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Bluegrass and Old-Time in Catalonia: An Ethnographic Case Study of Aesthetic Communitas

A thesis

presented to

the faculty of the Department of Appalachian Studies

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Master of Arts in Appalachian Studies

by

Michael J. Luchtan

December 2018

Dr. Ron Roach, Chair

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Keywords: Appalachia, Communitas, Catalonia, Aesthetic Communitas, Bluegrass, Old-Time

ABSTRACT

Bluegrass and Old-Time in Catalonia: An Ethnographic Case Study of Aesthetic Communitas

by

Michael Luchtan

This is an ethnographic case study of a musical community in Catalonia centered around the performance of bluegrass and old-time music. By using Victor and Edith Turners' ideas of normative communitas, this paper identifies an aesthetic communitas model which describes a community centered around a performative genre. Through participant observation in the 16th Annual Al Ras Bluegrass and Old Time Music Festival and interviews with local musicians, fans, venue owners, and luthiers, the ethnographic narrative details the characteristics of the aesthetic communitas in Catalonia and searches for associations of Appalachia that accompany the cross-cultural manifestation of bluegrass and old-time music in Catalonia. The conclusion examines the significance of the aesthetic communitas model and suggests further lines of research for this model.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my wife and son, who endured the long hours that I spent trying to get it right, and my parents, who sent me on my journey with an unquenchable curiosity and a love for reading, music, and learning.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This paper could not be done without the assistance and advice of my thesis chair, Dr. Ron Roach. His advice was always thoughtful and encouraging. My wife, Kehren Barbour, was a wonderful and willing assistant to me during my fieldwork. Her friendly manner helped ease informants and open doors for my research, and her thoughtful advice was always helpful. I would also like to acknowledge the community in Catalonia who allowed me to observe and take part in their lives. This thesis is about them, the individuals who helped create a successful community that has allowed a musical style to flourish.

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Su acento es la canción
De voz sentimental
Su ritmo es el compa
Que vive en mi ciudad
No tengo pretensión
No quiere ser procaz
Se llama tango y nada mas¹

-From the tango canción “Una Emocion” by Jose M. Suñé

As you step into a dim, unmarked bar, you hear these words sung by a singer accompanied by a bandoneon and two violins, with two couples dancing tango in the tiny floor space they could make. The scene, the dancers, the music, all indicate that you are in Buenos Aires or Montevideo, one of the great South American cities of tango referred to in the song lyrics above—any other place than a small city in Appalachia (Luchtan, 2017). But I found myself in this situation time and again as a musician, and tango aficionado, in Asheville, North Carolina, a booming city in the Appalachian Mountains. Tango music is a complex style, requiring a high level of musicianship and an intricate knowledge of an arcane style. This is

¹ Author’s translation: Its accent is the song / With a sentimental voice / Its rhythm is the beat / That lives in my city / It’s not pretentious / It’s not vulgar / It’s tango, and nothing more.

doubly true of the dance; both the dance and the music rely on person-to-person interactions to communicate the style. As the song lyrics state above, the rhythm of tango, its colors, are strongly tied to its place of origin, the urban center of Buenos Aires in Argentina, yet we can find it flowering in the heart of Appalachia, surrounded by a supportive community of dancers, musicians, listeners, instructors, and organizers (Johnson, 2012).

I belonged to a tango community in Asheville, NC between 2010-2017. Upon arrival in town, I had set myself up as the director of a tango orchestra, an orchestra that I took quite seriously, even using my own money to supplement the budget. What I liked about tango, first of all, was the music, the passion, the feelings, and the emotions that cannot be explained with words. I was emotionally connected, entranced even, by the dance and the music. But simultaneously, on a scholarly and philosophical level, I was interested in the way that the shared sense of the dance and the arcane knowledge of the music was able to survive and even flourish so distant from its native environment. I wanted to know how a culture of tango came to exist in the heart of Appalachia and how it could be fostered and encouraged through my actions because, with my love for the music, I wanted to help ensure its continued success. I began to see how aspects of the tango community in Asheville could be generalized in such a way that they could be applied to other communities in the ideas of *communitas* as put forward by Victor Turner. In the tango community, I was a neophyte seeking to learn the arcane knowledge of tango, the type of knowledge that is tied to a geographical homeland. In order to form a more solid understanding of the type of community I was beginning to theorize, I hoped to study a community from the other side, coming in with an innate knowledge of the aesthetic. As an Appalachian Studies scholar with an interest in the music, I found a case study example of the type of community that I have come to call *aesthetic communitas* in the bluegrass and old-time

music community centered around Barcelona. This thesis brings the community in Barcelona, and the people and locations that foster it, into focus as a case study of aesthetic *communitas* and details my ethnographic fieldwork in Barcelona in an effort to discover how bluegrass and old-time music takes place in Catalonia, who performs it, and why. To answer these questions, this study finds theoretical backing in, and borrows the term *communitas*, from the life work of the husband-wife team of anthropologists Victor and Edith Turner.

Communitas

Edith Turner's final book, *Communitas: An Anthropology of Collective Joy* (2012), is a conclusive overview of the phenomena that she and her husband had been trying to identify. Her text consists of a series of examples of *communitas* that the Turners had observed and studied over the course of their research careers. While Edith Turner provides an explanation of *communitas*, which she defines as "togetherness itself" (2012, p. 4), she claims the best way to come to an understanding of it is through experience and examples. And in fact, *communitas* is something that everyone experiences. Her deflection of a hard definition is inherent in the idea of *communitas* as being a communal experience that cannot be defined by words. It is a feeling, an emotion, a sense that is shared. The Turners differentiate between *spontaneous communitas* and *normative communitas* (V. Turner, 1969, p.132), where *spontaneous communitas* is that feeling Edith Turner describes that can happen unexpectedly in a moment of communion with others, and *normative communitas* is the societal structures set up to help create an environment for the continual repetition of *spontaneous communitas*. Victor Turner describes *normative communitas* as when *spontaneous communitas* is "organized into a perduring social system" (V. Turner, p. 132). In the Asheville tango community, the moment of *spontaneous communitas* is the dance, and the *normative communitas* is the various aspects of community that I had

observed, the people and connections that helped create a culture of tango in Appalachia. In Catalonia, the moment of spontaneous *communitas* for bluegrass and old-time music takes place in the moments of communal music-making that is referred to as the jam session, or jam, and the normative *communitas* is the structure that I examined for this case study. The normative structure includes things like the Al Ras Bluegrass and Old-Time Festival, the Barcelona Bluegrass Camp, and various other ways that someone can experience the music and deepen their understanding of the aesthetic, but the heart of the aesthetic *communitas*, the reason for its being, lies in the spontaneous *communitas* that occurs during communal music-making. For Edith Turner, *communitas* can occur in any number of diverse experiences—it is present in a high-stress kitchen when everyone gets “in the groove” to make it through a busy night, and in the ritual passage of circumcision of Ndembu teenage boys. What binds these diverse experiences together is the connection individuals make with others that seems to defy explanation—situations that evoke a group emotional response. This idea of *communitas*, “togetherness itself,” is the basis of the tango community in Asheville, the bluegrass and old-time community in Catalonia, and countless others. It is the feeling, a feeling that cannot be experienced in another way, that the performance of a ritualized performance aesthetic can evoke when experienced with two or more people together. This feeling resonates with individuals at different strengths, and compels some individuals to go to great lengths to experience that feeling again.

This study takes the idea of *communitas* into the realm of performative aesthetics, an aspect underexamined by the Turners but tangentially explored by people who succeeded the Turners such as Richard Schechner. For tango dancers, spontaneous *communitas* is what happens during the moment of the dance, the abandonment of self in order to live in the

improvisatory movement that requires an intense connection with a partner. Jane Holgate (2015), in her analysis of a tango community in England entitled “Transcultural Tango: An Ethnographic Study of a Dance Community in the East Midlands,” describes these as tango moments—the “memorable and intensely pleasurable experiences of dancing Tango” (p. 121). Similarly, it is what happens when musicians jam together, when a musician is able to “get in the groove” and communicate with another in the moment without words or structure—what Kisliuk (1988), in “‘A Special Kind of Courtesy’: Action at a Bluegrass Festival Jam Session”, describes as the “special energy that comes from the anticipation of the unexpected and the unrepeatable within the temporary jam session alliance” (p. 141).

As a tango aficionado, I could easily answer the question of why an instance of normative *communitas* based on tango exists. Tango doesn’t happen alone—it requires a partner familiar with the intricacies of its bodily language to experience it. It needs the music, the setting, the romance of a Milonga (a formal evening of tango dance) in order to happen. The tango dance community is comprised of people who are, as one aspect of their identity, tango dancers. Their relationship with tango is not just one of appreciation, but a love that borders on obsessive, and a feeling of being compelled to work towards its continual survival, expansion, and experience. Holgate (2015) describes the *communitas* experienced from dancing tango as “tango ecstasy” (p. 144). When someone falls in love with tango they become a *tanguero*, embarking on a lifetime of self-improvement and a deeper understanding of the art form. Members of the community go

to great lengths² in order to not only better themselves, but to better others around them in the art of tango so that, together, they can experience deeper *communitas*.

As a musician who grew up with bluegrass and old-time, I intrinsically understand the spontaneous *communitas* that erupts from a jam session, the “transcendent experience” that Kisliuk (1988) describes (p. 145). With a working knowledge of the normative *communitas* created in Asheville for tango, I went in search of the people, networks, connections, and structures that I knew would be an essential part of the normative *communitas* that had evolved in Catalonia around bluegrass and old-time music.

