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Scholars of early modern Europe in the past two decades have begun to investigate charivaris and other related social rituals. In 1939, Huizinga, in *Homo Ludens*, began the systematic study of the function of games and play in society and, in 1971, Davis initiated her investigation of charivaris as rituals to control disruptive elements in the society of sixteenth-century France. Her subsequent research has inspired historical studies focusing on the religious context, both popular and institutional, of the charivari; on the arena of the social custom and practice which encompassed women and sex; and on similar practices in a variety of cultures. This recent outpouring of work on the social behavior of European people is part of the heritage of the *Ecole pratique des hautes études*, and of French historians who see all of human behavior as fodder for historical analysis. By placing their research in an anthropological setting, they have facilitated our understanding of these rituals through the cooperative efforts of anthropologists, students of folk culture, semioticians, and critics of literature, art, and drama.[1]

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1 Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens* (Paris, 1944; orig. pub. 1939). See also Harvey Cox, *The Feast of Fools* (Cambridge, Mass., 1969); Roger Caillois, *Les Jeux et les hommes* (Paris, 1967); Natalie Zemon Davis, "The Reasons of Misrule," in *idem*, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford, 1975), 97–124; *idem*, "Charivari, Honor and Community in Seventeenth-Century Lyon and Geneva," in John J. MacAloon (ed.), *Rite, Drama, Festival, Spectacle* (Philadelphia, 1984), 42–57. Other historians interested in this subject from the perspective of popular and institutional religion are André Burguière, "The Marriage Ritual in France: Ecclesiastical Practices and Popular Practices (16th to 18th Centuries)," in Robert Forster and Orest Ranum (eds.), *Ritual, Religion and the Sacred* (Baltimore, 1982), 8–23; Nicole Belmont, "The Symbolic Function of the Wedding Procession in the Popular Rituals of Marriage," in *ibid.*, 1–7; Belmont, "Fonction de la dérision et symbolisme du bruit dans le charivari," in Jacques LeGoff (ed.), *Le Charivari* (Paris, 1983), 15–23. Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, "Zacharias; or the Ousting of the Father: The

Few American historians have tackled the social significance of shivarees, and even fewer have attempted to analyze the anthropological function of this ritual in American history. It is time to relate the theories of our European colleagues to the American shivaree.

Most American midwesterners, especially those in rural and small-town communities, remember a shivaree as a raucous, high-spirited, occasionally even violent, celebration after a wedding. In the Midwest during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a shivaree was almost an inevitable adjunct to marriage. It was expected. One observer, reminiscing about the custom in Kansas, suggested that during the first quarter of this century the "theory seemed to be that a good shiveree [sic] was the best sure way to start a newly wed couple on their romp through married bliss and happiness." It was not essential to the wedding, but it was a ritual that tied the married couple together in a shared experience and also, by implication, integrated them—with a somewhat rowdy seal of approval—into the community of married folks.[2]

The roots of this American custom are indisputably European. "Charivari," in its original French form or in similar phonetic spellings, is the most common name for the American folk custom. The American version can also claim kinship with similar customs from Portugal, Spain, Italy, Britain, Germany, and even Rumania. In order to understand American shivarees, therefore, we must examine their European roots. To do so, we should establish the differences and similarities between European and American shivarees, formulate a rationale for the homogeneity of American shivarees despite their diverse heritages and ritualistic observances, and investigate the social functions of shivarees in European and American communities.[3]

Rites of Marriage in Tuscany from Giotto to the Council of Trent," in Forster and Ranum (eds.), *Ritual, Religion and the Sacred*, 24–56; Henri Lalou, "Des charivaris et de leur répression dans le Midi de la France," *Révue des Pyrénées*, XVI (1904), 493–514.

2 Floyd L. Hockenhull, "What's a Shiveree?" *Kansas City Star Magazine*, 13 Jan. 1974, 25.

3 For evidence of shivarees in New England, see Miles L. Hanley, "'Serenade' in New England," *American Speech*, VIII (1933), 24–26; in the East and South, Alva L. Davis and Raven I. McDavid, Jr., "'Shivaree': An Example of Cultural Diffusion," *American Speech*, XXIV (1949), 251; Maria Leach (ed.), *Funk and Wagnall's Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend* (New York, 1949), 212; in the Midwest, Louise Pound, *Nebraska*

