told by the late Cazaux, from Lectoure (Gers)*. (Bladé 2008, 347)

However, even “Gargantua” is, by Timothy Tangherlini’s standards, a fully-formed, if very short, narrative, with an orientation (who Gargantua is), complicating action (he came to the region and ate a lot), evaluation (this was bad), result (but he left), and coda (the ambiguous lines at the end about whether or not he was “malicious”) (Tangherlini 1994, 10). It seems likely that Bladé would have discarded the most fragmentary legend material that Cazaux told him, or possibly tidied it up into narrative form. The repertoire is, therefore, probably not a perfect reflection of all of Cazaux’s beliefs. While such a perfect reflection would be impossible to produce of any individual’s repertoire, the record we have of Cazaux’s is probably skewed towards complete narratives with coherent plots.

Neither do Cazaux’s legends seem to reflect the concerns about social change that modern folklorists have discerned in legends (Fine 1980). If anything, many of his stories are about the disappearance of troublesome supernatural beings and how much safer the world is now. The only one of Cazaux’s eight legends I have not yet mentioned is “The Horned Men.” This story is about threatening half-men, half-beasts, whose main sport involves abducting young girls. In his reflections at the end of the story, Cazaux makes a similar point to one that he made at the end of “Gargantua:” “Now, no-one talks of those nasty beasts. They have left the region, to go and live elsewhere. That is hardly cause for me to cry!” (Bladé 2008, 356-360). If anything, the world is now a safer place than in past times, when Horned Men and Gargantua wandered the region.

It is interesting to note that Cazaux's repertoire matches up to all of the other suggestions drawn from modern research into legends about thematic content and style: they are personal, yet traditional, "only *slightly* dramatic" (Thomas 2007, 29) and feature the everyday settings, place-names, and references to widely known traditions that we expect from legends.

### iii. The Problem of Function and Context: Bringing Legends Back to Life

Aside from this question of social change, the real problems come when Cazaux's repertoire is compared to the functions and conversational contexts of modern legends, rather than their style and content. Linda Dégh has summarized the issues in dealing with historical collections:

"the conversational frame or the situation-description that led to the recital of the legend has been most often disregarded. The reason for this negligence might be because the introductory and concluding parts of the legend are less stereotypical and less formulaic, and thus are not readily discernible. Also, the collector's interest was usually focused on publishing a smooth story, rather than one that was whimsically interrupted by comments and set in a situational context. But it is precisely these circumstances that bring legends to life, and the omission of them in legend transcripts unfortunately renders legend texts almost unrecognizable and fit only for variant documentation. In other words, in the case of the legend, interpretation from the story content itself is not enough—all of the preliminaries that lead to the story and the story's frame are also needed for analysis." (Dégh 2001, 53)

With Cazaux there is no sure way to access the conversational and situational contexts that folklorists have emphasized in studying modern legends (Dégh 2001, 53; Thomas 2007, 50). By relistening to old tapes she had made, the folklorist Ellen Stekert discovered that a legend she had collected was probably a challenge made by her informants in a conversation designed to test her trustworthiness (Stekert 1996).

Divorced from this conversational context, the narrative lost its functional significance.

With Cazaux's legends, we do not have the luxury of tape-recordings of the whole conversations through which the stories were distributed. Bladé's own comments about his meetings with Cazaux are all we have to go on. While his vague description of a generic telling situation (Bladé 2008, 32) gives us no idea what kinds of conversation occasioned each individual legend Cazaux told him, it does, however, help to understand two dimensions of the dynamics of their interaction.

First, the two men were apparently "alone," so any message intended for the audience was intended for Bladé himself. As I tried to show with the example of "The Mass of Saint Sécaire," this means that the texts may say more about the relationship between the two men than simply about folk belief in the region. Second, the landscape of Gascony was spread out before them as they talked. Thanks to Bladé's careful description of where they met, modern readers can still go to the same spot on the Esplanade and cast their eyes over the landscape. Perched high on a hill, Lectoure really does "[dominate] the vast countryside" (Bladé 2008, 32). With the terrain laid out like a map before them, perhaps it is not surprising that one of the main subjects of conversation between the two men revolved around local places.

While this information is interesting, it does not settle the question of function in Cazaux's repertoire. Modern folklorists have studied the ease with which stories can be acted out as "ostension," emphasizing that the dividing line between legend and cultural script is blurry (Dégh and Vázsonyi 1983; Ellis 1989; Goldstein 2004).

Stories are blueprints for action as well as reflections of things that have happened. Sadly, with the case of Cazaux's narratives we do not know enough about his life to prove the relationship between narrated actions and his biography.

If Cazaux going to see the Green Man was an early form of "legend-tripping," we cannot know if the legend of the Napoleonic Deserter was an expression of regret, longing, or defiance. Considering that Cazaux lived through the heavy conscription of the Empire, the story could certainly be understood as a justification or blueprint for deserting. In the story, the Deserter runs away the night before the conscription lottery. He spends the next seven years leading a "sad life, hunted by the police and the *garnisaires*" responsible for catching deserters. One night, he has the good fortune to hear the Seven Beautiful Fairies singing that Napoleon has finally been defeated. The Deserter returns home overjoyed, where he is greeted by his delighted parents (Bladé 2008, 340-343).

The message of the story seems to match up to what historians have said about conscription as "a heavy tribute exacted by an oppressive and alien state" (Hopkin 2003; Weber 1976, 294-5). Young men, the legend suggests, have the right to do everything in their power to resist this imposition, especially because of the effect conscription has on their families:

His parents were sad, very sad, and they often said to him:  
 "My poor friend, if you go to war, that will be the end of us seeing you.  
 You will be killed, like the others." (Bladé 2008, 340)

This lack of evidence about the dividing line between narrative and action is problematic, but it also holds out hope for modern readers of Cazaux's legends. As I

tried to show with “The Mass of Saint Sécaire,” Cazaux’s performances are not just stories about the past, but warnings and advice situated in the present: they can be understood as veiled threats about Cazaux’s powers as well as compliments directed at the folklorist. It would, however, be unfair to Cazaux to underplay his ability to distinguish real-life action from believable narratives. Such a simple psychology of the “folk” in Linda Dégh’s work has a tendency to depict ordinary people as the playthings of social forces that supposedly promote “irrationality” and violence (Dégh 2001, especially 441-2). Against Dégh’s pessimism, we can probably assume that Cazaux, just like modern narrators, had some concept of the difference between narratives and actions. Nonetheless, he was certainly able, as the last chapter suggests, to blur this line in performance in order to control his audience, Bladé.

This touches on the final and possibly most important defining characteristic of the legend: the importance of dialogue and dialectics (Bennett 1999, 32-6; Dégh 2001, especially 2-3; Goldstein 2004, 8; David J. Hufford 1982; Tangherlini 1994, 7). This idea is so crucial that Linda Dégh subtitled her defining statement on legend “Dialectics of a Folklore Genre” (Dégh 2001). Dégh writes that “legends appear as products of conflicting opinions, expressed in conversation.... [D]isputability is not only a feature of the legend, it is its very essence, its *raison d’être*, its goal” (Dégh 2001, 2-3). It might seem hard to see Cazaux’s texts as dialogues. No matter how imaginative the reading of “The Mass of Saint Sécaire” in the previous chapter, Bladé had an immense but silent role in the texts. Although Cazaux appears to speak, it is Bladé who did the writing, and his effacement from the final product renders the

transcripts eerily similar to a forgery, a document written in the name of another, without their permission (Groom 2002).

Finding traces of the dialogue between the two men in the texts would arguably be the best evidence that they really are legends that Cazaux told Bladé. This is why the comments Cazaux addressed to his one-man audience and Bladé's strangely obsessive footnoted replies are so important. The example of "My Uncle from Condom" reveals that these marginal exchanges are the site of a conversation not only about types of authority associated with regional identity and place, but also about the only theme that Cazaux's legends do not seem to share with modern legends: concern from the narrator's viewpoint about social change.

#### "My Uncle from Condom"

I had an uncle (God bless him!) who died at an old age in Condom, a long a time ago now. He lived out of town on the road to Nérac. My uncle was a very smart man. But he had such a simple air, so simple that no-one suspected a thing. By doing more than one type of work he had enough to live off his profits. In his youth, before the great Revolution, my uncle was first a valet for a horse dealer and for a long time went round the fairs of the Grandes Landes, and those of the Pyrenees, from Bayonne to Perpignan. Later he worked for himself, and became a smuggler.

My uncle learnt a lot from this life, which helped him later on. He understood and spoke the languages of the countries he had travelled through. He knew all the paths to follow to avoid the police. He knew which farms you could find some dinner and somewhere to sleep if you paid well enough, without the fear they would sell you out. My uncle often gave gifts to women whose husbands were in power, golden jewellery, silk fabric. More than once he even lent them money, which he never saw the color of again. That's how my uncle came to have more than sixty thousand francs, without ever having been tortured, nor put in prison.