Aesthetics

Aesthetics has been defined by everyone from Aristotle to Ranciere, and this thesis uses the term to describe more than an art form. It encompasses an art form, but it is also the context that surrounds it. Aesthetics is the taste, the style, the feel, the cultural context of an art form. It is the body of knowledge that defines a style. Often times, it cannot be expressed with words, it is something that is felt, or “known,” once one has significant exposure to the aesthetic. It is a domain of shared knowledge and taste. Like *communitas*, perhaps, a particular aesthetic can best be understood through examples rather than a definition. Is a particular group or recording “bluegrass?” Is it “old-time?” These definitions are fluid, but there arises, from the accumulation of experience, familiarity, and knowledge through time, a set of patterns that defines a particular aesthetic, a form of knowledge that is passed down through experience. It is these unwritten rules that define the aesthetic and give room for bounded freedom of infinite

² Sometimes literally with a pilgrimage to Buenos Aires—a process which Griffith calls apprenticeship pilgrimage. For more information see Griffith’s 2017 book *Apprenticeship Pilgrimage: Developing Expertise through Travel and Training*

creativity. Furthermore, it is those sorts of unwritten, internalized rules that are so challenging to learn with a non-native aesthetic because they are not necessarily akin to explanation, and instead are learned through exposure. Tango dance is a language that is learned body-to-body—no amount of reading about tango will teach you what it is; it must be danced. And knowledge of bluegrass and old-time music, even in an institutional setting, is learned “knee-to-knee.” The aesthetic is what is performed in a bluegrass and old-time jam, encompassing the music but encapsulating so much more.

Yet this thesis is not just concerned with aesthetics, it is concerned with performative aesthetics. Japanese woodblock printing is an aesthetic, but it does not require the presence of another person to experience it. It can bring you joy, but it will not bring you what Edith Turner (2012) calls “collective joy.” We are not looking at *jouissance*, but rather *communitas*. And by performative, we do not necessarily mean on stage (although it can be), we mean that it is an aesthetic that is experienced in the moment. In *Performance Theory*, Schechner (2006) gives an inclusive definition of performance where “theater is only one node on a continuum that reaches from the ritualizations of animals (including humans) through performances in everyday life—greetings, displays of emotion, family scenes, professional roles, and so on—through to play, sports, theater, dance, ceremonies, rites, and performances of great magnitude” (p. 1). One studies the unwritten rules of the aesthetic, and performs in an improvisatory way the aesthetic with another person- that is how we get aesthetic *communitas*. In tango it is the moment of the dance, in bluegrass and old time it is in the moment of the jam.

As stated above, Turner came to apply his concepts of *communitas* to activities not traditionally considered ritual by expanding the idea of what ritual can be. How is a bluegrass and old-time jam like a ritual? It has a community of people who participate in a type of shared

performance that require a certain amount of preparation. There is a shared understanding of the process which is governed by certain codes of behavior. Participants wear special clothes and play particular instruments in a codified style. The event is demarcated by a special name, a “jam,” that sets it apart from normal everyday life. The jam is a time and space apart from normal life, one that permits people from diverse social and economic backgrounds to meet together and engage in communal music-making.

Defining the Community

Of course, this type of *communitas* can happen anywhere there are two or more people with knowledge of the aesthetic who perform it together. Yet some types of aesthetic are so compelling and require such a specialized knowledge that the people with whom the aesthetic strongly resonates work together in community to foster its development. *Communitas*, in aesthetic *communitas*, refers to the both the normative and the spontaneous *communitas* as described by the Turners. It is both the shared experience of “togetherness itself” that is achieved in the embodiment of the performative aesthetic and the necessary community required to keep a body of knowledge locally in order to regularly perform the aesthetic. The structure of the normative *communitas* can occur in numerous ways. It can take the form of a legally incorporated organization³ or more simply a group of people who experience *communitas* together, such as musicians who jam together, or very likely both.

One does not have to be a member of the more formal normative *communitas* structures like Tango Asheville or the Al Ras Bluegrass And Old-Time Music Society to be a member of

³ The Knoxville Argentine Tango Society in Knoxville, Tennessee, for example, is a registered not-for-profit organization. A “civic-minded, not-for-profit social club...[that] welcomes you to share our love for Argentine Tango” (Meece, n.d.).

the aesthetic community. In this ethnographic case study, I consider a person to be a member of the community if they engage in communal bluegrass and old-time music-making with others. This music-making can take place at a public jam, a private get-together, or even onstage in a performance. The defining aspect is not membership in a structural organization, nor is it the outward display of signifiers. It is defined by practice of the aesthetic community. Members of the community are musicians who play bluegrass and old-time music with one another to a larger or lesser degree. There are innumerable ways that a group like this can be broken down into subsets to help discover its extent and nature. In this study, I look at two groupings of individuals in the community. The boundaries between these tiers is fluid, but I label them Professional and Amateur.

The Professional grouping consists of professionals who dedicate a large part of their life and identity to the aesthetic and receive a portion of their income from it. Membership in the Professional tier can be fluid, but the economic ties creates a more lasting symbiotic relationship with the community. A person in the Professional tier cannot easily untie themselves from the aesthetic or from the community, and the diminishment or growth of the community is tied to their economic well-being. It can be equally hard, emotionally and mentally, for someone in the Amateur grouping to divest themselves from the community, but they are unlikely to suffer any economic reverberations. This is the key differentiation between the Amateur and the Professional in this classification. This does not indicate any less devotion to the aesthetic or the community. A member of the Amateur tier can be just as devoted, if not more, to the aesthetic and the community as someone from the Professional tier. The division of community members into Professional and Amateur tiers is not intended to indicate a hierarchy of community, but rather is a rhetorical device for discussing a community's members. An amateur, someone who

does it purely for love, is as valuable and integral a part of an aesthetic *communitas* as a professional, someone who receives a portion of their income from it. Membership in the Amateur grouping can be everything from complete novices who are just learning how to jam to retired professionals who retain much of the community knowledge of the style. Membership in the Professional tier can also consist of people who play an important role in the community but do not reside in the area. They are performers and teachers of the aesthetic that repeatedly pass through the community and give workshops and concerts to help the local community in their understanding of the aesthetic. These connections can have a lasting impact on the community over time, although short in duration.

The bluegrass and old-time community in Catalonia that is the focus of this study consists of musicians who play the music with one another. They are supported by a network of people and organizations that provide them the opportunity to play music together and to better themselves in the genre. The age demographic for the bluegrass and old-time community in Catalonia is a wide range. I encountered both youth and seniors, although the majority of people were in the 20 to 50 year-old range. I was not able to get a firm grasp on the socio-economic class of the community members, although as is often the case with extra-curricular activities that require an investment in time and resources, more often than not it consists of people who have at least some form of disposable income. While the location of this study is in Catalonia, the nationality of community members was not exclusive. While the community is primarily Catalan, being in Catalonia, it welcomed expatriates from the English-speaking diaspora along with people who identified as Spanish and other European countries. As is often the case in aesthetic *communitas*, the community in Catalonia is a welcoming community regardless of

nationality because the requirement for inclusion is based on performance, understanding, and appreciation of a performance aesthetic.

The Research Questions

The research questions that guide this study fall into two groups. The first group concerns the existence and nature of the aesthetic *communitas* centered around bluegrass and old-time music in Catalonia. What are the characteristics of the structural normative *communitas* that has developed in Catalonia? How is the spontaneous *communitas* performed? Where do community members gather to perform the spontaneous *communitas*? Who are the important characters in the normative *communitas* that are responsible for its success? Lastly, what can be learned about the concept of aesthetic *communitas* through this case study?

The second aspect of this study is to see if there is an awareness of Appalachia as the cultural center of bluegrass and old-time music amongst the community. Although scholars have debated the exact origins of bluegrass and old-time music, the Appalachian mountains are seen as the homeland for this music in the popular consciousness. Is bluegrass and old-time music seen as a distinctly Appalachian music or as a more generic American music in Catalonia? To what extent is Appalachia celebrated or signified? What non-musical connotations of Appalachia are transmitted along with the music, if any? Are there linguistic terminologies, particular clothes, or other signifiers that are exchanged within the community that represent stereotypical symbols of Appalachia?

Chapter Preview

Chapter two, the Literature Review, introduces the essential concepts that are at play in this case study, and provides an overview of Appalachian Studies and the work that has already been done in the field. I examine more closely the theoretical background of *communitas* as

studied by the Turners, especially how these ideas were applied to theatre, and as a result, genres of performative aesthetics. We also look at where this fits in the field of Appalachian Studies. I also discuss the scholarly basis for my ethnographic methods, which includes both elements of cyber ethnography and classic fieldwork.

Chapter three is Methodology. I performed an ethnographic analysis to conduct this case study. I use Geertz's "thick description" to clarify the patterns of social and cultural relationships that are at play in this community and attempt to model his clear prose writing style (Geertz, 1973). This chapter outlines the techniques, methods, and ethics that I used for my ethnography, including the cyber ethnographic methods such as digital communications and social network analysis and the participant observation used in cultural studies fieldwork for generations of scholars.

The analysis in chapter four is a presentation of the data, organized through my fieldwork. I intersperse analysis in a narrative description of the people, events, symbols, signs, and locations I observed and participated in which play a role in the communal practice of bluegrass and old-time music. I described the essential aspects of aesthetic *communitas* as I experienced them during my fieldwork: the people, place, and events that determine the community. In this chapter I relate my experiences at the bi-weekly Barcelona Bluegrass Jam, the Al Ras Bluegrass and Old-Time Festival, and a frailing banjo workshop. I give short biographies of five members of the community whom I have classified in the Professional tier interspersed with thick descriptions of four locations relevant to the community. Reoccurring locations, people, and signs serve to relay the web of culture that create the local community.

In the conclusion I determine that, yes, there is an aesthetic *communitas* centered around bluegrass and old-time music in Catalonia, and I use findings from this case study to determine

characteristics of aesthetic *communitas*. I offer a possible historic explanation for why a bluegrass and old-time community exists in Catalonia, and discuss reasons for the success of this community in Barcelona as the people who have given so much of their lives to the music and its sustained development in Catalonia. I also attempt to explain how the signifiers of Appalachia are expressed in Catalonia. I point out possible avenues of scholarship and cultural outreach that can be mutually beneficial.