EUROPEAN CHARIVARIS In France, the term charivari was used to designate the popular and public ritual reproach of private or public behavior which infringed upon the community code. Ridicule was the method, and discordant noise the trademark.[4] Charivaris and their British counterparts, usually called "rough music" or "mock serenades," followed a stock formula, mixing and matching a variety of components. The foundation was discordant noise or music made on household "musical instruments" and horns, sometimes varied with special songs composed for the occasion and chanted to attain the requisite loudness. These noisy serenades issued from a processional crowd of celebrants, often wearing masks or otherwise disguised. Usually, French charivaris were held at night. Occasionally they included dramatizations, either animated or in tableau. These shows varied from slapstick comedy to malicious ridicule, from symbolic mockery of an old man's sexual prowess or an old woman's inevitable sterility to a parody of marriage itself.

More elaborate charivaris to chastise heinous or unusual infringements of the community code frequently incorporated a promenade on a donkey. This feature of the ritual can be traced back to the Greeks and is one of the more enduring characteristics of modern nineteenth- and twentieth-century American shivarees. The donkey ride is tied to other popular observances such as regional and seasonal fetes, and, as an extension of ritualistic inversion, it is dramatized in art and literature in the motif of

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Folklore (Lincoln, Neb., 1959), 194; Hockenhull, "What's a Shiveree?"; Mamie Meredith, "'Belling the Bridal Couple' in Pioneer Days," *American Speech*, VIII (1933), 22–24.

4 Emile Littré, in his *Dictionnaire de la langue française* (Paris, 1878), defined charivari as "Conçert ridicule, bruyant et tumultueux de poêles, de chaudrons, de sifflets, de huées, etc. qu'on donne en certaines localitées aux femmes veuves et agées et aux veufs qui se remarient, et aussi à des personnages qui excite un mécontentement." Other definitions of the charivari offer a rudimentary historical perspective but only in the period after the Council of Trent. See, for example, Jean-Baptiste Thièrs (1704) quoted and translated by Burguière in "The Charivari and Religious Repression in France, during the Ancient Regime," in Robert Wheaton and Tamara Hareven (eds.), *Family and Sexuality in French History* (Philadelphia, 1980), 93: "To make noise with drums, firearms, bells, platters, plates, pots, skillets, casseroles, and cauldrons; to hoot, whistle, jeer, and cry in the streets. . . ." Denis Diderot in the *Encyclopédie*, quoted in Claude Lévi-Strauss (trans. John and Doreen Weightman), *The Raw and the Cooked* (London 1964), 286. "The word means and conveys the derisive noise made at night with pans, cauldrons, basins, etc., in front of the houses of people who are marrying for the second or third time or are marrying someone of a very different age from themselves. . . . This unseemly custom was at one time so widespread that even queens who remarried were not spared."

riding backward on a donkey. In France, the donkey ride sometimes occurred apart from the charivari and had a wider range of social functions, but it could also be a part of a charivari. French charivaris, especially in the sixteenth century, were often organized by the young bachelors of the community, who exacted a customary fine to be paid to the local Abbey of Youth—a formal institution in many cities in southern France which gave unmarried men broad control over marriage customs. A banquet paid for by the newlyweds, who in Italy were "honored with laughter," or a gift of money to less organized revelers was sometimes substituted for the fine. This custom, like the donkey ride, had a separate identity from the charivari. The Church forbade the practice of exacting this *pelote, vin de mariage*, or *coquête*, apart from and in addition to their limitations on charivaris.[5]

British forms of the charivari included variations of the French practice, but omitted the semi-institutionalized contribution to a counterpart of the Abbey of Youth. Payment was exacted directly by the celebrants, often in the form of ale and treats. The English version of the donkey ride was called a "skimmington" or "riding the stang." This element was the most common in the ritual performance called "rough music." A man (usually because he had allowed himself to be beaten by his wife) rode on a horse behind his wife with his face to the horse's tail. To compound his humiliation, he was forced to hold a distaff in his hands while the woman beat him over the head with a ladle. Sometimes the