When the great Revolution drove out the priests and the nobles, the good, brave man changed his line of work. He earned as much as a thief by secretly taking people into Spain, people that were being hunted down to be guillotined. I bet that in that period alone he would have built up almost forty

thousand francs, if he hadn't been forced to leave three quarters of it to those thieves in positions of power who were protecting him.

My uncle, and he was no liar, he told me lots of things that happened to him. Here are two which are worth retelling.

As a child, you must have seen the abbé de Ferrabouc, who died the parish priest of Saint-Mézard. [Footnote: "I did, in fact, meet the abbé de Ferrabouc during my childhood in the vicarage of Saint-Mézard, in the *canton* of Lectoure (Gers), where he died as a very old man. The real name of this good priest was Herrebouc, which came from the lands of the old county of Fezensac, which his ancestors were lords of. During the Revolution, the abbé de Ferrabouc emigrated to Spain, and he lived for a long time in Córdoba. Need I add that he never mentioned a word of what my narrator told me, even if Cazaux said it believing it to be true?"] During the Revolution, this abbé fled into Spain, and it was my uncle who took him to the frontier. They wanted to go by Saint-Bertrand-de-Comminges to reach the valley of Arran. [Footnotes: "[Saint-Bertrand-de-Comminges is the] *chef-lieu* of the *canton* of the *département* of the Haute-Garonne, and is in the part of this department formed by the central Pyrenees." "[The Valley of Aran is] a Spanish valley, next to France. It is the source of the river Garonne." ] But they were warned that the routes were guarded throughout the Pyrenees all the way to Foix. [Footnote: "The top of the valley of the Ariège, which opens onto Spain and Andorra on the southern side." ] My uncle and the abbé de Ferrabouc were therefore forced to make a large detour through Languedoc, in order to get, via Limoux and Aleth, to a wild and wooded part of the country, called Capcir. [Footnote: "Small region made up of the highest part of the Aude valley. Capcir was ceded to France by the Treaty of the Pyrenees at the same time as Vallespir, Conflent and the French Cerdagne." ] This region borders on the Spanish Pyrenees, they speak Catalan there. But it belongs to France. The people of Capcir are not bad people, except there is a race of men there who kill Christians, when they can, and eat them raw, or cooked in the oven.

My uncle had heard about that, but he wasn't sure it was true. He spoke and understood Catalan as well as anybody, but he pretended not to know a word. As for the abbé de Ferrabouc, he didn't understand one bit.

So my uncle and the abbé de Ferrabouc found themselves one evening at seven in the region of Capcir, two leagues from the Spanish frontier. They were famished, and didn't have the strength to put one foot in front of the other.

"Monsieur l'abbé," said my uncle, "here is a charcoal-makers' hut. Let's go in to eat something and sleep. Tomorrow, we will set off before daybreak and we will be in Spain before sunrise."

"As you wish, my friend."

The two of them went into the hut, where they found seven people eating their supper, three men, a woman, and three children, the eldest of whom was not yet twelve. The two travellers were not badly welcomed. They

were given something to eat and drink. The eldest charcoal-maker knew a little of the Gascon *patois* [dialect], but my uncle pretended not to understand Catalan.

At nine, the old charcoal-maker said to his three children in their language:

“It’s late. Go to bed.”

“No,” said the eldest. “I want to eat one of the priest’s legs.” [Footnote: “*No. Quiero delante comer una pierna del frayle.* This is Castilian Spanish, but this is what the narrator said. In Catalan it would be: *No. Vuy abant manja une cama del capella.*”]

So the old charcoal-maker took a stick and drove out the children. My uncle was still pretending not to understand.

“Ha, ha, ha! Monsieur l’abbé,” he said, laughing, “pretend to laugh like me. If you don’t, we are lost. Ho, ho, ho! These charcoal-makers belong to a race of men who kill Christians, when they can, and eat them raw, or cooked in the oven. Hee, hee, hee!”

“Ha, ha, ha!” said the abbé de Ferrabouc. “We both have our knives, and our steel-tipped canes. Ho, ho, ho! Let’s try and get out of here without injury. Hee, hee, hee!”

“My friend,” said my uncle, “we would like to go to sleep.”

The old charcoal-maker led them to a little room full of straw.

“Sleep there, and don’t worry or fear. Tomorrow morning we will give you some breakfast before you leave. Good night.”

The charcoal-maker left, and my uncle heard him say to his wife:

“In an hour, those two men will be sleeping like logs. Get my knife ready. We have enough to eat well for two weeks.”

But my uncle had already softly, softly opened the little window of the room. One minute later, he and the abbé de Ferrabouc were outside, and fleeing towards the Spanish frontier.

That’s what happened to my uncle in the region of Capcir. Now I’ll tell you what he saw and heard in the Grandes Landes.

My uncle had taken a noble to Spain, I can’t remember his name. The journey went well, and the noble left France through the mountains at Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port, in the Basque country. My uncle was returning alone across the Grandes Landes, through the pine forests with fifty well-earned gold *louis* that he was carrying hidden under his clothes in a leather belt. It was St John’s night. [Footnote: “The 24<sup>th</sup> of June.”] It could have been around eight.

All of a sudden, my uncle heard metal clashing behind him, and horses at full gallop.

“The police!”

Immediately, he jumped off the road into the pine trees, and hid in a thicket. The police went by, still at full gallop, and went off, I have no idea where to. So my uncle thought to himself:

“Those people certainly weren’t after me. But it would be best not to find myself in their way. It’s a nice night. I will sleep outside, under a pine tree.”

So my uncle pressed deeper into the woods, and lay down on the sand at the bottom of a pine-tree as tall as a bell-tower, careful to keep his dagger and his steel-tipped cane within hand reach. He quickly fell asleep. He was woken by the sound of little voices shouting, just as the stars signalled midnight.

“Hee! Hee!” came the voices from the top of the pine-tree as tall as a bell-tower.

“Hee! Hee!” came the reply from the tops of the other trees.

“Hee! Hee!”

At the same time, all sorts of different spirits fell onto the sand like rain, in the form of flies, glow-worms, dragonflies, crickets, cicadas, butterflies, stag beetles, horseflies, wasps, but not a single bee. From underground other spirits swarmed out in the form of lizards, toads, frogs, salamanders, and men and women the size of a thumb, dressed in red and with golden tridents.

Immediately, all of these people began to romp around and dance in a circle on the sand, on the tips of the stalks of grass, the heath and the gorse bushes. The spirits sang as they danced:

“Hee! Hee!”

All the little plants  
In the fields  
Flower and seed  
On Saint-John’s day.

“Hee! Hee!”

Half-dead with fright, my uncle made the sign of the cross. But the spirits kept on singing as they danced:

“Hee! Hee!”

All the little plants  
In the fields  
Flower and seed  
On Saint-John’s day.

“Hee! Hee!”

So my uncle was no longer scared, and thought to himself:

“This spirits are nothing to do with the Devil and his nasty lot. They mean no harm to Christians.”

All of a sudden, the dancing and singing stopped. The spirits had seen my uncle.

“Man, my friend, don’t be afraid. Come, come and dance and sing with us.”

“Spirits, thank you. I have travelled a long way and I am too tired to do as you do.”

So the spirits began to sing and dance.

“Hee! Hee!”

All the little plants  
In the fields  
Flower and seed  
On Saint-John’s day.

“Hee! Hee!”

The ball lasted until daybreak. Immediately, the flying spirits went back up into the sky, the others went back underground, and my uncle found himself alone, lying on the sand at the bottom of a pine-tree as tall as a bell-tower.

[Bladé writes] *Told by the late Cazaux, of Lectoure. Belief in both cannibal mountain-dwellers in the Pyrenees and in benevolent spirit gatherings during Saint John’s night is still widespread in Gascony. But the details concerning the uncle from Condom and the abbé de Ferrabouc belong to Cazaux alone. I have classed this mixed superstition with the Malevolent Beings because of the charcoal-makers of Capcir* (Bladé 2008, 351-356)

### Two Sides to Every Story

Bladé calls this highly-personalized, believable, historical account of Cazaux’s uncle’s encounters with two different types of extra-normal beings a “superstition,” taking the position that it is not only untrue, but evidence that Cazaux’s worldview is archaic (Belmont 1986). Modern researchers have no obligation to commit themselves to any such position about whether the events of the story really happened (Bennett 1999, 3; Thomas 2007, 25-6; Dégh 2001, 4). Instead, folklorists emphasize that the dialogue between the performer and the audience about the truth of the legend reflects the concerns of the present (Dégh 2001, 90). Where nineteenth-century historians

might have tried to “isolate the historical core from the traditional packaging” in the legend (Tangherlini 1994, 13), modern researchers recognize that stories set in the past are conversations about the here and now.

Bladé was quite unashamed to present the beliefs Cazaux professed as untrue survivals belonging to the ignorant rural poor, so why are his footnotes so concerned to disprove the historical truth of the accounts? Rather than being about fairies or cannibals, perhaps these conversations had more to do with personal claims to authority based on social recognition, regional knowledge, and models of time.