As a tango musician and dancer in Asheville I was a neophyte looking in, searching for more knowledge that could better inform my experiences with tango. At times it seemed no matter how much I practiced, I would never be able to dance tango as well as someone from its place of origin. In this case study of bluegrass and old-time music in Catalonia, I have the life experiences that place me on the other side—able to observe the community with an innate understanding of the style and the socio-musical aesthetic around it. These situations allowed me to approach the community, and to understand it, with a unique sensibility that granted me insight and clarity that other researchers might not have been privy to. It was this connection to the music that granted me a connection to the community members in Catalonia, and I am thankful for their support, assistance, and cooperation in this case study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Appalachian Studies

How Appalachia is perceived—how it is identified—is in many ways at the core of the field of Appalachian Studies. One cannot have an Appalachian Studies without having some idea of what Appalachia is. It's clearly more than a geographical location, something that can be described on a map such as the Appalachian Regional Commission's definition of Appalachia, formed during the Johnson Administration's War On Poverty, that serves 420 counties over 13 states. It also represents the people who live there, and those that live outside of the region but carry the family traditions on in a new location.

The field of Appalachian Studies began in the 1960s with an examination of the people and culture of the Appalachian Mountains. In the 1970s and 1980s, and in some circles still relevant today, the field of Appalachia was energized with social justice aspects and examined through an internal colony lens. *Colonialism in Modern America: The Appalachian Case* (Lewis, Johnson, & Askins, 1978) described Appalachia through an internal colony model drawing on Appalachia's subordinate position in the national economy and the history of extractive industries' theft of resources. As the field developed, the region was studied from a variety of theoretical perspectives. The resource extraction of the region is well documented in Eller's *Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers* (1982). Eller gives factual context to the more emotional portrayals of the life of Appalachians between 1880 and 1930 such as James Still's fictional *River of Earth* (1940) and Harry Caudill's non-fictional *Night Comes to the Cumberlands: A Biography of a Depressed Area* (1963). Eller's well-researched bibliography

gives original sources for figures on how the Appalachian forests were transformed to timber, then to lumber, then to homes, schools, and hospitals for the growing nation.

Outside of the confines of Appalachian Studies, ideas of Appalachia were formed through mediated experiences that reflected, to a certain extent, the life of people on the ground. *Night Comes to The Cumberlands* (Caudill, 1963) and *The Dollmaker* (Arnow, 1972), although criticized over the years by scholars, were popular tragedies of Appalachian existence depicted in literature. Others, such as the movie *Deliverance* (Boorman, 1972), relied on old tropes of the Hillbilly stereotype, further ostracizing a group of people from the larger national consciousness. According to Shapiro in *Appalachia On Our Mind* (1978), these mediated experiences have thoroughly shaped the idea of Appalachia since the mid-eighteenth century (Shapiro, 1978). Dominant lines of communication/dissemination of information at the time, such as popular magazines like *Harper's* and *Lippincot's*, published articles of the “strange land and peculiar people” (Harney, 1873, p. 429) existing just outside of “civilization” in the Appalachian Mountains that shaped the growing national awareness of Appalachia. Benedict Anderson, in *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1991), traces the power that such lines of communication/dissemination of information have possessed to Benjamin's ideas about the mechanical reproduction of art, and how they contributed to the way people see the world in a shared sense. The ephemerality of the daily newspaper, and its hegemonic distribution over a city ensured that members of a community were on the same page, so to speak, in their “almost precisely simultaneous consumption (‘imagining’) of the newspaper-as-fiction” (Anderson, 1991, p. 35). Wittingly or not, these papers gave rise to the power of the editor. The ability of the mechanical reproduction of art to shape the conversation reached its prime in the rise of monolithic news distribution channels. Print-capitalism, according to

Anderson, “made it possible for rapidly growing numbers of people to think about themselves, and relate themselves to others, in profoundly new ways” (1991, p. 36). Whisnant pointed out that not just print capitalism, but other manners of cultural production can be used to define symbols and shape rhetorical constructs. Using cases such as the White Top Folk Festival, Whisnant describes a manner in which Appalachian culture can be used to further ideological ends, and that there does in fact exist a “politics of culture” (1982). While Anderson and Shapiro’s ideas are historically accepted, the reality of today is vastly different from the worlds they were describing and the era they were writing in. In 2018, individuals consume their own feed of news, each person getting a constant feed of information custom tailored to themselves. The cyber-ethnographic aspect of this case study makes use of Facebook, a line of communication/dissemination of information that represents the apex of this individualized diet of mediated experiences. Scholars such as Shapiro and Batteau have described Appalachia as a rhetorical construct shaped by hegemonic editorial discourse, but in 2018 the individual is their own editor and imagined communities based on a dominant worldview have splintered apart.

Transnationalism in Appalachian Studies

Since the 1970s, scholars in Appalachia studies have engaged in comparative studies with other regions. As part of her research and her work toward social justice for the people of Appalachia, Helen Lewis set about comparing Appalachia with other regions of the world that had a similar set of economic conditions, regions that had been colonized by the hegemonic forces of market capitalism and the drive for ever increasing profits. Lewis’s observations on the post-coal economy of Wales (Lewis, 1983) was an early example, but transcultural comparisons have become more important to the field in the last few years as scholars seek to place Appalachia in a global context. Lewis’s work was focused on identifying similarities between

Appalachia and Wales as internal colonies. While she was not concerned with transcultural aesthetic communitas, her work was pivotal in directing Appalachian Studies to search for similarities in the Appalachian experience and that of other regions of the globe. The Appalachian, Scottish, and Irish Studies program at East Tennessee State University, founded by Thomas Burton, is one of the oldest examples of such programs in the field. Additionally, scholars such as Donald Davis and Christopher A. Miller have led a comparative regional study of Appalachia to the Carpathian Mountains for over a decade by conducting fieldwork and promoting papers, research, plenaries, and conference presentations. There has been some introduction of Appalachian music to Carpathian scholars, and vice versa, but no one has yet attempted to make full cross-cultural comparison of bluegrass and old-time music and Carpathian music. As a result of the early work of Lewis, transnationalism, whether it is called that or not, has been studied and reviewed in the major journals of the field many times, such as in William Schumann and Carwyn Fowler's article "Globalization, Identity, and Activism in Appalachia and Wales: Comparing the Political Economy of Representation in Two Marginal "Regions"" published in the Fall 2002 *Journal of Appalachian Studies*. In 2013, *Now & Then* magazine, published by the Center of Excellence for Appalachian Studies and Services at East Tennessee State University, published an issue dedicated to the topic of "Global Appalachia" which includes articles comparing Appalachia to regions of the globe as diverse as Rwanda, France, Alaska, and Catalonia. The article on Catalonia, by Dr. Ted Olson, discusses broad similarities and differences between the two regions based on Olson's experiences in Barcelona during a six-month Fulbright. This article is a brief exploration and does not focus specifically on the musical community (Olson, 2013).

Bluegrass Outside of the United States

In addition to transnational research in Appalachian Studies, scholars in other fields have researched bluegrass and old-time music communities in other nations. Lee Bidgood's analysis of bluegrass music in the Czech Republic (2017) is a clear example of work that has been done similar to this study. Bidgood's research benefits from longer fieldwork and is based on multiple years and visits to the Czech Republic. Instead of focusing on Appalachia, Bidgood discusses the ways in which Czech bluegrassers perform their Americanness. Playing bluegrass for these Czechs allows them to stand in-between Czech and American culture. Much of Bidgood's book, *Czech Bluegrass: Notes From The Heart of Europe*, is focused on explaining the "in-betweenness" of Czech bluegrassers who combine devotion to a distinctly American form of music and their own Czech heritage. Bidgood's research is multi-faceted, but on a certain level the research is intended to "explain their music-making in part as a negation or subversion of existing cultural, political, and economic structures" (p. 5). He traces the origins of bluegrass music in Czech republic not only to a form of resistance to communist rule, but also in the Tramping movement that arose in the region between the two world wars. The community in Catalonia, while not as old or established, shares some of the same characteristics as the community Bidgood studied. Members of the Czech bluegrass community have given instructional workshops in Catalonia, and the principal organizer of the Al Ras Bluegrass and Old Time Festival plays a Prucha banjo, manufactured in the Czech Republic.

Much of the work done on bluegrass and old-time musical communities outside the United States place their origins in the ideological battlefield of the cold war. Ledgin (2006), in *Homegrown Music: Discovering Bluegrass*, describes various international scenes of bluegrass and pinpoints most of their origins to "various outposts where American military personnel are

stationed” (p. 94). Ledgin’s short description of the “small but enthusiastic bluegrass community numbering around one hundred and centered in Barcelona, Madrid, and Bilbao” (p. 97) is cursory and indicative of the need for a more in-depth study such as this one. Even Bidgood’s work, which takes place after the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989, is focused on a subculture that was formed in response to Cold War ideological tactics. Various analyses of American country and folk music in Germany (Mueller, 2013) and Japan (Mitsui, 1983) squarely place origins on the radio of the American military bases. Mitsui (1983) also gives credit to “American capitalistic power in internationally disseminating American musical products” (p. 284). The community in Catalonia is different. It was not an occupied territory after World War II like Japan and Germany, neither was it a strategic element of the Cold War. Cultural repression under the Franco regime in Catalonia limited the amount of international cultural products available, and it wasn’t until after Franco’s death in 1975 that American culture fully appeared, although bluegrass, country, and rock and roll surely seeped in through phonographic records and radio stations servicing the various US military bases in Europe. In 1977, two years after Franco’s death, the American College in Barcelona brought the McLain Family Band, a traditional bluegrass band from Berea, Kentucky, to perform. In general, the bluegrass and old-time community in Catalonia is younger than the communities in Japan and Czech republic, consisting mostly of people who came of age after Franco’s death. One example of American culture that was strongly influential in Catalonia in the 1960s and 1970s was the folk movement. Xesco Boix and other members of the “Grupo de Folk” made Catalan translations of American folk songs that were popular at the time. As repression of the Catalan language began to recede, the simple melodies of American folk tunes carried Catalan verses to children in Catalonia.