5 Hanley, "'Serenade,'" 24–26; Martin Ingram, "Le charivari dans l'Angleterre du XVIe et du XVIIe siècle," in LeGoff (ed.), *Charivari*, 252; Claude Gauvard and Alban Gokalp, "Les conduites de bruit et leur signification à la fin du Moyen Age: le Charivari," *Annales*, XXIII (1974), 693–704; Ruth Mellenkoff, "Riding Backwards: Theme of Humiliation and Symbol of Evil," *Viator*, IV (1973), 153–176. Scholars investigating social practices in relation to women and sex are Jacques Rossiaud, "Prostitution, jeunesse et société dans les villes du Sud-Est au XVe siècle," *Annales*, XXXI (1976), 289–325; *idem*, "Fraternités de jeunesse et niveaux de culture dans les villes du Sud-Est à la fin du Moyen Age," *Cahiers d'Histoire*, 1/2 (1976), 67–102; Jean-Louis Flandrin (trans. Richard Southern), *Families in Former Times* (Cambridge, 1976). Scholars investigating charivaris in other cultures include Edward Palmer Thompson, "'Rough Music': Le Charivari anglais," *Annales*, XXVII (1972), 285–312; Klapisch-Zuber, "The Medieval Italian Mattinata," *Journal of Family History*, V (1980), 2–27. Sometimes a charivari was occasioned only because a family would not pay its fair share for the communal fêtes: Lucienne Roubin, "Male Space and Female Space within the Provençal Community," in Forster and Ranum (eds.), *Rural Society in France* (Baltimore, 1977), 165; Burguière, "Charivari and Religious Repression," 88–91, 102; Belmont, "Fonction de la dérision," 17; Martine Grinberg, "Charivaris âu Moyen Age et à la Renaissance," in LeGoff (ed.), *Charivari*, 144.

offending parties played themselves in the ritual; sometimes neighbors stood in to express their disapproval of this reversal of male and female roles.[6]

An elaborate and particularly vicious skimmington was recorded in a legal complaint made in 1618 in Calne, Wiltshire. A group of young men, some armed with guns and some playing on drums and horns, accompanied a horse and rider decked out in a costume complete with horns. When they reached the home of the offending couple, the husband, guilty of allowing his wife to beat him, locked her in a room and attempted to disperse the crowd. The troop of players then invaded his house, seized his wife, dragged her outside "where being a wett hole, they threw her downe into it & trod upon hir & beried her filthily with durt, & did beate hir blacke and blewe in many places." Their intention was to carry her into town and "washe hir in the cuckinge stoole. . . ."[7]

Another British form of the charivari was the staghunt, or mock pursuit of a human "stag" by human "hounds." This variation was paralleled in France by bear hunts and in Germany by wolf hunts. The staghunt was a kind of rough justice and public censure for a moral lapse (usually adultery) in which two married people were known to be guilty. If only one partner were guilty, the punishment was gossip or ostracism, which lacked the excitement of a staghunt. Such internal limits suggest that the ritual, at least in this case, was not simply an excuse for fun, but rather had a very serious and responsible social purpose. The "stag" was pursued at length throughout the countryside and town to enable the community fully to enjoy the chase. At last the stag, arriving at the front door of the offender's house—a destination already known to the community bystanders and rabble-rousers—allowed the "hounds" to "kill" him. The death was realistically simulated as the "stag" produced a bladder of oxblood which was liberally dispensed over the culpable pair's doorstep.[8]

Van Gennep, in his seminal anthropological work on French folklore, suggested that such folk observances are rites of passage

6 Howard Cunnington, "Correspondence," *Folklore*, XLI (1930), 287–288.

7 *Ibid.*, 289–290.

8 Carlo Ginzburg, "Charivari, associations juvéniles, chasse sauvage," in LeGoff (ed.), *Charivari*, 134; Julio Caro Baroja (trans. Sylvie Sesé-Lege), *Le Carnaval* (Paris, 1979; orig. pub. 1965), 50–71; Theo Brown, "The 'Stag-Hunt' in Devon," *Folklore*, LXIII (1952), 104–105.

reflecting the symbolic recognition of the transition of a group or an individual from one social status to another. The noise and disorder of a charivari provide the necessary context for such a change in order. The community's role in the ritual underlines not only the community's interest in maintaining the social order, but also its reluctant acceptance of a change that is necessary but that threatens the community by displacing persons, property, and values. The clashing disorder of the charivari masks at the same time that it celebrates the transition from the old to a new order.[9]

As a celebration of a natural and positive—even if potentially disruptive—change in a community's social order, European and American frontier charivari/shivaree rituals are similar. Most scholars of sixteenth-century European charivaris, however, see them as punitive, as a ritualized censorship of remarriage or bigamy. Charivaris gave the community a means of protesting a social action that it could not and would not even wish to prevent.