#### i. Witnesses: Social Recognition

As I noted above, Cazaux behaves like modern tellers who ground the believability of their legends in the authority of reliable witnesses (Goldstein 2007, 70-78). In “My Uncle from Condom,” the most important witness is obviously the Uncle himself. Cazaux emphasizes the reliability of this Uncle, “a very smart man,” who “learnt a lot” from being a smuggler, and was “no liar.” Despite being a smuggler, the uncle is presented as an honest man, certainly more honest than the Revolutionary officials who milked his profits.

And the uncle is not the only witness to the events of the story. Like modern legend-tellers, Cazaux justifies the accuracy of his story in the same way as a lawyer establishes evidence in court, by presenting more than one person on his “Narrative Witness Stand” (Goldstein 2007, 70). Cazaux mentions the abbé de Ferrabouc by name not just because more witnesses lend more credibility: he also expects Bladé to

respect the testimony of a man of the cloth and suggests that his one-man audience knew and trusted this specific individual.

Bladé does not respond to this authority verbally, maintaining the conceit that the legend is narrated by Cazaux alone. Yet the text still assumes the form of the legendary dialogue through the apparatus that Bladé surrounds it with. Bladé's footnote concerning the priest is a direct riposte to the authority that Cazaux borrows from Ferrabouc. Bladé admits that he knew him, but concludes "[n]eed I add that he never mentioned a word of what my narrator told me..?" Bladé's reply is, however, not simply a statement that he has no knowledge of Cazaux's evidence. His riposte similarly takes the form of a miniature and condensed narrative, an anti-legend. In the place of Cazaux's authenticating apparatus, Bladé provides his own. The priest, he points out, was not really called Ferrabouc at all, but Herrebouc. Bladé then provides his own alternative narrative to back up his authority, a story based on the historical details of the priest's origins and what "really" happened to him during the Revolution: "The real name of this good priest was Herrebouc, which came from the lands of the old county of Fezensac that his ancestors were lords of. During the Revolution, the abbé de Ferrabouc emigrated to Spain, and he lived for a long time in Córdoba."

Cazaux deploys reliable and trustworthy witnesses to the truth of the story he told, but Bladé denies the social connections that underpin Cazaux's version of the truth. Bladé cares little for the intelligent Uncle who Cazaux is so keen to present as

“no liar,” but even worse, he presents a counter-narrative that calls into question the relationship between this Uncle and the real abbé de Herrebouc.

## ii. Regional Knowledge

Bladé’s sceptical footnotes go further, pointing out a factual error that Cazaux himself makes about the language that the men of Capcir speak. Cazaux says that the cannibal charcoal-makers spoke Catalan, but Bladé’s footnote points out that the printed words are actually Castilian Spanish. The quibble might seem unimportant, but it is another example of Bladé’s role as the sceptical audience for Cazaux’s narrative. If one part of Bladé’s expertise for this role is his social position and connection to individuals like the priest from Saint-Mézard, a more important source of his authority is his academic research on southwestern France. In his *Study on the Origins of the Basques*, Bladé emphasized his expertise as a comparative philologist and linguist (Bladé 1869, Part 2, Chs. 2 and 3).

In the footnotes, Bladé also assumes the role of the local geographical and historical specialist, as when he traced the history of the abbé de Ferrabouc. This role is in contrast to Cazaux’s own depiction of the region, which relies on an everyday and intimate contact with specific places. In “The Green Man,” for instance, the young Cazaux falls asleep on the rocks by the Hospital in Lectoure (Bladé 2008, 344). In “The Sirens,” the river Gers is not just a geographical landmark, it is a workplace for the boatmen, and a fishing opportunity for the hero of the legend (Bladé 2008, 369-371). In “The Seven Beautiful Fairies,” a stream named the Esquère is a path to be followed by the Deserter, anxious to avoid meeting the police or *garnisaires*

(Bladé 2008, 341). Cazaux knows landmarks and regions, such as the forest at Ramier or the rocks at the Hospital, from long-term intimacy. He has walked these regions for eighty years, and they belong to his acquaintances and family, themselves anchored to specific places, like the Uncle who lived “out of town on the road to Nérac.”

Perhaps most strikingly, Cazaux’s description of the different kinds of ghosts that exist deploys a familiar topography of the household and surrounding areas:

There are also the Marraouque and the Jambe-Crue who prowl around farms in the evening and behind straw bales ready to steal infants which they take off to eat, I don’t know where...

There are others whose names I don’t know, and who we hear, without seeing them. In the summer, they dance by the moonlight, in the meadows, in the fields, and in the treetops. In the winter, they spend the whole day in the loft, in the oven and in holes in the wall, and they don’t leave until night, to make the doors and windows creak and slam. (Bladé 2008, 329-330)

Like modern ghosts (Thomas 2007, 32), Cazaux’s Bad Spirits have a fondness for liminal places around the house, but it is also important to notice that their peregrinations match the seasonal movements of male agricultural workers. These Bad Spirits spend the summer in the fields and meadows, and the winter locked up in “the loft, in the oven and in the holes in the wall,” just the same as the men who would have done most, if not all, of the work further from the home (Segalen 1983, 86-114, especially 99).

In this respect, Cazaux’s legends match very closely what Timothy Tangherlini found with the legends collected in Denmark by Evald Tang Kristensen. As a male narrator, Cazaux told about male activities, further away from the home (Tangherlini 1994, 147, 153, 320). The heroes who wander the night-time landscapes

of his legends at will are all men, and there are very few female characters at all. His intimate portrait of the landscape is gendered.

Bladé's geographical and historical expertise contrasts with the authority of Cazaux's intimacy. When Cazaux mentions hamlets or forests or streams, Bladé interjects with footnotes, placing these landmarks in a coherent, ideal geography. When Cazaux presents the valleys of the Pyrenees as routes from France to Spain in "My Uncle from Condom," Bladé contextualizes them with reference to other, large geographical units, such as Ariège and Andorra. As soon as Cazaux mentions the valley of Capcir, Bladé cannot resist providing a mini-history: "Small region made up of the highest part of the Aude valley. Capcir was ceded to France by the Treaty of the Pyrenees at the same time as Vallespir, Conflent and the French Cerdagne."

Cazaux's regional credibility depends on his familiarity with a lived space, while Bladé's encroachments on his narrator's authority draw on linguistic, historical, and geographical learning.

### iii. Time

One of the differences between Cazaux's legends and modern legends is that Cazaux's narratives do not seem to express concern about social change (Fine 1980). Or rather, Cazaux's half of the dialogue does not express this concern. Instead, Cazaux presents non-degenerative models of time. Life is clearly better now that Gargantua and the Horned Men have left the region, and it seems fairly clear that Cazaux feels the same way about the end of Napoleonic conscription in "The Seven Beautiful Fairies" and the calming of the tribulations associated with the French

Revolution, described at the start of “My Uncle from Condom.” This is in direct opposition to what the historian Maurice Agulhon said about the memory of the Revolution in the nearby Var. For Agulhon the people did not remember 1789 and 1793 in 1848 and 1850, while the elites had a “*veritable obsession*” with the revolutionary period, largely born out of fear of the guillotine (Agulhon 1982, 259-60).

Aside from this optimistic progression evident in Cazaux’s concept of time, there is also a theme of cyclical and even unchanging time. The Seven Beautiful Fairies as well as the fairies in “My Uncle from Condom” return every St John’s eve and the Bad Spirits in “Ghosts” follow the agricultural laborer’s annual cycle (Bladé 2008, 329-30, 341-3, 354-6). Although Gargantua and the Horned Men have left the region, Cazaux never claimed they have ceased to exist. Gargantua is probably in Spain, and the King of the Horned Men is trapped underground (Bladé 2008, 347, 359). While Cazaux admits that even when he was “little, people already said that the Green Man didn’t show himself as often as in the past” (Bladé 2008, 343), but we should not take this to mean that he no longer exists. Cazaux himself saw him twice, and as he points out “In Lectoure, there has always been, and there always will be a Green Man” (Bladé 2008, 343).

Historians such as Eugen Weber and Judith Devlin inherited from the nineteenth-century folklorists the conviction that supernatural beliefs were survivals or “superstitions” in the process of disappearing (Devlin 1987; Weber 1976). If they had paid more attention to the attitudes towards time expressed by the folklorists’

informants themselves, perhaps they would have agreed with more recent writers who have found that supernatural beliefs not only withstood the advent of fertilizer that Weber depicted overcoming “The Mad Beliefs” (Weber 1976, 23-29, 355-6), but continue to be relevant to many people from all social classes and levels of education today (Bennett 1999; Favret-Saada 1980; Harris 1999; Goldstein, Grider, and Thomas 2007). As Diane Goldstein has emphasized, supernatural beliefs neither were nor are gripped in a war to the death with scientific rationalism, which the forces of modernity are destined to win (Goldstein 2007). Traditional beliefs are not as archaic as this suggests (Belmont 1986; Bennett 1999), and the modernizers themselves may have little claim to have ever been truly “modern” (Latour 1997).