Several more scholars have taken an interest in the cross-cultural appearance of bluegrass and old-time music, such as Ferguson’s study of bluegrass and country music in Northern Thailand (2010). Janice Waldron (2011) does an interesting cyber ethnography case study of an online, cross-cultural community of bluegrass and old-time banjo enthusiasts in the article “Locating Narratives in Postmodern Spaces: A Cyber Ethnographic Field Study of Informal Music Learning in Online Community.” Waldron was doing pioneer work in the field of cyber-ethnography in 2011. Her ethnography is a case study that uses the Community of Practice model, defining the community to be the members of a popular online forum entitled “Banjo Hangout”.

Bluegrass, Old-Time, and Appalachia

Bidgood’s work is focused on bluegrass and not Appalachia, but the origins of bluegrass in Appalachia have been discussed in numerous places. A simple explanation of the musical styles known as bluegrass and old-time is that old-time is the music traditionally played in the Appalachian mountains pre-World War II and that bluegrass is a specific adaptation of that music by Bill Monroe and his bands. Yet with a more sophisticated view, it is hard to make the claim that bluegrass and old-time music is “Appalachian music.” Bluegrass, while based largely on the musical traditions and experiences of Appalachia, incorporated sounds of the southern blues, jazz, and ragtime along with innovations such as Earl Scruggs’s three-finger banjo picking to create a unique sound that resonated with a large number of people, initially finding “its warmest and most enthusiastic reception among residents of Appalachia” (“Bluegrass,” 2018). And while sources such as the *Encyclopedia of Appalachia* designate old-time music as “the variety of traditional musical genres found in sections of Appalachia where regionally specific repertoires continue to be performed” (“Old-time Music,” 2018), the songs that make up the repertoire of

old-time music have origins not only in the Appalachian mountains, but also in minstrel songs of the south, parlour music of the 19th century, and traditional music of the British Isles. While not Appalachian music per se, bluegrass and old-time music have strong ties to the Appalachian Region through antecedent musical forms, cultural hearths, key artists from the region, and the use of Appalachian imagery in songs (Malone, 2002; Cantwell, 2003; Rosenberg, 2005). In “The Real Place of Appalachia in Bluegrass Music,” the French scholar Cherre does a brief analysis of Appalachian imagery in bluegrass by looking for Appalachian linguistic markers, place names, and stereotypes in the lyrics of a corpus of bluegrass songs to “study the nature of the link between the cultural region that is Appalachia and the musical style that is bluegrass” (2013, p. 30). The article is limited, but Cherre concludes that there is indeed a semantic relationship between the music and the region. Bluegrass and old-time music also became extremely popular in the region very early on and remain so to this day. As a result, they have become indelibly linked to the region in popular culture, not only in the United States, but also internationally.

Community

The bluegrass and old-time community in Catalonia is similar to the idea of Community of Practice, a term developed by Wegner and Lave in their 1991 book *Situated Learning*. Wegner-Trayner (2015) describes communities of practice as “groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly.” It differs from aesthetic *communitas* in that aesthetic *communitas* is not a community united in the knowledge or experience that one has with “something they do,” but largely united in the experience of *communitas*, of engaging in a ritualized performance aesthetic that invokes a liminal space to allow *communitas*. The bluegrass and old-time musicians in Catalonia do not

simply share concerns or passions, they share a communal performance which unites the community.

There are a number of case studies that have been done across the fields of cultural, community, and performative studies that are relevant to this thesis. Edith Turner's last book, *Communitas: An Anthology of Collective Joy* (2012), is in essence a collection of case studies of communitas. She covers everything from a high-stress kitchen environment to Ndembu circumcision rituals. Robert Gardner does a case study of bluegrass festival goers and describes the "community of practice" as a "portable community" in his work "The Portable Community: Mobility and Modernization in Bluegrass Festival Life" (2004). For Gardner, the bluegrass festival in its entirety provides the breakdown of structure that Turner indicates is typical in liminoid situations that produce communitas, where the social and economic structures of daily life are left behind. Lauren Griffith studies the trip that Capoeirists take to Brazil to become better practitioners in "In Search of Legitimacy: How Outsiders Become Part of the Afro-Brazilian Capoeira Tradition" (2016). Griffith more fully develops her idea of an apprenticeship pilgrimage in her book *Apprenticeship Pilgrimage: Developing Expertise through Travel and Training*. I make use of Griffith's concept of apprenticeship pilgrimage as a characterization of aesthetic communitas.

Communitas

In the introduction, I discussed the idea that the communal performance of playing bluegrass and old-time music can induce a liminal state and invoke communitas. The idea of liminality was first studied by van Gennep. In *The Rites of Passage* (1909), van Gennep's most famous work, he defines his idea that rites of passage can be divided into three stages: preliminary, liminary, and post-liminary. Victor Turner was interested in van Gennep's ideas of

liminality. In Turner's expositions on ritual, he focused on the liminal stage and defines it in various ways throughout his career as the moment when an individual steps out of the normal flow of events and participates in something extraordinary with others. A closer examination of ritual led Turner to explore performance, as many rituals are stylized performances, and Turner eventually began to discuss Theatre as a place where liminality is experienced (V. Turner, 1982). It is here that the work of Victor Turner is championed by performance theorist Richard Schechner. Together with Schechner, the two came to see liminality, and *communitas*, as occurring in more than just ritual, but performance. And more than just the performance of theatre, but the performances of everyday life. As Victor Turner states in his essay "Are There Universals of Performance in Myth, Ritual, and Drama":

Theatre is but one of the many inheritors of that multifaceted system of preindustrial ritual which embraces ideas and images of cosmos and chaos, interdigitates clowns and their foolery with gods and their solemnity, and uses all the sensory codes to produce symphonies in more than music: the intertwining of dance, body languages of many kinds, song, chant, architectural forms (temples, amphitheatres), incense, burnt offerings, ritualized feasting and drinking, painting, body markings of many kinds, including circumcision and scarification, the application of lotions and drinking potions, the enacting of mythic and heroic plots drawn from oral traditions. And so much more. Rapid advances in the scale and complexity of society, particularly after industrialization, have passed this unified liminal configuration through the analytical prism of the division of labor, with its specialization and professionalization, reducing each of these sensory domains to a set of entertainment genres flourishing in the leisure time of society,

no longer in a central, driving place. The pronounced numinous supernatural character of archaic ritual has been greatly attenuated. (1985, pp. 295-7)

If liminality is experienced in a theatre performance, why not in the codified forms of aesthetic rituals such as tango dance or bluegrass music? While this work is unique in focusing on bluegrass and old-time music as a performative aesthetic, there exists other work outside the field that are relevant to this study. In “Musicking and Communitas: The Aesthetic Mode of Sociality in Rebetika Subculture,” Janet Sarbanes (2006) describes the liminal aspects of communal music-making in the subculture surrounding the Greek urban blues genre known as rebetika, focusing on how the communal music-making can contribute to an anti-structural subculture. Jane Holgate (2015), in “Transcultural Tango: An Ethnographic Study of a Dance Community in the East Midlands,” discusses the cross-cultural appearance of tango in England and describes the liminal state that the tango dance induces to produce communitas as the reason dancers become dedicated to performing it.

In “A Special Kind of Courtesy: Action at a Bluegrass Festival Jam Session,” Kisliuk (1988) gives a good example of how a bluegrass jam can elicit communitas, although she does not use that concept, instead describing it as a “heightened musical and social communion” (p. 141). The “interactional etiquette” (p. 141) that she describes contributes to the codified form of behavior that surround the ritualized performance aesthetic. This scholarly article gives an in-depth analysis of the communal music-making known as a jam that takes place during a bluegrass festival, and while using a different theoretical model, does an excellent job describing the essence of spontaneous communitas derived playing bluegrass music.

Identity

I have argued here the ritualized performance aesthetic of bluegrass and old-time music, as the cause of *communitas*, might be the reason for the community in Catalonia—but it is not just liminal-inducing performances that this thesis is concerned with. This case study set out to find if any non-musical aspects of Appalachia are “performed” in the aesthetic *communitas*.

Kant-Byers gives a recent discussion of signifiers of Appalachia in “Revisiting Appalachian Icons in the Production and Consumption of Tourist Art” (2016). This work performs a “systematic classifying and quantifying of the frequencies of visual representations” (2016, p. 156) of Appalachian Icons in a manner that is much more quantitative than this study, which relies more on an interpretive, qualitative analysis. Her study focuses on artists who produce stereotypical images, not necessarily of themselves, for tourist consumption. Icons that she mentions include the hillbilly, cabins, mountains, and black bears. The presence of Appalachian stereotypes in tourism is also documented in “‘Hillbilly Sold Here’: Appalachian Folk Culture and Parkway Tourism,” an article by Jean Haskell Speer (1987) that explores the persistence of Appalachian tropes. David Hsiung (2004), in his chapter “Stereotypes” from the book *High Mountains Rising*, gives a general discussion of the stereotypes that have come to define Appalachians, with special attention on the idea of Hillbilly, stating that one reason for their persistence might be “because people use them for profit” (2004, p. 107). This study looks for non-musical signs of Appalachia that could be transmitted along with the music and are performed by Catalonian musicians for themselves. The reasons for producing and consuming the images are different, but the images could still be similar, and as such I searched for the icons, stereotypes, and signifiers outlined by Kant-Byers, Haskell, and Hsiung in my search for

Appalachian imagery in Catalonia. These works helped define what I felt I could most scholarly defend as signifiers of Appalachia.

Another work of note is Cherre's analysis of Appalachian signifiers in a canon of bluegrass songs. Cherre is a European scholar looking for similar signifiers as this study by analyzing themes of "Appalachia." Whereas Cherre looks for signifiers in the lyrics of the sung bluegrass canon, this case study looks for signifiers in the performance of reality.

Perhaps the most enduring stereotype of Appalachia is that of the Hillbilly. Anthony Harkness gives a comprehensive analysis of the Hillbilly symbol in America in *Hillbilly: A Cultural History of an American Icon* (2004). Williamson's *Hillbillyland* explores the rhetorical uses of mountain symbolism in film (1995). Both Harkness and Williamson discuss the mediated, stereotypical image of the Appalachian as Hillbilly, but in focusing on signs of Appalachia that are disseminated through the transmission of musical knowledge this study hopes to find aspects of Appalachian identity that are a little less stereotypical.