Anthropologists suggest that remarriage as an infringement of the rights of a dead husband or wife required special mediation. A charivari, in this case, served as a magical and mystical rite to appease the dead husband or wife and to allow a new social coherence. The noise of the charivari symbolized the clamor of the dead partner at being wronged and represented the efforts of the community and the newlyweds to create a new order. The food or money paid to the community or to the Youth Abbey represented the symbolic repurchase of innocence by the surviving widow or widower.[10]

The institutional Church of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries strongly censured charivaris which ridiculed remarriage, instituting stiff fines and sometimes threatening the perpetrators with excommunication. Paradoxically, the Church also provided its congregations with a reason for maligning remarriage. Although the earliest Christian prohibition of remarriage was soon modified by the Church Fathers, remarriage continued to be interpreted by the community as evil—a sign of concupiscence and

9 Arnold Van Gennep, *Manuel de Folklore Contemporain* (Paris, 1943), I, 614–628; Lévi-Strauss, *Raw and the Cooked*, 286–288; Belmont, "Symbolic Function," 5.

10 Lévi-Strauss, *Raw and the Cooked*, 288, 330. See Burguière, "Charivari and Religious Repression," 101; Belmont, "Fonction de la dérision," 19–20. See also Claude Karnoouh, "Le charivari ou l'hypothèse de la monogamie," in LeGoff (ed.), *Charivari*, 38–39, 41–42.

uncontrolled lust. The Church itself continued to deny the traditional marriage benediction to "bigamists"—a prohibition which included widows and widowers who married again.[11]

More important than the moral and ethical rationale for charivaris offered by the Roman Catholic Church was the community's economic interest. When a widow or widower remarried, often taking a younger spouse, the community equilibrium was altered by this removal of a marriageable adult from the pool of potential marriage partners. Remarriage also threatened the patrimony, or at least the financial security and rights of the children of the first marriage. These acts especially offended the young people of the community, who frequently, especially in urban areas where Youth Abbeys were institutionalized and common, had the authority and responsibility for initiating charivaris. Young people had a very personal concern in reprimanding infringements of their own rights concerning marriage.[12]

The combined official efforts of state and church did not eliminate charivaris and in fact the records show them being used to chastise a variety of social behaviors. The most common instance, especially in France, where the documents have been systematically searched, remains that of the remarriage of a widow or widower. Charivaris were also visited upon husbands who were beaten by their wives, newly married couples who refused to pay *pelote* to the Youth Abbey or community, foreigners who married young local women, women who jilted a well-liked lover to marry richer or older men or foreigners, young brides pregnant at marriage who made a pretense of virginity, young men who "sold" themselves to rich women or widows, married women proven adulterous, women whose lovers were married men, women who remained unmarried beyond the usual time, cuckolds, and even marriages sterile after one year.[13]

11 Burguière, "Charivari and Religious Repression," 100; Jean-Claude Margolin, "Charivari et mariage ridicule au temps de la Renaissance," in Jean Jacquot and Elie Konigson (eds.), *Les Fêtes de la Renaissance*, (Paris, 1956), III, 294–295; Klapisch-Zuber, "Medieval Italian Mattinata," 11.

12 Burguière, "Charivari and Religious Repression," 92; Flandrin, *Families in Former Times*, 94–97, 112–173, 184–189; Barbara Diefendorf, "Widowhood and Remarriage in Sixteenth Century France," *Journal of Family History*, VII (1982), 379–395; Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, "Family Structure and Inheritance Customs in Sixteenth Century France," in Jack Goody, Joan Thirsk, and Thompson (eds.), *Family and Inheritance* (Cambridge, 1976), 37–70.

13 Van Gennep, *Manuel de Folklore*, I, 614–628.

In Britain, evidence of skimmingtons appears first in the sixteenth century, where their purpose was not to chastise marriage or remarriage; instead, they concentrated on husband-beaters, adulterers, and public officials who had acted unethically. During the nineteenth century, wife-beaters became more frequent targets of charivaris, and the number held for *mésalliances* or second marriages declined. After the Industrial Revolution, charivaris were organized by workers against repressive employers, particularly in England. Parallel to increased diversification, nineteenth-century European and English charivaris also became less violent and less frequent, and were seen as less threatening to public order. The French Penal Code of 1848 lumped charivaris with other disturbances of the peace. By the mid-nineteenth century, charivaris had become mere vulgar displays.[14]

Who were the victims and the perpetrators? The victims of charivaris were people who challenged the social order. Although the social order was protected by the community, it changed over time, and social actions which were viewed as threatening the order also changed. Marriage itself caused a change; therefore, anyone who married was potentially subject to community dissatisfaction. In sixteenth-century Europe, the victims of charivaris were most frequently widows or widowers who remarried and thereby threatened not only the social but also the economic stability of the community. At the same time, anyone who challenged the social order could also be a victim: adulterers, women who dominated their husbands or other men, and individuals who, as employers or governing officials, infringed upon the community's moral code, even if they did not break the law.