This message is evident from Cazaux’s legends, set in a familiar, everyday, realistic world that does not seem to be disappearing. Bladé, however, responds to Cazaux’s models of time with his own, which does depict a vanishing landscape. When Cazaux mentions landmarks, Bladé notes that these landmarks are no longer there or greatly diminished, such as the Ramier forest, “situated between Lectoure and Fleurance, which is largely cleared now” (Bladé 2008, 376). When Cazaux refers to the château at Lamothe-Goas, Bladé notes that it “used to be a county” (Bladé 2008, 330). Probably the best example of these intercessions by Bladé is the case of the rocks at the Hospital in Lectoure. Cazaux gives no hint that the place where “The Green Man” is set has now disappeared. It is Bladé who interjects with a note emphasizing the destruction of the old place by the avatar of the new social order, a

road: “These rocks were north of Lectoure near to the old fountain of Saint-Esprit. The new road [*chemin de ronde*] built there destroyed all of it” (Bladé 2008, 343).

It is never Cazaux who refers to disappeared places. Although he tells stories about his own childhood, such as “The Green Man,” and the Revolution and Empire, such as “My Uncle from Condom” and “The Seven Beautiful Fairies,” Cazaux does not describe places or even people in terms that emphasize their passing. He tells us nothing, for instance, about the mysterious figure of his father, Mathieu Cazaux, who takes him to market in “The Green Man.” Born in 1744, Mathieu died some time between the start of the Revolution and Cazaux’s mother’s death in the Year XIV of the Republic (Archives Départementales du Gers). Perhaps the memorate Cazaux told was particularly important because his father died fairly early in his life.

#### Differential Nostalgia: Social Change and Social Identities

In an important article published in 1971, Richard Bauman urged folklorists to turn their attention away from a conception of folklore as belonging to homogenous groups (Bauman 1971). He wrote that “folklore performance does not require that the lore be a collective representation of the participants, pertaining and belonging equally to all of them. It may be so, but it may also be differentially distributed, differentially performed, differentially perceived, and differentially understood” (Bauman 1971). Jay Mechling extended these ideas further, using the example of folklore between humans and non-human animals to remind folklorists that folklore

can be shared between partners who exist in a relation approaching domination (Mechling 1989, 319).

I would suggest that the transcriptions of Cazaux's legends that Bladé published represent a case where the performer and the audience shared different understandings of the meaning of the performance, which presented differential conceptions of nostalgia. Among other recent writers who have attempted to reclaim the positive dimensions of nostalgia, the folklorist Ray Cashman has stressed that "not all nostalgias are the same" (Cashman 2006, 154). Cazaux's legend texts are an example of a clash of nostalgias: if Cazaux depicts a world of male solidarity united against alien outsiders, Bladé seems more interested in the idea of a dying or disappearing world.

#### i. Cazaux's Invitation

Cazaux's legends, as we have seen, are set in male spaces, and feature far more men than women. The only women who do appear are either threatening supernatural beings such as the Sirens, or threatened innocents, such as the girl whose kidnapping sets off the chain of events in "The King of the Horned Men." In Cazaux's legends, men help one another, like Cazaux's Uncle helping the abbé de Ferrabouc across the border into Spain. In "The Sirens" the hero decides he needs a place to stay while he is fishing for the night, so he drops in on a sharecropper who lives at Talayzac. In exchange for lodging and lending him the mare, the sharecropper will receive some of the fish he catches (Bladé 2008, 370). This is a world of male interdependence without women and children. The only children who do appear are the

ravenous cannibal children of Capcir in “My Uncle from Condom.” Perhaps some of Cazaux’s unconscious feelings about the responsibilities he never had are manifested in this narrative detail.

At the same time, the most important point about this depiction is that it looks suspiciously like an invitation to Bladé to join Cazaux in an in-group that Cazaux, like other Mediterranean narrators, referred to as “Christians” (Fabre-Vassas 1997, for instance 85). In “The Mass of Saint Sécaire,” Cazaux constructed a role for Bladé as a patron, assimilating him to the consensus model of social interdependence that writers such as Maurice Agulhon and David Hopkin have depicted elsewhere in small-town France (Agulhon 1982, 121; Hopkin 2003, for example, 9). But this was also, as the example of talking about witchcraft has shown, a slightly threatening offer. When Cazaux says to Bladé, “You know the mill at Aurenque as well as I do,” should we understand this as flattery and social identification, or a covert challenge, a sly shibboleth (Bladé 2008, 330)?

It might be going too far to depict Bladé “courting” Cazaux, trying his hardest to wheedle stories out of him, as the folklorist and his biographer later did, but there is definitely a sense in which Cazaux is in charge of the interaction (Alleman 1930, 168; Bladé 2008, 32). Cazaux is the expert. He had the experiences and knew the stories that Bladé was so keen to collect. It does not seem that Cazaux had much sense of the wider reading public for the final edition of *The Folktales of Gascony*, because so much of what he said is about inviting Bladé to share in his world of male sociability. If he was nostalgic about the past world he depicted in his legends of mutual

dependence and benevolence, it was a future-oriented nostalgia, not unlike the “critical nostalgia” that Ray Cashman has praised in Northern Irish folk material culture (Cashman 2006). The threat of the outsiders, such as witches, was the reminder that it takes a conscious effort on behalf of “good Christians” to survive in the world of “limited good” (Foster 1965).

## ii. Bladé’s Role

Chapter I explored some of the problems that this identification between the voices of the two men in the texts might raise. In his own life, Bladé told stories about exclusively masculine interactions that often referred to markers of regional identity, such as otter skin caps and dialectical proficiency. The worry is that Cazaux’s legends reflect the folklorist’s interests more than the informants’. Bladé’s role in eliciting certain types of legend from Cazaux must not be underestimated: it is hard to know if Cazaux adapted his repertoire to suit his audience, if Bladé was selective in publishing, or if the two men just made a good thematic fit.

One hypothesis is that Bladé selected Cazaux and asked him for specific things. “The Mass of Saint Sécaire” resembles a response to questioning about a specific topic, and some of Cazaux’s other legends might be seen in the same light. “Ghosts,” for instance, starts as a report, and develops into a narrative example so that Cazaux can explain the beliefs he was describing, much like modern informants faced with a difficult topic (Bennett 1999, 3). Bladé had a sense of what made a good informant, and old age may have been an important part of this. After all, older informants are still preferred by some researchers into the supernatural, although their

reasons are not necessarily made explicit (Bennett 1999). In Bladé's case, there is a strong possibility that he thought Cazaux a particularly important informant because of his old age and the longevity of his memory.

Under this hypothesis we can imagine that it was Bladé who asked Cazaux about his childhood, since childhood was a recurring interest of the folklorist (see Chapter I). Cazaux may have habitually told legends set in the recent past, but Bladé's insistence on the antiquity of supernatural belief would have meant that he preferred the legends set over fifty years before. This might sound like a good deal of speculation, but it is important to suggest answers to these questions about the genesis of the published texts. If Cazaux's legends were all set in the fairly distant past, or an unspecified time, as the selection Bladé printed suggests, why would Cazaux talk about so many of the supernatural beings as contemporary? Whatever the reasons that Cazaux told what he told, it is clear that they cannot have been wholly dictated by the folklorist and, unless Bladé possessed an imagination capable of inventing all of the dynamics of the relationship between the two men, the stories reflect what Cazaux felt about the world around him, as well as his audience, Bladé.

This is why there is none of the literary romanticism in Cazaux's story of his childhood, and why all of the morbid references to a revolved past that Bladé makes in his introductions and footnotes have little relevance to the messages of Cazaux's legends. The differential nostalgia of the two men competed over the question of whether the social world was composed of mutually interdependent men, closely tied

to the land, or a disappearing place that had been destroyed, like the “sounds of the first origin” that Bladé sought (Bladé 2008, 29).

#### Conclusion: After?

I have argued that Cazaux’s legend texts are not simple reflections of an old man’s supernatural beliefs, but a conversation between the informant and the folklorist about the way the world is. For many historians, this conversation is irrelevant. The “superstitious mind” (Devlin 1987) of “peasants” (Weber 1976) like Cazaux was doomed in the face of the growing importance of education, trade, transport, and the military (Berenson 1987; Tilly 1979). If these “peasant” attitudes were not destroyed by the new social forces, they were at least contained by their gaze: the “peasant” was invented and essentialized by officials, tourists, and the folklorists themselves (Lehning 1995). Shanny Peer suggests:

In France, as elsewhere, one might argue that the victory of “modernity” over “traditional” cultures has been achieved less by the eradication of residual practices than by their reabsorption and reconstruction within modern society. (MacCannell 1976; Peer 1998, 174)

Peer’s book on the uses of folklore in the Parisian World’s Fair of 1937 does not, however, take this “reabsorption and reconstruction” for granted. Peer argues that folklore was not just appropriated by the right-wing in France, but also by the left. It was available to both because it was “polysemic,” capable of expressing messages important to both the later Vichy government and left-wing Resistance (Peer 1998, 4).