Concepts of identity have much to do with concepts of language, semiotics, and rhetoric. The field of semiotics plays an important part in the theoretical underpinnings of this study, as I look in and through language for how and where meaning is created. Ferdinand de Saussure is seen as a pioneer of semiotics, and he laid the groundwork for understanding the division between signifier and signified in his works, the most available and relevant being the *Course in General Linguistics*, which was reconstructed from student notes after his death (1959). Roland Barthes expanded on the concepts of Saussure and pulled the field of semiotics away from its linguistic base with *Elements of Semiology* (1968). Barthes artistically applied elements of semiology to culture in his essays collected in *Mythologies* (1972), where he covers topics such as the performance of professional wrestling and the reality of mediated and marketed

commercialism. The work of Jean Baudrillard, whose *Simulations and Simulacrum* (1994) outlines the concept of hyperreality, takes the field of semiotics into a post-modern age, focusing not just on signs but on simulations. As a built reality of signs grows more complex, signs and simulations come to represent things that are also signs and simulations, and the distinction between reality and simulacrum becomes impossible to detect.

The field of transnationalism is still relatively new, although as demonstrated in this literature review there has already been significant work regarding transnationalism in Appalachian Studies. Cross-cultural communities based on the mutual appreciation for an aesthetic have been observed before in several distinct locations, and I rely on this work that has gone before in this thesis in an attempt to construct a theoretical model, with this case study in Catalonia, that can help unify much of the work that has been done, and is yet to come, concerning not just bluegrass and old-time music or tango dance, but all manner of performative arts.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The ethnographic case study combines the approaches to research of ethnography and case study. Case studies are useful when the research requires multiple sources of evidence on a topic. One type of case study approach, a descriptive case study approach, attempts to give a description of a particular phenomenon from within its context, and this is where it aligns well with an ethnographic approach. Ethnographies attempt to make sense of a community or place, taking into account the cultural context and social relations. An ethnographic case study will differ from a traditional ethnography in that it does not require the long-term fieldwork, yet it is similar in that it seeks to contextualize the research into wider contexts.

Case Study

Robert Stake, in “The Art of The Case Study” (1995), distinguishes between three types of case studies- 1. Intrinsic 2. Instrumental and 3. Collective. In an intrinsic study, the case is what is important. In an instrumental study, the case helps you “draw insight into a particular issue, redraw generalizations, or build theory” (Grandy, 2010). The case facilitates your understanding of something else. A collective case study combines the study of multiple instrumental studies. This case study is a mixture of intrinsic and instrumental. It is an instrumental case study because it is through the process of examining this community that I hope to better define cross-cultural aesthetic communitas. Yet it is clearly intrinsic in its semiotic analysis. The interpretation of signs is strictly tied to the context through which they are put into play. An aspect of this thesis is a semiotic analysis of non-musical signifiers of Appalachia that are performed in the aesthetic communitas of bluegrass and old-time music in Catalonia.

In this case study, I did my best to *triangulate*. In a case study, researchers triangulate to try and achieve a closer approximation to the real picture. Stake identifies triangulation as “working to substantiate an interpretation or to clarify its different meanings” (1995, p. 173). It is a way to recognize the stance of the researcher, and to allow multiple voices to come out. Any researcher is bound by the context in which they are received. The successful researcher is able to shape the context in a way that benefits them and allows them access to the data, but it can also shape the data they gather and the observations they record. By using multiple methods of data collection such as cyber ethnography and fieldwork, email and conversation, social networks and IRL⁴, applying diverse theories to the data such as *communitas* and *communities of practice*, and getting my information from multiple sources at different times, I tried to approach the reality of what was happening on the ground. I feel more ethically sound and scholarly secure by not relying on a single informant to construct my case study. I spoke with a variety of groups and subgroups, people from inside the community, people from outside the community, and people from both the United States and Catalonia.

I also attempted to triangulate my case study by combining online ethnography with the fieldwork of more classical anthropology. Online ethnography is a relatively new aspect of ethnography, and the methods I used were largely derived from trial and error of my past research experiences. I did not attempt to do a full-fledged cyber-ethnography like Waldron (2009) in “Exploring a virtual music community of practice: Informal music learning on the Internet.” Instead, I was looking to do online research and interactions that would facilitate a successful visit to the field. Additionally, online research was necessary, given the distance to

⁴ IRL is internet shorthand for “In Real Life”.

the field site and short time I had to be there. This type of online work gives the modern researcher a huge advantage over researchers of the past.

Cyber Ethnography

I began my online ethnographic work with the social network Facebook. On Facebook, I connected with central community members online—some of whom would become primary informants like Lluís Gómez, principle organizer of the Al Ras Bluegrass and Old-Time Festival, and David Prat, a luthier of banjos and Appalachian dulcimers. I became a member of Facebook group pages with membership made up of mostly Catalonians like Mundo Banjo, Barcelona Bluegrass Jam, Bluegrass & Old-Time Mountain Music, Bluegrass Music Fans in Europe, Spain Banjo Players, The Outlaw Music of Barcelona, and Appalachian Music Catalunya. I also became a fan of Catalonian music groups like Barcelona Bluegrass Band, Newgrass Republic, The Damned Hellbillies, Hermanos Cuberos, and YerbAzul who play bluegrass and old-time music. With these connections of bluegrass and old-time musicians in Catalonia, I received a constant feed of news and events involving the community, which allowed me to revise and expand my understanding of the community. Furthermore, I was able to conduct several extensive conversations with key informants over Facebook Messenger, a form of computer mediated communication that allows for asynchronous and synchronous communication.

While the technologies and cultural landscape of social media are changing quickly, social network analysis is established as a valuable tool for social research. I can say that in 2017, a time before there was a major crisis in confidentiality of Facebook (the Cambridge Analytica manipulation of user data led to Facebook CEO Zuckerberg's testimony before the United States Congress and European Union Parliament) when ethics and user satisfaction

became important issues that Facebook had to begin considering, these methods worked well. Regardless whether Facebook as it currently is used will be a fad or a long-term trend, in 2017 many people in Europe and America, all over the globe, consistently interacted with it on a daily basis for extended periods of time.

One of the great benefits of cyber ethnography over a social network is that it allows you to get an intimate familiarity with your subjects and maintain confidentiality with informants. They are called informants because this is a research study, but connecting with them on a social network allows them to be friends. When I approached luthier David Prat online to ask him questions about his experiences with bluegrass and old-time music, he had the opportunity to peruse my public profile and construct a reasonably truthful idea of who I was. Thanks to the fact that we were able to interact in a public online space, where social networks helped enforce truth, Prat invited me into his home, with his partner Lena Uria and their two young children, for the ten days that I was in Catalonia. My ethnography relied heavily on the help of Prat and his graciousness, and my association with him gave me a good introduction to members of the community. Prat is a central character in the old-time flavor of music in Catalonia. He has done an apprenticeship pilgrimage and is a renowned luthier of banjos and dulcimers in Europe.

In addition to my relationship with Prat, thanks to the online ethnographic methods that I employed, by the time I began my fieldwork I had already gotten CDs through the mail from Lluís Gómez, the “king of the banjo in Spain.” Together we had had email and messenger conversations, and over the months of my online ethnography I had helped him with several translations for promotional documents. As a result, when I landed in Barcelona for my fieldwork I had a working familiarity with central nodes who could introduce me to other members of the community.

Online social network methodology doesn't cover everyone. Not everyone who plays bluegrass and old-time music in Catalonia is on Facebook (although most are), and not everyone takes it as seriously as face to face communication. A case in point is Greg Ryan. Ryan is an expat who runs a music and dance venue called El Barn D'en Greg, which features country line dancing and various Americana acts. Try as I might, I couldn't get an interview with Ryan over Facebook or email. He was a friendly, willing, and vital informant in person, but he just didn't have the time for me over a social network. Also, Toni Giménez, a hugely important and influential player in the community does not have a Facebook profile (although he has an extensive personal/professional webpage⁵ and over 850 videos on his YouTube channel⁶). As such, it was important to take the information that I gathered from Facebook to the rest of the internet. I conducted much more of my research by searching the world-wide web for the key community members, musical groups, and festivals that I had become aware of from my Facebook research.

Ethnography

The fieldwork aspect of my ethnography is similar to the fieldwork ethnographies in symbolic and interpretive anthropology. I attempted to live as closely with the community as possible, so that I could interpret my experiences within the appropriate context. This ethnography was conducted in the style and form of symbolic and interpretive anthropologists like Franz Boas, Victor Turner, and Clifford Geertz who encourage the researcher to interpret symbols within the cultural context of where they are found. A little differently though, in this ethnography, we are looking at symbols and knowledge that derived from a culture, and then

⁵ <http://www.toniGiménez.cat/>

⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/user/toniGiménezfajardo>

finding the cultural context given to it by a different culture. When it comes to describing the symbols used, this ethnography *triangulates* between direct observation, Catalonian meanings, Appalachian meanings, and the researcher's interpretations. Another distinction in the methods that I use for this ethnography, versus that of the anthropologist as described, is that I am not observing something "foreign." As a practitioner of bluegrass and old-time music from the region most strongly associated with it, I was immediately accepted as a member of the community. And far from being an outsider, my position as a visitor from the region of origin gave me an ultra-insider status.

Symbolic and interpretative anthropology is a historic period in Anthropology, but the approach to ethnography is still valid and influential on contemporary work such as this. I use Clifford Geertz "thick description," and ascribe to his general goals for an anthropologist to understand a situation and then explain it in writing. His focus on writing as a part of ethnography allows the ethnographer to use styles of writing that are more literary than writing styles from the physical sciences. The writing of this ethnography strives to be narrative and observational. And although Geertz (1973) considers ethnographic writing to be "second-order interpretations," reserving "first-order interpretations" for the "native," it is my hope that this ethnographic writing will be closer to a first-order interpretation due to my inclusion in the community—not a member of this case study that has been explicitly defined by geography but the more inclusive community of people who play bluegrass and old-time music.