European charivaris cannot be classified as predominantly urban or lower-class. Most recorded charivaris occurred in cities. No one class is represented to the exclusion of others, although the nature of the custom suggests that wealthier bourgeoisie—or those who were first among equals—would be most apt to incite community ire. There are few examples of noble charivaris that were not contrived and ceremonial, for charivari victims of high rank had ample means to manipulate the custom for their own

14 Thompson, "'Rough Music,'" 296, 305–308; Le Roy Ladurie (trans. Mary Feeney), *Carnival in Romans* (New York, 1979), 109, 181, 297; Lalou, "Des charivaris et de leur répression," 493–513.

needs. In any event, the poor, the bourgeoisie, and the nobility were all potential victims, but they could share in the fun as well.[15]

The perpetrators of charivaris were members of the same community, and records show that the victims and actors were interchangeable. Early charivaris and rural charivaris often involved everyone in the community—old and young, men and women.[16]

Charivaris in Europe served two major functions: they were rites of passage to facilitate a change of social order, and they were a communal form of public censorship. As rites of passage, they were undifferentiated and stable. They celebrated an alteration in the communal order; they were committed to acknowledging and accepting that change, not to preventing it. As a form of public censure, they reflected the belief of the community that it had the right and even the responsibility to reinforce custom, or at least to remind the community of custom, by imposing extralegal sanctions on social behavior.

What response did the community expect from the offender? In some cases, none. The celebration usually occurred on the wedding night or several days before and after the marriage, but the community had known of the impending marriage long before that. The charivari was not intended to prevent the marriage. Offenses of community standards were punished only when the offense was compounded by unpopularity or disdain of community norms. The infraction itself was thus not so important as the manner in which it was committed. Wife- or husband-beating, for example, was mocked when it was habitual, not occasional. Humiliation was the most common consequence of a European charivari. However, the humiliation might be (and sometimes was intended to be) so devastating that the offending party would leave the community. Thus, local ostracism, sometimes exacer-

15 Klapisch-Zuber, "Medieval Italian Mattinata," 4, 8; Rossiaud, "Fraternités de jeunesse," 78; Burguière, "Charivari and Religious Repression," 87, 89–90; Margolin, "Charivari et Mariage," 598; Caro Baroja, *Carnaval*, 97.

16 Ingram, "Charivari dans l'Angleterre," 256; Klapisch-Zuber, "Medieval Italian Mattinata," 4; Robert Muchembled, "Des conduites de bruit au spectacle des processions," in LeGoff (ed.), *Charivari*, 233; Martine Boiteaux, "Dérision et déviance: à propos de quelques coutumes romaines," in *ibid.*, 241. For the other side of the argument, see Davis, *Society and Culture*, 97–124; Rossiaud, "Prostitution, jeunesse et société," 296, 300; Karnoouh, "Charivari ou l'hypothèse," 40. Karnoouh takes the best side of each argument.

bated by the inability to obtain a job in the community, would force an offender to depart. On rare occasions, violence erupted, and death or suicide was the result. Most charivaris did not have such brutal consequences, but they all left a mark on their victims—a mark which attested to the power of community disapproval.[17]

AMERICAN SHIVAREES American customs, especially those of the Midwest, are less melodramatic than the extremes of human and social passion illustrated by the European models. Masked peasants dancing and chanting in processions with effigies of deceased spouses, a spouse being beaten with a spoon while riding backward on a donkey, and neighbors dressing up to scatter blood on the doorstep of a culpable or at least morally and socially delinquent neighbor: all of these symbolic and dramatic scenarios appall us. Our modern love of privacy, our idealization of the American past, and our pragmatic views of social relationships are offended by such immoderate community intervention in the matter of personal morality.