But Peer's interest in the appropriations of folklore and rural identities by political movements, flexible as it is, needs to be grounded by a reminder that these appropriations depended on real rural individuals, who were not completely powerless in this process of construction. Rather than just a body of material that could be manipulated by conservative, "romantic peasantologies" or their left-wing equivalents (Kearney 1996, for instance 42), folklore bears some mediated relation to what rural individuals said and thought. If "the [Anglophone] *category peasant* has come apart at the seams" can we really say the same for the history of the French term *paysan* after Bladé was collecting (Kearney 1996, 30)? The anthropologist Susan Carol Rogers would probably disagree. Based on fieldwork dating from the 1970s onward, Rogers argued in the 1980s that the polyvalent image of the "peasant" remained important to rural identities and forms of resistance in the French countryside (Rogers 1987).

The rural population may have been romanticized by writers worried by urbanization and the "social problem" in the cities (Peer 1998, 103), but the idea Bourdieu suggested that the peasantry was an "object class," capable only of being acted upon, and not a category with its own agency, needs to be empirically proven (Bourdieu 1977). On the level of the two men, these social forces are less interesting than the ways that both Cazaux and Bladé were changed by the contact. Bladé's meeting with Cazaux changed him in an obvious way that I have mentioned before: it gave him a historical existence.

But it also changed Bladé. In his writings, Bladé shared some narrative interests with his informant, but embodied different styles, from romantic nostalgia to

rebellious humor (see Chapter I). In the final twist binding the two men together, however, Alleman describes her great-uncle the narrator in the same terms that Bladé himself used for Cazaux. Cazaux apparently dictated in a “slow, serious voice [*voix lente et grave*]” (Bladé 2008, 32), and Bladé, Alleman tells the reader, similarly narrated “slowly, in a very serious tone [*lentement, d’un ton très sérieux*]” even when telling humorous anecdotes (Alleman 1930, 6). When Alleman says that her uncle resembles “an old, poor man,” her most obvious model is the “old man” Cazaux who had worked “with his hands more than sixty years” in order to save up enough for a garden (Bladé 2008, 31-2). Cazaux wears modest and simple clothing (Bladé 2008, 31) and the old Bladé wears a “loose tie” and “yawning shoes” (Alleman 1930, 6). The meeting between the two men forged Cazaux as an individual with a history, but it also changed the way subsequent readers and writers have seen Bladé.

The rural population were not just invented as the answer to the political problems of the Third Republic in France, and neither were they entirely “discovered” (Robb 2007). An early collector like Bladé may have combined patronizing nostalgia with contempt for “superstition,” but the fact that he documented what Cazaux and others like him thought has an after-history. By the 1930s, the dominant currents in French folklore were to preserve the disappearing ways of life (Peer 1998, 144-5). There would have been no desire to preserve, nor even knowledge that there was something to preserve, without the conversations that early folklorists such as Bladé entered into with their informants.

In some ways, it is important to disagree with Linda Dégh's claim that using historical legend collections necessitates "situating texts in their social and historical setting" (Dégh 2001, 113). This chapter has aimed to do things the other way around, not just placing legends into contexts (Dégh 2001, 203), but trying to watch what real actors like Bladé and Cazaux were doing when they entered into a conversation about time and place through narrative performance (Latour 2007).

Yet on the other hand, it seems misplaced to claim, along with Timothy Tangherlini that "[t]radition in general, and legend in specific, does not have a life of its own; it is completely bound by the individuals who perpetuate it" (Tangherlini 1994, 32). Linda Dégh suggests instead that "the text of the legend speaks to us and about us, sounding our problems with agencies beyond our control" (Dégh 2001, 158, see also 5). In some ways, "[t]he legend-tellers do not make the story; the story makes them who they are" (Dégh 2001, 221). Some stories do seem to have a tenacious integrity, as if their message and essence were independent of each performance. It is not just a figure of speech to say that a story changes a person, yet neither can modern folklorists ignore the creativity of the performer and the subtle agencies of the audience.

The communal dimension of a shared narrative tradition is a much harder question to address than the micro-situation of Bladé confronting Cazaux. To study it would really require meticulously tracing narratives between many different narrators. While researchers interested in social patterns in the nineteenth-century folklore collections have made good use of quantitative methods to match up themes and

motifs to the gender, ages, and occupations of narrators (Tangherlini 1994) or to explore the social attitudes of specific groups to the state and the army (Hopkin 2003), their approach could be turned on its head. Instead of assuming the existence of social classifications based on region, gender, class, and age, and using these social classifications to understand the distribution of stories, motifs, and themes, the folklore transcripts could be used as the dialogues that trace the very constitution of these social categories (Latour 2007). Large-scale research of this kind could draw on the findings and failings of the diffusionists and historic-geographic folklorists but without succumbing to the rigidity of their conceptions about the solidity of narratives as “things.”

Stories pass among individuals and groups, and are modified in the process, but their tellers and audiences are also changed by the stories. Beyond Cazaux and Bladé, this three-way confrontation might restore the balance to histories of “modernization” that have lost all of their life. “Peasants into Frenchmen,” after all, is just another narrative, and its force as an explanatory model belongs in its dissemination through elite conduits in nineteenth-century France and its later adoption by twentieth-century historians (Weber 1976).

Other stories remain to be told. Modern readers can still read them in the folklore collections of Jean-François Bladé, and in the words of his most “defiant” informant, Guillaume Cazaux.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: GARGANTUA

## GARGANTUA

Gargantua was not from this region, but he passed through. They say he came from Bordeaux, and went to Spain.

He was a man seven times taller than the tower of Saint-Gervais [Footnote: “The cathedral in Lectoure.”]. He was so tall that he had only to open his mouth in order to swallow the birds from the sky.

Gargantua ate everything in his path, even wood, even stones, when he could find nothing better to satisfy his appetite. Often he ate up to cartloads of thorns.

When he went through the [forest at] Ramier, all of the felled wood went into his stomach.

Luckily, Gargantua didn't stay with us for long. There's no reason to wish for him back. However, I never heard tell that he was malicious, nor that he had wronged anyone.

*Told by the late Cazaux, from Lectoure (Gers).*

APPENDIX B: GHOSTS

## GHOSTS

Idiots pay no mind of cats, but sensible people don't trust them. A lot of those beasts have made a pact with the devil, who pays them to stay up all night and be the lookouts when Evil Spirits meet. No-one can say what the cats are paid in, or what they do with their wages. One thing is for certain: the Devil invites them to dinner on Mardi Gras. That's why it's so rare to see a cat that day.

Now you understand why cats sleep, or pretend to, all day long, the winter by the fireside, the summer in the first place they find. They are tired from having been on patrol all night, around the barns and the stables, in the cellars and attics. You see that with such good look-outs, Evil Spirits are almost always warned in time to escape. That's why the ones we can see don't appear often, and disappear in a flash.

In fact there are Evil Spirits that a man can see, and others he will never see. I'm not talking about witches and werewolves, who are nothing but people tied to the Devil by a pact. I am talking of Phantoms, Fears and *Dracs*, things that people have seen, just as surely as we will die. There is also the Marrauque and the Jambe-Crue [Raw Leg], who prowl around smallholdings in the evening, behind piles of straw to steal little children, which they eat, I don't know where. Those are the Evil Spirits a man can see.

There are others I don't know the name of, and which we hear, without being able to see them. In the summer, they dance in the moonlight, in the meadows, in the fields, and at the tops of the trees. In the winter, they spend their whole day in the

attics, in the ovens, and in holes in the wall, and they only go out at night to make the doors and windows creak and bang.

There are also Evil Spirits a man sees without realizing. They have the power to take all sorts of forms, they can change into animals, trees, stones, and other similar things. You mistake them for something else, and go by without paying any attention to them. If you don't believe, I can easily offer you proof.

You know the mill at Aurenque [Footnote: "A hamlet in the commune of Castelnau d'Arbieu (*canton* de Fleurance) on the banks of the Gers."] as well as I do. One day, the mechanism of the mill broke down. So the miller said to himself:

"This is annoying. Still, a monetary wound won't kill you. There is a famous carpenter who specializes in mills in Condom. I'll go look for him tonight. I'll bring him back tomorrow and before four days are up my millstones will be dancing again."

So the miller went into the stable, brushed down his most handsome horse, kitted it out, and gave it a double serving of oats. Once he had done that, he changed his clothes, and ate and drank like a man who has a long distance to travel, and returned to the stable to put the reins on his horse. This took place in the dead month. [Footnote: "December."] It was as dark as the inside of an oven. At the strike of eleven, the miller mounted his horse, armed with a knife, because he had to travel across forests, and he feared running into wolves and thieves.

As he was going through the [forest at] Ramier [Footnote: "Forest between Lectoure and Fleurance."] everything was fine. Happy, the miller pulled the reins toward Lamothe-Goas [Footnote: "A castle in the former *pays de Condomois*, in the

*canton* de Fleurance (Gers). Lamothe-Goas used to be a county.”] and soon fell asleep on the saddle, as the horse walked. How long did the rider sleep? He would never be able to say. When he awoke, he was a prisoner, clasped on every side by large oak trees, by fallen trees and dead branches, by brambles and thorns, clasped so tight, so tight that a snake or a viper could not have found its way through. The dry leaves trembled, the branches snapped and banged. The shrubs, which no billhook had ever pruned, scratched the rider and his horse, and would not let them move a step.