Fieldwork

During my fieldwork, I used a number of tools available to the present-day researcher in addition to the trusty field journal. Fieldwork is entirely necessary for an ethnography, no matter how much digital research one conducts. There is no replacing the experience of being in a

place, to experience reality in common with the people that you are studying. In my fieldwork I conducted unstructured interviews with informants that I had lined up before my arrival and with many more that I had not discovered in my pre-fieldwork research. I was lucky to have David Prat as my host, an easy-going person who is strongly connected in the community and liked by most everyone. My association with him was a positive introduction to members of the community. The fieldwork for this study consisted of ten days which included site visits to important locations, interviews with informants, and attendance at the Barcelona Bluegrass Jam and the Al Ras Bluegrass and Old Time Music Festival. The short nature of the fieldwork is common in case studies yet presents challenges to an ethnography. I made use of a variety of digital communications, both before and after the fieldwork, in an attempt to alleviate the challenges.

A field journal is one thing, but in today's ethnography a computer is essential. At the end of every day I kept my diary in the writing software program Scrivener. These notes, taken while the experiences were fresh, were invaluable to me as I conducted my post fieldwork analysis, allowing me to look back on the day by day record of my experience. In addition to my daily entry, I kept a character sketch of each person in the community that I encountered and a detailed description of each location that was prominent to the community to assist in the writing aspect of my ethnography.

Entry into Scrivener took place at the end of a long day, writing down everything before I nodded off to sleep. And while I didn't take a traditional laptop with me during the day, I did have most of the power of a computer in my pocket at all times. One of the most important tools for my fieldwork was a Motorola g4 international smart phone, connected to the Ya cellular network, which contained software for capturing documentary audio, photos, and videos. It also

provided me with a convenient translation service with Google Translate and a GPS for maps and locations. I am not sure how I could have navigated my way around a major metropolitan city that I was unfamiliar with in a land I had never visited before without it.

I continued with my ethnography long after I returned back home by following up with my informants and continuing with my online ethnography. I followed new bands that popped up, edited documents for Lluís, and analyzed the artifacts that I had brought home.

Any research that makes use of human subjects must take a thoughtful account of ethical considerations. As I said before, these people became friends, but they are also subjects of a study, and I must make sure to abide by the ethics of scholarly research. At the very least the Society for Ethnomusicology's Position Statement on Ethics is a clear place to start⁷. In short, ethics in ethnography requires being open, honest, and not taking without giving back. In many ways, you are not taking if you are giving back—you are sharing. The researcher needs to ensure that they do not just get what they need and then say goodbye. I still send messages over the international texting application WhatsApp with Prat a few times a month, and have worked on several translations for Gómez since I left, including work for the linear notes of his Barcelona Bluegrass Band CD "Set List," and English material for the Barcelona Bluegrass Camp.

But ethics in research is much more than interactions. In reporting, I needed to mitigate researcher bias and objectivity. I became involved with the subjects, aware of their personal triumphs and vulnerabilities, the conflicts and resolutions that arose in the community, and personal habits and traits that might not reflect well. In order to mitigate these concerns, I

⁷ The statement can be found in full at <https://www.ethnomusicology.org/page/EthicsStatement?>

focused my research on aspects that would not detail personal squabbles. The conflicts that arise in any community can lead to a skewed research set. Although complete objectivity is impossible, I attempted to maintain a level of objectivity in my interactions with members of the community, triangulating between different parties in an attempt to discover facts and not opinions, particularly with regard to members of the community. I was lucky to be associated with David Prat, a member of the community who was liked by everyone. This allowed me to triangulate between different camps of people without appearing to be strongly associated with any of them. This was a participant ethnography, so I attempted to experience the aesthetic *communitas* with the members of the case study. As a visitor to the community, I was an outsider, but my ability to play bluegrass and old-time music, along with my associations with Appalachia, gave me instant insider status.

My fieldwork, conducted between November 3 and November 10, 2017, consisted of interviews, events, and site visits. I attended the Barcelona Bluegrass Jam and the Al Ras Music Festival, elements of which occurred at three distinct locations. I made site visits to the workshop of Prat Instruments, the music store Guitarland, the dance and music venue El Barn D'en Greg, and Café Pámpol. I interviewed every bluegrass and old-time player I could find, but focused primarily on five, three that I had identified from my research as important nodes in the community, and two more important nodes that I became aware of during my fieldwork.

I made use of numerous methods to analyze my data once I completed my fieldwork in addition to writing vignettes of the different scenes, events, and characters I encountered. I began by listening to the interviews that I had made during my trip, transcribing notes from the important parts and refreshing my memory of the events and conversations. I took stock of my photos and organized them according to different locations and events. I also looked them over

for signifiers. I examined the physical artifacts I had collected during my trip such as the magazine *D'Country* that I purchased at El Barn D'en Greg and the instructional book on the five-string banjo published by Lluís Gómez and Toni Giménez. The close reading of these two texts informed my understanding of the knowledge of Appalachia that community members share. Ethnography means to write culture, and it is by writing out my experiences, capturing the context of the moment, that I analyzed the data that I had gathered.

Through these methodologies, I constructed a narrative description of the community in Barcelona. *Communitas* refers to a collective feeling that cannot be described by words, so I could not get a good feel for the community that I had set about to study without experiencing them in commune. By using an ethnographic approach I was able to provide this case study with experiential data that informed my conclusion that there does exist a bluegrass and old-time community in Barcelona of aesthetic *communitas* and to observe the non-musical signifiers that were in use.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The history of Catalonia, and its struggle for independence, stretches over a thousand years. It is beyond the scope of this paper to go into a full-scale retelling of the history of Catalonia, but a brief overview will be helpful to the reader before going into the recent events leading up to my fieldwork. The region of Catalonia has historically alternated between an independent, self-governing nation and a subject nation, with varying levels of autonomy. Catalonia and the Kingdom of Aragon were united in 1137 by monarchical marriage, and eventually it became a part of the Spanish empire with the marriage of monarch Ferdinand II of Aragon and Isabella I of Castile. In the late nineteenth century, Catalonia experienced significant industrial expansion which led to strong nationalistic feelings. The Catalonian provinces of Spain formed a commonwealth in 1914, and that resulted in a strong autonomous government in the Second Spanish Republic of 1931. Unfortunately, this short-lived democracy ended when the Spanish Civil War resulted in the establishment of the Franco dictatorship in 1939. Under the Franco regime, the Catalan language was suppressed and regional autonomy revoked. After Franco's death in 1975, Spain transitioned to democracy and the Catalan language was once again recognized and encouraged. Under the Spanish Constitution of 1978, the regional government of Catalonia secured a certain amount of autonomy, with ability to determine political, environmental, cultural, and educational policies. This autonomy was reinforced by the great economic growth of the region as Barcelona become one of the great industrial and commercial centers of Spain.

After months of long-distance research, I landed in Catalonia at the Barcelona Airport on November 3, 2017. It had been over a month since an October 1st independence referendum in

Catalonia resulted in a chaotic political situation on the ground. I had been watching the developments closely as my departure time grew nearer.

On June 9, the Catalan regional government announced plans to hold a new independence referendum on October 1, with plans to declare a new republic within 48 hours if voters agreed. On September 7, Spain's constitutional court suspended the ballot after a legal challenge by the central Spanish government. Over the course of the month leading up to the October 1 referendum, the central government in Madrid vowed to stop the referendum, and the regional Catalan government vowed to continue with it. The central government, lead by prime minister Rajoy, used economic, political, and military intimidation to stop the vote from proceeding. Yet on October 1, a vote was held. Images of the Spanish military beating peaceful voters of all ages were broadcast throughout the world, and the chaotic scene of what was supposed to be a peaceful expression of the will of the people resulted in an overwhelming vote for independence that could not be verified. The month between the referendum and my arrival for fieldwork was filled with day-by-day developments as Catalan officials vowed to press on with independence and the central government out of Madrid dissolved the Catalan government, placing the region under central rule. By the time I had arrived on November 3, the Catalan leader Charles Puigdemont was in exile under an international arrest warrant issued by the central Spanish government, and the Spanish military had set up a home in cruise ship festooned with Looney Tunes characters docked in the port of Barcelona.

At the time of this writing, the situation is still unresolved. A new government was elected in Catalonia to replace the government dissolved by Madrid. The pro-independence parties won, but not with enough of a majority to make a proclamation of independence. Meanwhile, the Prime Minister in Madrid who led the confrontation with Catalonia, Rajoy, was

himself removed from power after a scandal and the new Prime Minister has taken a conciliatory attitude to Catalonia. Although I was worried about the situation on the ground in the days leading up to my fieldwork, the reality is that everything was fine. The people of Catalonia were not looking for a bloody revolution, but rather a way to peacefully determine their own political path forward. That respect for peace and self-determination prevented the situation from exploding.

In this chapter, I give a chronological narrative overview of my fieldwork, followed by a more detailed analysis of specific people, places, and events outlined in the narrative. In any aesthetic *communitas*, the elements that distinguish it, and those that make it successful, are these human focused experiences: the people, places, and events that make up the community.

Fieldwork Narrative

On Friday, November 3, 2017, I left Johnson City with my wife Kehren Barbour. We drove to Charlotte, NC for a plane flight to Barcelona airport. We landed in Barcelona on November 4. David Prat, an old-time musician and banjo-maker, met us at the airport and drove us to his home in Rubí, a mid-sized city off an old roman road outside of Barcelona. He and his partner Lena ran a café called Café Pámpol (since closed), open from 8 am to 8 pm weekdays. They lived upstairs above the café and David built banjos in the evening in a shed at the back of the courtyard. We played music together the very same day we landed. That Saturday night, November 4, I made my first visit to El Barn D'en Greg, a music and dance venue located in Rubí. We arrived early, and the venue owner, Greg Ryan, gave me a tour of this simulacra of a barn built inside an industrial warehouse space. After we had ordered cheeseburgers and fries, gourmet quality, dancers started coming in to grab dinner before line dancing. Soon, the room was a-flurry in Cowboys and Cowgirls, flannel shirts and Cowboy boots. The table next to us

was full of dancers between the ages of 40 and 60, drinking cans of Pabst Blue Ribbon. Prat and Uria's children began to tire, and we headed back to Café Pámpol for a much needed night of sleep after traveling just as the line dancing began.