Despite these differences, the similarities of American shivarees—especially the midwestern shivaree—to their European counterparts are inescapable. When people gathered for a frontier wedding, they expected the high jinks of a shivaree, so they created them. The community exercised its self-proclaimed right to participate actively in the marriage. The celebration was not just disorderly horseplay; it bore a resemblance to the cacophonous ritual of the mock serenade with all of the European trimmings. The features were standard: discordant noise, a procession afoot or more recently in vehicles, variations of the donkey ride and the mock chase, waterplay or dunkings, demands for payment in treats, and assorted pranks ranging from pouring salt in the sheets to removing the labels from the cans in the pantry. But, in spite of the family resemblance of their components, shivarees were unique and depended on the particular circumstances and relationships of the participants.

Anecdotal accounts of the ritual patterns are myriad. One Kansas observer described a celebration held for a distinguished

17 *Ibid.*, 36; Belmont, "Fonction de la dérision," 17; Thompson, "'Rough Music,'" 290, 298; Violet Alford, "Rough Music or Charivari," *Folklore*, LXX (1959), 513–514.

banker known for his "shivaree" pranks. When he, at age fifty, married a young vivacious girl, he was "shivereed good."

> Those shiveree clowns and their wives busted right into our house and dragged us out by force. I fought, but it was no use.
>
> They set my young bride in a wheelbarrow that hadn't been greased for years. And they made me push her in the wheelbarrow down our main street to a beer palace. It seemed like miles.
>
> They forced me, and I mean forced, to treat all that crowd to beer and salami and rye bread and to cigars and candy and so on, in fact to about everything eatable and drinkable in the joint.
>
> Then they put my bride back in the wheelbarrow and made me push her home again. . . .

The wheelbarrow did not look much like a donkey, but it served the same purpose. In more recent years, other substitutes like wagons, manure spreaders, and even grocery carts have translated the donkey ride to frontier and modern America.[18]

Frontier shivarees often featured a dip in the horse tank or a local spring ("all in fun—it was just a shiveree, you know—and nobody got mad about it. At least not very mad"). One couple, rumored to have strewn fractured hearts around them, were shivareed mercilessly. After storming the bridal suite of the hotel and demanding and receiving the traditional treats, the shivareers proceeded to the business at hand, which was to throw the couple into the horse tank at the town pump on Main Street. The groom put up a stout fight, but was eventually subdued.[19]

Another account of a shivaree in western Kansas suggests a variety of the mock chase in addition to the traditional expected pay off of the revellers. A couple married in 1937 kept their marriage a secret since the wife was underage and still in high school. When the husband had an opportunity to obtain a highway construction job if he were married (a requirement for public employees in those depression years), they announced their marriage and prepared for the expected shivaree by buying cigars and candy bars. "[W]e were hauled a few miles from home and let out to walk. A friend of mine who was to start to work on the

18 Hockenhull, "What's a Shiveree?" 25; Eugene Maddux, personal conversation (1981); Lorinda Langner, personal conversation (1981).
19 Hockenhull, "What's a Shiveree?" 25.

highway with me the next morning had whispered in my ear that he would come by and pick us up and haul us back to the house after we were let out, so we weren't long getting back home."[20]

Although this tale suggests that shivarees were usual, this couple had also done something to excite community displeasure. Nevertheless, the pain of this midwestern shivaree was minimal compared with examples from sixteenth-century France. By 1938 friends could use the telephone to warn newlyweds of the impending celebration and by conspiratorial whispered encouragement soften the blow. Stories like these could be compiled endlessly. And they usually finish with the stock phrase: "They would never forget it."[21]

The earliest use of the term shivaree (sherriverrie, in this case) in English was in 1805 by a Pittsburgher transplanted to French-speaking New Orleans. The ritual he described was nearer the European pattern. A certain Madame Don Andre was required to pay off a mob with a donation of three thousand dollars in gold coin. Thousands of townspeople, disguised and making noise with old kettles, shovels, tongs, and other clanging metal objects, joined in a melee that laid aside all civil authority and rule. "All this," the Pittsburgher noted, "comes from an indisposition to allow ladies *two chances* for husbands, in a society where so few single ladies find even one husband! a result it is to be presumed, of the concubinage system so prevalent here." This shivaree, lasting several days, was caused by the remarriage of a wealthy widow to an unpopular man, and the writer noted the need to appease the widow's dead husband by including his effigy in the ritual celebration. It included a procession, noise, and payment to the mob, and it was attended by genteel as well as ordinary folk. That it occurred in French Louisiana is significant, and suggests that the custom, in that part of the country at least, came directly from its French and Spanish roots.[22]

The victims of shivarees were almost always newlyweds, especially in the Midwest. The perpetrators were, again, interchangeable with the victims. Some statements say only "riffraff"

20 Paul E. Turner, personal communication (1982).

21 Other examples of charivaris include Lincoln, *Nebraska Weekly State Journal*, 27 Sept. 1898; *Nebraska City News*, 28 Dec. 1867; Red Cloud, Nebraska, *Webster County Argus*, 30 June 1887.