The miller then understood that he had stumbled upon a meeting of Evil Spirits, which take all sorts of forms. He pulled on the reins, stopped spurring his horse, and waited for daylight, praying to God.

Until the very break of dawn, the miller was tortured in a thousand ways. When the cock crow sent the Evil Spirits fleeing, the rider found himself, without knowing how, in the middle of the highway, half a rifle-shot from the castle of Lamothe-Goas.

The lady of the castle (she was a very charitable widow) sent for the surgeon from La Sauvetat, [Footnote: “Settlement in the former country of Gaure, now in the *canton* de Fleurance (Gers). The communes of La Sauvetat and Lamothe-Goas are next to one another.”] who cared for the miller for seven days. She also sent a servant to Condom, to warn the carpenter who specialized in mills, so that the mechanism was repaired the very morning that the miller returned home.

*Told by the late Cazaux, from Lectoure.*

APPENDIX C: THE GREEN MAN

## THE GREEN MAN

In Lectoure, there has always been, and there always will be a Green Man, who looks after the birds and is the master of all flying animals. The Green Man neither does nor wishes harm on anyone. No-one has ever seen him eat or drink. He lives almost always hidden. When he shows himself, the Green Man always chooses a place where he can't be reached. I knew some old people who saw him more than once on the *Rochers* [rocks] *des Bohêmes* [Footnote: "So called because gypsies [*bohêmes*] would shelter under the overhangs. These rocks were north of Lectoure near to the old fountain of Saint-Esprit. A patrol path [*chemin de ronde*] built there destroyed all of it."] or the *Rochers de l'Hôpital*. [Footnote: "To the south of Lectoure."] When I was little, people already said that the Green Man didn't show himself as often as in the past. However, I saw him twice, and I remember everything.

One evening my father, God bless him, had business in Pont-de-Pîle.

"Child," he said, "come with me. Perhaps we will see the Green Man who looks after the birds and is the master of all flying animals, as we pass under the rocks at the *Rochers de l'Hôpital*."

We set off at around four in the afternoon. The weather was superb. Under the *Rochers de l'Hôpital*, my poor father stopped and said to me:

"Look."

I did as my poor father said, and I saw the Green Man, who looks after the birds and is the master of all flying animals. He was sitting at the top of an old

rampart. The Green Man didn't say anything. But he moved his right arm, like a sower shaking out grain.

“Good evening, Green Man,” said my poor father.

“Good evening, Green Man,” I said as well.

The Green Man looked at us from the top of the old rampart and replied:

“Good evening, father Cazaux. Good evening, little Cazaux.”

We carried on. Twenty steps later, I turned back. The Green Man was no longer there.

I was about ten or eleven. My poor father and I never said a word, even between the two of us, about what we both saw. But I wanted to see the Green Man again. Often I went on my own to the *Rochers des Bohêmes* and *de l'Hôpital*. For a whole month, I hoped, without seeing or hearing anything. However, I thought to myself every day:

“I must see the Green Man again.”

One afternoon, around two, I had climbed, like a cat, to the top of the *Roches de l'Hôpital*, where I had seen the Green Man. Once there, I laid myself out in the shade, at the foot of the old rampart, and fell asleep.

The noise of a storm woke me. I looked at the sky. It was black like a chimney. All of the bells of the town were ringing, to ward off the bad weather. The lightning blinded me, and I smelled the scent of the earth as soon as the rain started.

All of a sudden, it was a downpour. Pressed up against the rampart, I listened to the claps of thunder and the sound of the water. However, I wasn't afraid, and I was

happy seeing something which doesn't happen every day. Finally, the rage of the storm decreased. The wind carried off the bad clouds, and I saw the sun once more.

I was going to return home, when I heard a noise above my head. It was the Green Man, sitting on top of the old rampart. He was moving his right arm, like a sower shaking out grain. This time, he spoke to me first:

“Good evening, little Cazaux.”

“Good evening, Green Man.”

“Little Cazaux, you have been looking for me for a long time. I know it. What do you want from me?”

“Green Man, you look after the birds, and you are master of all flying animals. Give me a blackbird, a handsome blackbird which sings well.”

“Little Cazaux, I don't give away my flying animals, and I don't sell my birds for gold nor silver. If you want a blackbird, a handsome blackbird which sings well, try to catch one. And now, little Cazaux, go home. Your parents are worried about you.”

The Green Man left, and I went home, where everyone was glad to see me. For three or four more years, I would return alone, and often, to the same spot. However I never saw the Green Man again, never again.

*Told by the late Cazaux, from Lectoure (Gers). Some old people of the town talked to me more vaguely of the Green Man.*

APPENDIX D: THE KING OF THE HORNED MEN

### THE KING OF THE HORNED MEN

There are men with horns, tails and hairy legs, like goats. The rest of their body is the same as a Christian's. However, the horned men are beasts. They will live until the end of the world, but they won't be resurrected to be judged.

When I was little (that was a long time ago), I heard people talk of the horned men more than once, but I never saw any. The truth before all else. Now, no-one talks of those nasty beasts. They have left the region, to go and live elsewhere. That is hardly cause for me to cry!

The horned men lived underground, among the rocks. There were some at Cardès, La Peyrolière and Aurignac, but not as many as by Saint-Clar, in the valleys of the Esquère and the Auroue. [Footnote: "Cardès, La Peyrolière, Aurignac, [are] all hilly areas of the commune of Lectoure. Saint-Clar [is an] administrative centre of the *canton* of Lectoure. L'Esquère [and] l'Aroue [are] streams."]

The horned men would only come out at night, in order to steal enough to live off from the fields. They would also carry off the prettiest girls, because there are no horned women.

The king of this bad lot lived in the rocks by Milord. [Footnote: "A smallholding in the village of l'Isle-Bouzon, in the *canton* of Saint-Clar (Gers)."] One evening, at sunset, he saw two women on the road: one was old, the other young and as pretty as the day. They were the wife and daughter of the marquis de l'Isle-Bouzon, and they were on their way home to their castle.

Immediately, the King of the horned men seized the poor child, and snatched her away as if she were a feather. He took her underground, into the rocks at Milord, and the marquise returned to her castle in tears.

“Marquise,” said the marquis de l’Isle-Bouzon, “where is our daughter?”

“Marquis, the King of the horned men has stolen her from us.”

Immediately, the marquis de l’Isle-Bouzon had the bell tolled as if there was a fire. All of the men of the parish came running with rifles, pitchforks and scythes. For six nights and six days, they searched without finding anything. The morning of the seventh day, a young man, with three mastiffs as big and strong as oxen came and knocked on the door of the castle early in the morning.

“Hello, marquis, hello marquise de l’Isle-Bouzon. They say that the King of the horned men has stolen your daughter and taken her underground, into the rocks at Milord.”

“My friend, it is true.”

“Well then, I have been in love with your daughter for a long time. If I bring her back to you, swear on your souls that you will give her to me in marriage.”

“We swear on our souls.”

The young man bowed to the marquis and the marquise de l’Isle-Bouzon, whistled to his mastiffs, and set off. For a whole month, nothing was heard of him, but he wasn’t wasting his time. Night and day he roamed the countryside with his beasts, looking for the King of the horned men. Finally, he ended up meeting him at midnight in the rocks at Milord.

“Young man, where are you going this late [at night]?”

“King of the horned men, mind your own business. I am going where I please. I don’t have to ask your permission to travel.”

“Young man, you have three lovely mastiffs. I need them.”

“King of the horned men, if you want them for nothing, I’d watch yourself. If you want to pay one hundred *pistoles* [gold coins] for each one, the deal will soon be sealed.”

“Young man, bring your mastiffs here tomorrow at midnight. I will count out your money.”

“King of the horned men, I can’t come here tomorrow at midnight. But I will send my brother in my place.”

The young man whistled to his mastiffs and set off. At sun rise, he knocked on his brother’s door.

“Hello, brother. I have come to ask you a big favor.”

“Brother, I will refuse you nothing.”

“Brother, I am in love with the daughter of the marquis de l’Isle-Bouzon, who the King of the horned men has prisoner underground, in the rocks at Milord. If I free her, this young lady [*demoiselle*] will be my wife. This evening you will learn what I want to do. Now I want to eat, drink and then sleep until the sun sets.”

The young man did as he had said. When night fell, he woke up, called his brother and whistled to his mastiffs.

“Brother, help me kill and skin the most handsome of these beasts.”

Within a moment the mastiff was killed and skinned. The young man threw the skin over his shoulders.

“Now, my brother, we must go.”

Silently, the two of them made their way with the two mastiffs until eleven at night. In a little wood, the young man put on the mastiff’s skin and got down on four knees, just like the other two beasts.

“Listen brother. Over there we will find the King of the horned men. Say to him: “Here are my brother’s three mastiffs. Where are the three hundred *pistoles*?” Once the money is counted out, return alone to your house. For the rest of the job, I won’t need you.”