The morning of Sunday, November 5, I met with Lluís Gómez, a musician who plays bluegrass banjo professionally and is the principal organizer of the Al Ras Bluegrass and Old Time Festival, at Prat's home. Gómez and Prat were the two musicians I had been able to establish rapport with in my initial, online research. I conducted interviews with Gómez over coffee in mixed Spanish and English. The face-to-face communication humanized the person I had only known online, and filled in missing aspects of his biography that I did not know to ask in our online communication.

Our hosts were visiting family that evening, so my wife and I headed into Barcelona on the metro line from Rubí to get a general feel for the people in the city in this time of political crisis. We opened ourselves to serendipity, followed our instincts and interests, and stepped off at the penultimate stop on our line, the neighborhood of Gràcia. The walls were freshly plastered with posters demanding freedom for the political prisoners who had been detained by the Spanish government. The national flag of Catalonia hung from almost every window, a symbol of defiance to the Spanish government. On one street corner, we witnessed a confrontation between a twenty-something woman who was tearing down freshly-hung posters demanding freedom for political prisoners and a woman in her late sixties with her grandson who demanded she stop.

The unusual architecture of Fundacio Tapies drew us down Carrer d'Arago, and inside was an exhibit presenting the work of the photojournalist Susan Meiselas. Clearly chosen to promote ideas of revolution, the exhibit features Meiselas' daring photojournalistic work

documenting revolutions in Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Kurdistan. The curation of this art show is as much a demonstration of political leanings as any choice of flag could be. Afterwards, we attended a play at Theatre Goya⁸ entitled *Incendios*. Like the exhibit at Fundacio Tapies, the Catalan flag, and the freshly painted graffiti demanding “llibertad por la prensa politica”, *Incendios* plays with imagery of revolution. Written by the playwright Wajdi Mouawad, this play based partly on the life of Lebanese communist militant Soha Bechara was presented in Spanish to a crowd of well to do residents of Barcelona.

On Monday November 6, on Prat’s advice, I rode the metro again into Gràcia to interview Richard da Silva, a musician who plays the mandolin. I was aware of da Silva from my online research—he was a member of many of the same Facebook groups that I was—but I had not connected with him. His music shop, Guitarland, was a short walk from the metro line. Guitarland sells Martin Guitars, fiddles, and banjos along with the standard fare. Da Silva repairs instruments in the back half of the store. On this day, da Silva was in the back of the shop at his desk, watching YouTube videos with his guests from West Virginia. Jamie Lynn and Trae Buckner make up the husband-wife team of the Hillbilly Gypsies. Da Silva was the first to bring them to Barcelona many years ago. He discovered them a decade ago on a social network that predated Facebook, Myspace, and convinced them to tag a show in Barcelona on to their European tour. In Catalonia, the Buckners incorporate da Silva and his band, The Damned Hellbillies, into their performances. I discussed the origins of bluegrass and old-time music with da Silva while my wife reminisced about a Dairy Queen she knew in common with the Buckners, being all from Morgantown, West Virginia. Like most people in America, da Silva

⁸ Under the artistic direction of Josep Maria Pou, Theatre Goya focuses on contemporary works and those of the great 20th century playwrights.

associated bluegrass and old-time music with Appalachian mountain music and hillbillies. He distinguished between bluegrass being a product of Bill Monroe and old-time as being a more traditional form of music from the Appalachian mountains. Musicians like the Buckers represent a connection with the source of the music for da Silva, and he enjoys being able to make music with them. In many ways, they reinforce stereotypes of Appalachians to the community in Catalonia. Da Silva had a store to run, so I accompanied the Buckners on a trip around their favorite sites of Barcelona. I got to know the couple, along with their associations and opinions of the local community, over a glass of wine at a tapas restaurant in the gothic quarter. When we arrived back at Guitarland, a second member of The Damned Hellbillies was playing music with da Silva—Ricky Araiza.

Ricky Araiza is a multi-instrumentalist and retired studio musician from San Diego, California, who was a mentor to many of the banjo players in Catalonia during the early years. Before Lluís Gómez traveled to France to study with Marie Redon, he worked with Araiza. A friendly expat, Araiza was happy to step across the street to a quiet bar for an interview. He gave me information about the community and his opinions about bluegrass and old-time music. In addition to some more mainstream Americana stars like Gram Parsons and Emmy Lou Harris, Araiza told stories of hanging out with the bluegrass group The Dillards. Araiza agreed with the popular idea that bluegrass and old-time is hillbilly, mountain music. For many years, Araiza was *the* person to go to if you wanted to learn how to play banjo in Barcelona. He mostly played Dixieland jazz during the early years, but the amount of time he spends playing bluegrass and old-time has grown with the community.

On Wednesday November 8, Lluís Gómez had gotten my wife and I comp tickets to see the matinee showing of Eugene O'Neill's *Desire Under the Elms* (*Desig Sota els Oms*). The

play, translated to Catalan and produced by the Theatre Nacional de Catalunya, features Gómez playing a resonator banjo made by Prat: when the string band trio plays at the party to honor the birth of a child in Act 3, they play “Old Joe Clark” and “Devil’s Dream.”⁹ Gómez had hoped to play an old-time style banjo more authentic to the 1850 setting, but the director wasn’t concerned with that level of authenticity and preferred the sound of the resonator banjo (L. Gómez, personal conversation, November 6, 2017). In any event, the contract with the National Theatre was a possible professional stepping stone and a good paycheck, and required Gómez to be onstage with the Theatre Wednesday through Saturday nights. I was scheduled to meet with Gómez afterwards to accompany him to a radio interview where he would discuss bluegrass and old-time music in Catalonia and promote the Al Ras Festival. The political turmoil of the region changed our plans, though: all public employees went on strike, the roads were blocked, and almost one million Catalonians marched in Barcelona demanding freedom for their political leaders. The Theatre Nacional Catalunya was on strike, so the play was cancelled, and the radio show was also cancelled. We would not have been able to make it anyway, because all forms of public transit were shut down.

Things had returned to normal by the evening, and my traveling partner and I were able to match up with Gómez to welcome Michael Miles to town. Miles is a banjo player from Chicago who would be giving a workshop on frailing banjo Wednesday night and performing Friday and Saturday night as part of the Al Ras Festival. We waited for Gómez to show up outside the Pension Alberdi, an affordable hotel in Gràcia that Gómez recommends, around the corner from Guitarland. Together with Gómez, we waited for Joan Manel to arrive with Michael

⁹ <http://actionbanjo.fr/tag/desire-under-the-elms/>

Miles. Joan Manel is one of the community members who has volunteered to pick up some of the work organizing the Al Ras festival this year due to Gómez' conflicts with theatre obligations. I saw Joan Manel many times during my fieldwork, but never had the opportunity to interview him. He is a multi-instrumentalist, although his preferred instrument is the mandolin. For several months his Facebook profile pic read "I didn't choose Mandolin, it chose me!". After checking Miles into Pension Alberdi, Gómez took everyone out to dinner at a middle-eastern restaurant down the street. Afterwards, Kehren and I headed back to Rubí on the metro line to Café Pámpol.

The Al Ras Festival officially started on the evening of Thursday, November 9 at a bar in Gràcia called La Sonora. During the day, I travelled into Barcelona to meet Ned Sommerville, a banjo player from Rutherfordton, North Carolina. Prat had introduced me to him online that morning. Sommerville was working on a philosophy Ph.D. in Barcelona. It was during his time overseas that he began to identify with the banjo, using it as a way to stay connected to back home. Sommerville was well aware of the associations of bluegrass and old-time music with Appalachia, and had a unique perspective on the community. Although from Appalachia, Sommerville was a neophyte in bluegrass and old-time community of Catalonia, where he regularly participated in jams and instructional opportunities like the Barcelona Bluegrass Camp. Back in the US, his experiences as a musician were centered mostly around the folk song tradition. This folk song tradition has a special place today in Catalan identity. During the last years of the Franco regime, a group of musicians known as the "Grupo de Folk" translated songs from the folk movements of the sixties into Catalan, and these songs were subsequently used to teach the language to children after restrictions on Catalan were lifted. Catalonians of all ages know a version of "Red River Valley," "Oh My Darling Clementine," "On Top of Old

Smokey,” and “Oh Suzannah” from the works of Xesco Boix and Jordi Pujol, whose *Chansons Catalanes De Folk* was published in 1970.

After interviewing Sommerville, we made our way to the small bar and music venue called La Sonora de Gràcia for the clawhammer banjo workshop presented by Michael Miles. In Gómez’ absence, the workshop was run by Joan Manel and Jorge Rodriguez, a guitar player and singer. Manel and Rodriguez stepped in to fill many of the roles that Gómez would previously handle as the principle organizer of Al Ras. I place both Joan Manel and Jorge Rodriguez in the Amateur tier of the community, but this is not in any way to diminish their musical ability or commitment to the aesthetic *communitas*. While a large part of their social life might be tied up in their musical identity, they are not as tied economically to the success of the community as the members of the Professional tier. Both took the clawhammer workshop. Miles taught, in English, clawhammer versions of “Cripple Creek” and the Bob Dylan song “You Ain’t Going Nowhere” to a group of five musicians. He followed the workshop with a concert during which he performed, in a folk style, “50 Ways To Leave Your Lover” by Paul Simon, “Take Five” by Dave Brubeck, and a piece from an original banjo suite. Miles was director of the Chicago Folk School for many years, and his version of bluegrass and old-time, while not exactly traditional, is perhaps well-suited for Catalonians brought up on translations of songs from the American folk movement of the 1960s.