22 Davis and McDavid, "'Shivaree,'" 251.

and foreigners—meaning recent immigrants to the country—observed the folk custom. The first woman lawyer in Renville County, Minnesota, recalled her shivaree with distaste. Whether because of the incidental damage to her house or because she saw it as a ruffianly custom is unclear. The evidence is contradictory. In the example from New Orleans, the observer carefully noted that even genteel men attended.[23]

Such barebones comparisons are convincing evidence that European and American shivarees have a close kinship, at least as far as practice is concerned. Did the American version also serve to reinforce community values and control social behavior? The answer to that question is not simple.

There are probably two reasons why midwestern shivarees were only rarely used to chastise family cruelty or miscellaneous sexual aberrations. First, shivarees arrived in this country with eighteenth- and nineteenth-century immigrants after their European counterparts had become less violent and more diverse in their objectives. Immigrants often cited freedom as their reason for coming to this country—freedom of worship, freedom to own land, and freedom from serving in the armed forces. These new Americans valued privacy and were unlikely to concede to the community much say in the exercise of their freedom. Furthermore, the frontier American population and culture were patently mobile. No one was compelled in the North American settlements to remain in an inhospitable community as they were in Europe. Already on the move, the social practices of settlers could not be controlled by the threat of ostracism or exile. Second, settlers in early American frontier regions, even when the frontier was on the Atlantic seaboard, were of diverse nationalities. Shivarees and other communal ritual practices, therefore, drew on the elements common in the experiences of immigrants from different heritages. As a result, observances of the folk custom in the United States were generic rather than ethnic.

Most midwestern shivarees confirmed community solidarity and invited newly married couples to share in that community, but there are evidences in the early nineteenth century of persistent

23 Meredith, "'Belling the Bridal Couple,'" 22–24; Hanley, "'Serenade,'" 24–26; Joe Paddock (ed.), *The Things We Know Best: An Oral History of Olivia, Minnesota* (Willmar, Minn., 1970), 139–140, 198.

remnants of a folk memory of shivarees as hostile instruments of social control. One reminder that the shivaree had a negative European heritage is found in an American short story by James Hall written in 1835. The shivaree is protested by the newlyweds in the story, who claim that neither of them had ever been married before. Clearly, in 1835 the memory of the punitive roots of the custom and its European association with remarriage was still fresh. In fact, all of the previous examples of frontier American shivarees fit the pattern of the French ritual for *mésalliances*. In each case, the married couple infringed upon some normal pattern of marriages. An older man married a younger woman; one couple had broken many hearts before marrying; another couple had concealed their marriage for a time; and an outsider had come to take a marriageable woman away from the community.[24]

These examples may be merely aberrations of the limited and anecdotal records. Most witnesses confirm that the shivaree was traditional, expected for every marriage, and meant to be fun. Even so, there were many who did not think it was fun. Minnie Tapping, a Minnesota pioneer married in about 1897, noted: "As an adjunct to a wedding of that day there was usually a charivari. I am glad to add that that hideous custom passed out with the century."[25]

To a degree, our evidence confirms the European connection for American frontier shivarees in social function as well as in practice. As a rite of passage, the shivaree attested to a community's claim to have the right to be involved in the creation of a new household. The shivaree was a symbolic interaction of language, drama, and formal ritual functioning to bring about a new social reality distinct from and external to the individual. American shivarees, like European charivaris, assisted in the renewal and creation of society and community by interposing ritualized violence between the old and new orders.[26]

As in nineteenth-century Britain and France, where rough-music rituals and charivaris were used to signal community dis-

24 John T. Flanagan, "Note on 'Shivaree,'" *American Speech*, XV (1940), 110; Paddock (ed.), *Things We Know Best*, 139–140.

25 Minnie Ellingson Tapping, *Eighty Years at Gopher Hole: The Saga of a Minnesota Pioneer, 1867–1947* (New York, 1958), 108.