“Brother, you will be obeyed.”

At exactly midnight, they arrived in the rocks at Milord.

“King of the horned men, here are the three mastiffs of my brother. Where are the three hundred *pistoles*?”

Once the money was counted out, the brother returned alone to his house. So the King of the horned men took his three mastiffs underground, into the cave where the daughter of the marquis d’Isle-Bouzon lived prisoner. Two places were laid on the table with bread as white as snow, old wine, and all sorts of meat.

“Young lady, here are three mastiffs, which cost me a lot, and will help me guard you until you are my wife.”

“You nasty beast, you aren’t of the Christian race. I am under your power. But I will never marry you, never.”

“Young lady, let us eat together.”

“You nasty beast, I am neither hungry nor thirsty. Eat alone, if you want.”

During the meal, the young man lay under the table, pulled off his mastiff skin and attacked the legs of the King of the horned men.

“Attack, my dogs! Css! Css! Bite him! Attack!”

The battle lasted more than three hours by the clock. Finally, the King of the horned men fell. So the young man chained his feet and hands with iron chains. Once he had done that, he bowed to the daughter of the marquis de l’Isle-Bouzon and said:

“Young lady, we must return to your parents’ castle. And you, King of the horned men, it is not within my power to kill you. But you will remain chained up in this cave, and you will suffer hunger and thirst until the day of the Last Judgment.”

The young man and the young lady left the cave with the two mastiffs. By sunrise, the young girl was returned to her parents’ house.

“Hello, marquis, hello, marquise de l’Isle-Bouzon. Here is your daughter. Now, remember what you swore to me on your souls.”

“My friend, we swore to you on our souls that if you brought her back to us, we would give her to you in marriage. We will hold the wedding party when you like.”

“Young lady, do you want me for a husband?”

“Yes, young man. I want only you because you are strong and brave, because you saved me from the King of the horned men.”

“Well then! Call for the vicar, this very morning, to say the mass for our marriage. Meanwhile, I have things to do.”

The young man bowed to the marquis and the marquise de l’Isle-Bouzon, and set off once again for the rocks at Milord. Once there he sealed up the entry to the cave where the King of the horned men was chained up and would suffer hunger and thirst until the Last Judgment with large rocks. Once he had done that, he returned to his mistress’s castle. The vicar married them that very morning, and they lived happily ever after.

*Narrated by the late Cazaux, from Lectoure. I remember having heard the same story from the mouth of Jacques Bonnet, a sharecropper in Lacassagne, a hamlet of Lectoure close to l’Isle-Bouzon, when I was a child. Jacques Bonnet died a long time ago, as well as another narrator called Merle, from Marsolan (in the canton of Lectoure), who located the events in his birth commune.*

APPENDIX E: THE SEVEN BEAUTIFUL FAIRIES

## THE SEVEN BEAUTIFUL FAIRIES

Back when Napoleon was fighting all of the kings of the earth, there was a young man who was waiting for the conscription lottery in Frandat. [Footnote: “A hamlet in the commune of Saint-Avit, in the *canton* de Lectoure (Gers).] His parents were sad, very sad, and they often said to him:

“My poor friend, if you go to war, that will be the end of us seeing you. You will be killed, like the others.”

The young man didn't reply, but night and day he thought about his problem. One evening, he whistled to his dog, took his rifle, his ammunition and a pouch full of food.

“My poor parents,” he said, “tomorrow is the day of the conscription lottery in Lectoure. I don't want to go to war. It's decided: I am going to desert. It will be a long time before you will see me. I will hide, I don't know where. My poor parents, don't cry. If I can, I will send news. Farewell, my poor parents. Keep your hopes up, and your courage. Don't cry. After the rain comes the sun.”

The Deserter whistled to his dog, and set off into the dark night.

For seven years, he led a sad life, hunted by the police and the *garnisaires* [responsible for finding men who had deserted]. Winter and summer the poor boy remained hidden all day long, in the deepest thickets of the woods, his loaded rifle to hand, and sleeping with one eye open, while the dog kept guard.

This dog was a good and brave animal, always as silent as a fish, and could scent the enemy from a league away, so they could run off immediately by the best route. At night, he walked a hundred steps ahead [of the Deserter], when his master moved to another region, when he [begged] as he went on the doorsteps of the smallholdings a little piece of bread for the love of God.

The Deserter lived in this way, for seven years. More than once, these good people had said to him:

“My friend, Napoleon has fallen. The king rules France. It’s over. Return to your parents.”

The Deserter responded, shaking his head:

“I don’t trust it. Napoleon will return.”

He was right, Napoleon came back and led an army of married men and young men to fight all the kings of the earth again.

Truly, that was a sad time. In the towns and the countryside, there were only old people, cripples, women, and children.

One night of Saint-Jean [Footnote: “The 24<sup>th</sup> of June.”] the weather was excellent, and the moon rose in a sky dotted with stars.

Along the banks of the stream called the Esquère [Footnote: “A tributary of the left bank of the Auroue, a little river which feeds the Garonne (Lot-et-Garonne).”] the Deserter made his way through the meadows. He made his way with his dog, pricking his ears, and running his eyes over the wooded rocks which dominate the

valley, to the right of the road to Saint-Clar. [Footnote: “The road from Lectoure to Saint-Clar.”]

Finally, the young man stopped by a big washhouse surrounded by hollow willows, and looked at the stars. Midnight was not far off. Once more, the Deserter pricked his ears and ran his eyes around. Then he snuggled up in the largest of the hollow willows, his loaded rifle to hand, and sleeping with one eye open, while the dog kept guard. Suddenly, a small cry rose out of the bottom of the washhouse.

“Hee, hee! Hee, hee!”

The Deserter armed his rifle and looked at his dog. The poor animal was sleeping.

“Hee, hee! Hee, hee!”

“Mother of God! The police and the *garnisaires* are here. Careful! I have only one shot. Then, [I must] charge, and watch out for my knife.”

Now seven small cries rose out of the washhouse. The dog was still sleeping.

“Hee, hee! Hee, hee!”

“Mother of God! The police and the *garnisaires* are here. Careful! I have only one shot. Then, [I must] charge, and watch out for my knife.”

“Hee, hee! Hee, hee!”

The dog was still sleeping.

“Mother of God! The police and the *garnisaires* are here. Careful! I have only one shot. Then, [I must] charge, and watch out for my knife.”

But it wasn't the police and the *garnisaires*. It was the Seven Beautiful Fairies who know everything that has happened, and everything that will. It was the Seven Beautiful Fairies who live hidden under the water all year, only to come out on the night of Saint-Jean, to dance in the meadows from midnight until the break of dawn.

“Hee, hee! Hee, hee!”

Dressed in robes of silver and gold, the Seven Beautiful Fairies came out of the big washhouse, and began to dance around the old hollow willow where the Deserter was snuggled up.

The Seven Beautiful Fairies sang and danced:

“Hee, hee! Hee, hee! We are the Seven Beautiful Fairies, who know everything that has happened, and everything that will. Hee, hee! Hee, hee! Lots of things are taking place elsewhere, which the people of the region will soon know about. Hee, hee! Hee, hee! Napoleon has finished fighting all the kings of the earth. Hee, hee! Hee, hee! The enemies of Napoleon took him away prisoner to an island in the sea, the island of Saint Helena. Hee, hee! Hee, hee! Peace has been established. In Paris, the king of France has returned to his Louvre. Hee, hee! Hee, hee!”

That's what the Seven Beautiful Fairies sang as they danced around all night long, from midnight to the break of the dawn. Then they dived to the bottom of the big washhouse, to live down there another year, hidden under the water, only to come out the following night of Saint Jean.

The Deserter saw everything, heard everything. He left the old hollow willow, put his rifle on his shoulder strap, whistled to his dog, and went calmly back to his [family].

“Hello, my dear parents. My sufferings are over. Last night the Seven Beautiful Fairies sang while they danced, they sang about lots of things which the people of the region will soon know about. Napoleon has finished fighting all the kings of the earth. The enemies of Napoleon took him away prisoner to an island in the sea, the island of Saint Helena. Peace has been established. In Paris, the king of France has returned to his Louvre.”

It didn't take long to realize that the Seven Beautiful Fairies had sung the truth. From then on, the Deserter had nothing to fear from the police and the *garnisaires*. He lived with his parents, got married, and lived happily ever after.

*Told by the late Cazaux, from Lectoure, whose story is identical as far as the content [le fond] as the story told to me when I was young by another old man called Jacques Bonnet, a sharecropper in Lacassagne, in the commune de Lectoure (Gers). The belief in the “Seven Beautiful Fairies who know everything that has happened, and everything that will” is not yet dead in my home region. But I only ever heard Cazaux and Bonnet talk of the Deserter's adventure. The historical facts match up exactly to the legend, more or less. It is well known that Napoleon lost the battle of Waterloo on the 18<sup>th</sup> of June 1815. The news of this defeat wasn't known by all of our peasants until the end of the same month.*

APPENDIX F: THE SIRENS

## THE SIRENS

There are Sirens in the sea. There are also some in rivers. You'll have proof that they've been seen in the Gers in just a moment.

Sirens have long hair, fine like silk, and they comb their hair with gold combs. From the head to the waist, they look like beautiful young girls of eighteen. The rest of the body is the same as the stomach and the tail of a fish. These animals have their own language, to talk to one another. If they have business with Christians, they speak *patois* or French.

They say the Sirens will live until the Last Judgment. Some think that these creatures have no souls. But many think that they have the souls of people who drowned in a state of mortal sin within their bodies. I can't say either way.

During the day, the Sirens are condemned to live beneath the water. No-one has ever been able to find out what they do. At night, they surface in flocks, and romp about, swimming in the moonlight until the first chime of the Angelus in the morning. Sometimes they fight among themselves. Then they scratch each other, and bite each other to suck blood. At the first chime of the Angelus, they are forced to return beneath the water.

Many sailors, travelling at sea, have seen flocks of Sirens swimming around the boats. Many boatmen have seen them in the Garonne as well. They would sing, as they swam, songs so beautiful, so beautiful that you have never heard anything like it. Luckily, the owners of these boats and barges don't trust them, and know what to

think of these singers. They grab a rod and flail around, left, right and center at the young sailors who are ready to dive in to find the Sirens. But the owners can't always be watching. Then the Sirens seize the divers. They suck their brains and blood out, and eat their liver, their heart and their intestines. The bodies of the poor drowned men become Sirens as well, until the Last Judgment.

And now, here is the proof that there are Sirens in the Gers.

There used to be a young weaver in the hamlet of La Côte, close to Lectoure, who was so passionate, so passionate for fishing that he had been nicknamed Bernard-Pêcheur [Footnote: "A name for herons in Gascony. Sometimes it is used for kingfishers."]. Every evening at sunset, he went off to set nets and fishing lines in the Gers, which he would raise in the morning, before the break of dawn.

One evening, at harvest-time, Bernard-Pêcheur had gone to set his nets and lines opposite the smallholding at Talayzac, in the commune of Castéra-Lectourois. Once he had done this, he said to himself:

"My house is a long way off: the smallholding at Talayzac is close. I know the sharecropper. He will shelter me for the night. Tomorrow, I will give him a carp or an eel."

The sharecropper fed Bernard-Pêcheur and sent him to sleep in a good bed. After sleeping a short while, Bernard-Pêcheur jumped to the ground, dressed himself in the dark, opened the window, looked at the moon and the stars and thought:

"It will be three soon. It is almost time to raise the nets and the lines."

Immediately, Bernard-Pêcheur set off down to the river. A hundred steps from the Gers, he heard young girls shouting and laughing.

“To hell with them,” he thought. “The young girls from Castéra have come to bathe here. They will have terrified the fish. I won’t need to borrow the sharecropper from Talayzac’s brood mare to take my catch home.”

Bernard-Pêcheur approached softly, softly, hiding behind shrubs, ash trees and willows, so that he could see the girls, without them realizing he was there. The young girls were combing their hair with gold combs, their hair as fine as silk. They swam and romped around in the moonlight. Bernard-Pêcheur heard their shouts and laughter.

“To hell with me,” he thought to himself, “but I don’t recognize a single one of these young girls, and I don’t understand a word they are saying.”

The break of dawn was not long off, and Bernard-Pêcheur was still watching. Finally, one of the girls saw him and shouted:

“A man! A man!”

Immediately, all of the young girls turned towards Bernard-Pêcheur:

“Bernard-Pêcheur, my friend, come, come and swim with us.”

“Mother of God! I’ve come across a flock of Sirens.”

“Bernard-Pêcheur, my friend, come, come and swim with us.”

So then the Sirens started singing a song so beautiful, so beautiful that you have never heard the like and never will. By the power of this song, Bernard-Pêcheur was forced to come closer and closer to the water.

The Sirens kept singing.

“Mother of God!” thought the weaver. “I’ve come across a flock of Sirens.”

The Sirens kept singing.

“Mother of God! I’ve come across a flock of Sirens.”

The Sirens kept singing.

Bernard-Pêcheur was on the bank of the river. He was going to dive in, without wanting to, when the bells of the church in Castéra chimed the first note of the Angelus. Immediately, the Sirens stopped singing, and hid themselves under the water.

Bernard-Pêcheur was trembling like a leaf of wild clover. He was as pale as a ghost. He raised his nets and his lines. The weaver had never caught so many and such handsome fish. But he kept none for himself, and gave them all to the sharecropper at Talayzac. Having done that, he went home, to La Côte, and spent seven days without going out. On the eighth, he set off, before daylight, to Notre Dame de Bétharram, which is a well-known pilgrimage site in the Béarn region. Bernard-Pêcheur spent a whole month there burning candles, hearing mass from sunrise to midday. During the afternoon, he would use his rosary, until bed time. When he returned to La Côte, Bernard-Pêcheur burned his nets and his lines. He stopped fishing, and advised his friends to do the same. At night, he avoided the Gers, because he was afraid of coming across a flock of Sirens again.

*Told by the late Cazaux, from Lectoure.*

APPENDIX G: THE THIRTEEN FLIES

## THE THIRTEEN FLIES

Once there was a weaver as lazy as a dog who lived at Mounet-du-Hour [Footnote: “A hamlet in the commune of Lectoure. Mounet-du-Hour is said to be a region of sorcerers.”]. You never heard the noise of him at work. However this weaver could not be matched for weaving and handing over on the due day as much and as fine cloth as his customers [*pratiques* ?] had ordered.

He never dug his garden. He never worked his field. He never tended his vines. Yet every year he harvested thirteen times more than his neighbors.

The weaver’s wife could not imagine how he did it. Night and day, she questioned and spied on her husband. But after seven years of marriage she knew no more about it than the first day.

One morning of Saint-Martin [Footnote: “The 11<sup>th</sup> of November. There is a mule fair that day in Lectoure.”] the weaver said as he got up:

“Wife, I need to go to the fair in Lectoure. Look after the house until I come back.”

“Husband, don’t worry. The house will be looked after.”

The weaver set off. His wife softly, softly followed him, hiding behind trees and hedges. When he got to the middle of a little wood, the husband took something from his pocket, and hid it at the base of a juniper bush, and set off once more. Five minutes later, the wife had found the hidden object. It was a nut, as large as a turkey egg, and cries could be heard from within it:

“Bzz. Open the nut, bzzz. Where is the work? Bzz. Open the nut.”

The wife quickly went home with her find. The whole time she could hear the cries:

“Bzz. Open the nut, bzzz. Where is the work? Bzz. Open the nut.”

Finally, the wife opened the nut. Immediately, thirteen flies began flying around the room.

“Bzz. Where is the work? Bzz. Where is the work? Bzz. Where is the work?”

So the wife, terrified, demanded:

“Flies, get back in the nut.”

The Thirteen Flies went back into the nut. But they kept crying:

“Bzz. Open the nut, bzzz. Where is the work? Bzz. Open the nut.”

The wife grew annoyed and went to replace the nut at the foot of the juniper bush where the weaver had hidden it. In the evening when he returned, she said to him over dinner:

“Husband, I know now about the workers who do your work for you. They are Thirteen Flies, that you hold prisoner in a nut as large as a turkey egg.”

“Wife, it is true. Seeing as you know my workers, order them to do what you want. They will obey you just as they obey me.”

From this day forth, the weaver’s wife had only to cross her arms, open the nut, and give her orders. Whatever the work, the Thirteen Flies would have it done in a moment.

Immediately, they would go back into the nut, which the wife kept hidden under her cushion. But then they would cry:

“Bzz. Open the nut, bzzz. Where is the work? Bzz. Open the nut.”

The wife often became annoyed at this noise. In her anger, she would order the Thirteen Flies to do the most difficult things. But whatever the work was, they would do it in a moment.

Immediately, they would go back into the nut, which the wife kept hidden under her cushion. But then they would cry:

“Bzz. Open the nut, bzzz. Where is the work? Bzz. Open the nut.”

One day, the wife couldn't take any more. She opened the nut and shouted:

“Flies, here are six sieves, six colanders, and a barrel with both ends smashed in. Fly to the Gers and bring back all the water from the river.

In a moment, the Gers was dry and the whole region around Mounet-du-Hour was flooded. Immediately, the flies went back into the nut, which the wife kept hidden under her cushion, but they still cried:

“Bzz. Open the nut, bzzz. Where is the work? Bzz. Open the nut.”

“Husband,” shouted the wife, blue with anger, “these flies will send me mad. Send them away.”

“Wife, you will be satisfied. Flies, leave.”

“Bzz. Count out our wages. Bzz. We will leave. Bzz. Count out our wages. Bzz. We will leave.”

“Flies, here are thirteen crows, thirteen crows that fly over there, over there by the forest at Ramier [Footnote: “A forest situated between Lectoure and Fleurance, which is largely cleared now.”] Take them as payment for your efforts.”

The Thirteen Flies flew off, carrying the thirteen crows. Since then the man and his wife never saw them again, never.

*Told by the late Cazaux, from Lectoure.*