26 Victor Turner, "Process, System and Symbol: A New Anthropological Synthesis," *Daedalus*, CVI (1977), 63, 67.

satisfaction with the old order of repressive industrial bosses, so in America there were shivarees that fit the punitive European pattern. As the frontier blossomed with cities and cities became industrialized, workers needed to protect their social privileges and their community customs. Palmer has pointed out that shivarees were used in Canada, Indiana, and the South to protest the behavior of bankers, bosses, and politicians. Wyatt-Brown has also suggested that southern shivarees were related to Ku-Klux-Klan activity in function and ritual and only somewhat less menacing than lynching as a means of controlling social behavior. Their examples refer specifically to shivarees.[27]

In the midwestern plains, the word "shivaree" continued to refer to amiable marriage celebrations, whereas malcontents resorted to "hazing" to protest economic malfeasance. One mid-nineteenth-century Minnesota newspaper condemned the general practice of debtors being hazed by the "bloods" of the town. A column in the same newspaper upheld "pillorying" as fit punishment for a wife-beater on the grounds that the "highest civilizations" always have condemned such treatment of women. In the Midwest, shivarees were not used for economic community protest or to chastise family cruelty; they were reserved instead for community celebration.[28]

As a communal form of public censorship, shivarees in America differed from those in Europe, just as communities on the American frontier differed from those of sixteenth-century France and seventeenth-century England. European communities had existed for a long time. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, their unity, social homogeneity, and autonomy were being threatened by legal controls imposed by the institutions of Church and State, and by the demands of an increasingly international economy—demands which required the population to be more mobile and which forcibly altered community values and personal standards. European charivaris were vehicles for insuring local conformity and community control over values and behavior in the face of official opposition.

27 Bryan D. Palmer, "Discordant Music: Charivaris and Whitecapping in Nineteenth-Century North America," *Labour/Le Travailleur*, III (1978), 5–62, Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York, 1982), 435–461.

28 *Chaska* [Minnesota] *Valley Herald*, 8 Feb. 1872, 1; *ibid.*, 31 Jan. 1878, 2.

Shivarees on the American frontier exercised social control more constructively by drawing individuals, including "riffraff" and foreigners, into the community circle. By the time the custom reached the midwestern frontier, which had been settled by secondary migration from the Atlantic seaboard, shivarees seldom implied community disapproval. For the most part, they posed little threat to law and order. In 1946, the police chief of Hastings, Nebraska, declared that "[t]here'll be no more of the old-fashioned shivaree parties. . . . They're getting out of hand. . . ." Even so, the admonition was gentle: "The chief assured citizens the police will not interfere with 'reasonable' community celebrations of marriages."[29]

The United States began its existence in an international setting with a highly mobile population. The frontier changed quickly during the nineteenth century, moving by leaps and bounds across the continent and back again to rest for a time in the agrarian Midwest. Formal institutions such as churches, political parties, and voluntary associations helped to integrate, organize, and control community diversity by channeling social conflict. Shivarees reached even deeper into the community and, in an unofficial and unorganized way, created a community identification for the common people. The amorphous universality of the ritual, the formal, rather rigid symbolism, and the informal, unorganized, and secular nature of the celebration drew everyone—including ordinary, apolitical, non-church-going individuals whose circumstances prevented them from participating in traditional voluntary associations—into the community. Symbolically, shivarees gave everyone a share in creating and defining the unique identity and social norms of their community. They were part of a process of community integration through controlled conflict.[30]

By altering the function of shivarees, immigrants to the United States were able to adapt them to the needs of the Amer-

29 Pound, *Nebraska Folklore*, 194.

30 Allan G. Bogue, "Social Theory and the Pioneer," *Agricultural History*, XXXIV (1960), 21–34; Don Harrison Boyle, "Social Theory and New Communities in Nineteenth-Century America," *Western Historical Quarterly*, VIII (1977), 151–165. See also, Robert Dykstra, "Town and Country Conflict," *Agricultural History*, XXXVIII (1964), 195–204; Victor Turner, "Process, System and Symbol," 66–79; *idem*, *The Drums of Affliction* (Oxford, 1968); *idem*, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Chicago, 1969); James L. Peacock, *Rites of Modernization* (Chicago, 1968).

ican frontier. In America, shivarees lost the unique character that had identified them as French, English, or Eastern European and took on the amalgamated characteristics of all the individual customs. They were transformed into unifying rituals rather than punitive ones; their function was to integrate immigrants into a unified American culture rather than to protect communities from outside influences.