During Miles performance, I had the opportunity to meet with and interview one of the oldest members of the Al Ras community. Xavier Cardus, a banjo player, was another volunteer community member who had stepped up to ensure the festival went smoothly in Gómez’ absence. Cardus told me that he first fell in love with bluegrass and old-time music when he heard the McLain Family band play in Barcelona in May 1977 at the American College in

Barcelona¹⁰. Ledgin gives credit to the McLain Family Band as one of the principle exporters of bluegrass music (2006, p. 92) in her chapter on the international language of bluegrass. As Cardus explained to me, family and work obligations had kept him from dedicating sufficient time to the banjo, but now that he was older and retired he was progressing along, participating in local jams and giving time to Al Ras by helping to organize the annual festival and the bluegrass camp. According to Cardus, he had one of the first banjo's in Barcelona. He was aware of the idea that bluegrass and old-time music was from Appalachia, no doubt due to his original exposure to the music coming from the McLain Family Band. In a bulletin published in May 1977 by the American College of Barcelona, the organization which presented the McLain Family band, they are presented as "bluegrass and American folk typical of Kentucky, Tennessee, and other parts of United States" (American College of Barcelona, 1977).

At the end of the night Lluís Gómez showed up with Jake Schepps, a banjo player from Colorado who was scheduled to play at the Al Ras Festival.

The Al Ras Festival was in full swing by Friday night, November 10. The featured artists from out of town, Michael Miles and Jake Schepps, performed their sets for a crowd of about 150 people at La Sedata, a cultural center in Barcelona that also hosts the annual Barcelona Bluegrass Camp. The show was open to the public, and had both musicians and admirers of bluegrass and old-time music in the audience. Miles performed first, a set of the two songs he had performed the night before, another Paul Simon song, Bach, Robert Johnson, and original folk songs and classical compositions. He was followed by Jake Schepps, a banjo player raised

¹⁰ Announcement of the concert and a cover photo of The McClain Family Band can be found in the newsletter for the American College in Barcelona: 7 días = 7 days : boletín del Instituto de Estudios Norteamericanos, Barcelona. Núm. 608, del 23 de mayo al 5 de junio de 1977

in the bluegrass festival tradition who uses the banjo to explore unexpected territory. He performed with a guitar player and fiddler that he had brought with him, and Maribel Rivera, who plays bass in the Barcelona Bluegrass Band. Schepps and his band performed a bluegrass-sounding interpretation of Satie's "Gnosseine no. 3" and a original score, written by Schepps, to the Buster Keaton silent film *The Scarecrow*. He followed up the performance with an encore of "Big Scioty", which was the only traditional number presented that night.

The big night of the Al Ras Festival was the evening of Saturday, November 11. During the day our hosts took my wife and I to go see a unique aspect of Catalan culture, castells. A castell is a human pyramid, and two teams had been chosen to compete this Saturday to see who can build the tallest pyramid. It is family affair and a centuries old tradition. The construction of the pyramids in the town square was accompanied by a traditional Catalan pipe instrument with a sound quite similar to a bagpipe. The Al Ras Festival was in an old market converted to cultural center in a small town outside of Barcelona called Mollet, El Mercat Vell de Mollet del Vallès, with a crowd of roughly 300 people.

Lluís Gómez opened the Festival with a group that performed original composition off of his latest CD entitled *Dotze Contes* before he had to run off to the theatre. He was followed by Toni Giménez, a banjo player who has performed at every Al Ras Festival since the beginning. Giménez has played banjo in Catalonia since the 1973, and is strongly influenced by the folk music movement of the "Grupo De Folk". He co-authored the only banjo instructional book written in Catalan with Lluís Gómez, published in 2010. He teaches frailing banjo in the area and has performed professional music for children and families since 1977. In between acts, musicians gathered together and jammed. Howdy, a band from the Basque region and frequent performers at Al Ras, took the stage next. The group had an accordion player that contributed to

their unique sound as they performed several numbers from the bluegrass canon. Howdy was followed by Michael Miles and then Jake Schepps, the two visiting artists from the United States, who each performed the same set as the night before. The final act of the night was a local Barcelona group who had played Al Ras several times before, Th' Booty Hunters. Th' Booty Hunters feature an old-time banjo, electric violin, guitars, upright bass, and drums in a performance that is more punk than old-time. It is an in your face version of Americana that seems to have grown out of the teddy boy, greaser, and biker subculture. My ride left before the final song of Th' Booty Hunters' set, but afterwards Gómez reappeared and led a group of about 20 festival performers and organizers in a group rendition of "Old Joe Clark". The drummer for Th' Booty Hunters clogged rhythm with two upright basses while a collection of guitars, fiddles, mandolins, dobros, and banjos took turns with the melody.

The final night of my fieldwork, Sunday November 12, I attended the Barcelona Bluegrass Jam with Greg Ryan, the owner of El Barn D'en Greg. Ryan is a multi-instrumentalist, but he brought his violin with him to the jam. The Barcelona Bluegrass Jam has occurred every two weeks for over ten years. It has only been at its new home at La Sonora De Gràcia for a few months after the last location, a bar called Astrolabi that featured many different types of music, closed its doors. The bartender was the same as on Thursday night when I was there for the clawhammer banjo workshop, this time wearing an Al Ras Festival commemorative tee-shirt. There were 8 people in a circle, and a 9th player on percussion outside the circle. Joan Manel and Jorge Rodriguez were there along with several other musicians, some I had seen before and others I had not.

The jam was already happening when I walked in with Ryan. I had brought my guitar and Ryan had his fiddle. Ryan ordered us both a Damm, and immediately joined the circle of

players. It was a joy to participate in that *communitas* that requires no language, to be able to play music with people from a different culture, a different background, on the same plane, working in an unwritten language, an unspoken, but still learned, set of rules, behaviors, and protocols. I was able to communicate with these musicians using the internalized set of rules that I had learned through jams back home. The jam session is laid back, the line between player and observer unclear. According to Kisliuk, “the jam session performance is neither a rehearsal nor a formal performance, and it is because of this fairly open frame that jamming discourse can take place” (1988, p. 153).

Ryan, the resident “expert” as an American, and a singing fiddle player, soon took the lead from Jorge, who had a black three ring binder with songs printed from the internet in plastic sleeves. He led the group in “Old Joe Clark” as soon as we got there. Pepe Fuster, a person I had not connected with but who was at the Al Ras Festival, was on the banjo and he called out “Flint Hill Special,” a fun Scruggs tune that requires some dexterity and a detuning in the middle of the song. Pepe is in a band called YerbAzul along with Jorge Rodriguez that was formed in early 2018. At one point in time, a younger woman from the crowd stood up to ask if we could play “something by Hank Williams” and I was able to lead the group in “Hey Good Lookin’”- a song I knew the assembled group of musicians would be familiar with because of my online research.

I was able to conduct a more informed interview with Ryan on the way back to Rubí, incorporating the knowledge of the people and places of the community that I had learned over the course of the week. He dropped me off late at Café Pámpol, where everyone was sleeping to get ready for the next work week.

The next morning, Monday November 13, my wife and I carted our luggage to the metro, rode the line into Barcelona, and began the long journey home to Johnson City, Tennessee.

People

The principal reason behind the normative community structure of the bluegrass and old-time community in Barcelona is to create more opportunities for musicians to play bluegrass and old-time music together. This section highlights many of the musicians from the bluegrass and old-time community in Barcelona that I interviewed. For each character, I give a brief biography, discuss their familiarity with the origins of bluegrass and old-time and their relationship to Appalachia, place them in either the Professional or Amateur tier, and discuss their role and importance to the structural aspect of the community.

David Prat

Prat is a lifetime lover of American music. He grew up listening to his father play country music records. Prat learned how to play banjo from a Pete Seeger banjo instructional book. As Bidgood and others have demonstrated elsewhere, Seeger had a far-reaching influence on banjo in Europe, being one of the few people who toured with the banjo, and had records available to buy locally. Prat began learning bluegrass banjo, but as his tastes evolved he moved into old-time banjo playing. Today, he plays mostly old-time banjo, finding bluegrass “too competitive.” He has played with a variety of bands, but is not currently affiliated with a group of performing musicians. In the old-time style, Prat is more interesting in *playing* the music, in *communitas* with others, than in *performing* it. His evolution from bluegrass to old-time mirrors some of the observations that Mitsui makes in “The Reception of the Music of American Southern Whites in Japan” (1993) that appreciation for the music became more sophisticated over time. When bluegrass was first being played in Japan, most Japanese had no concept of

Appalachia as a rhetorical construct nor geographical location. “A case could be made that it was not until the early 1970’s that the general Japanese enthusiasts of the music became somewhat, if not sufficiently, conscious of the fact that it came from a cultural area called the South” (1993, p. 279). It took decades for the community members to have a more sophisticated palette and knowledge of the origins of the music in the post-world war two period. For Prat and the rest of the community in Catalonia, that path was shortened considerably with the aid of the internet. In my interviews in Catalonia I found there was in fact a further step back before bluegrass. Prat is an essential element of the aesthetic communitas centered around bluegrass and old-time music in Catalonia. Although an amateur, a lover of the music, I place him in the Professional tier of community members. What started as a love of the music, a curiosity to learn more about the origins and the intricacies of its techniques, grew into a significant part of Prat’s identity and economic life. His economic ties to the ongoing success of the community is what places him in the Professional tier. As a luthier of instruments that are traditionally used in bluegrass and old-time music, Prat both cultivates and harvests from the success of the community. It is important to note, for Prat and for others in the Professional tier, that the symbiotic ties that bind him to the community developed gradually and originated in a love for the music. Prat did not go into banjo making as a way to make money, but as a way to satisfy his own curiosity about the instrument and the aesthetic, to learn more about how it is made and what makes it sound the way it does. The economic relationship that evolved between Prat and the community developed over time. Prat has a place in the economy of the aesthetic communitas because he has played a large role in creating that community. Building commissioned instruments provides an economic niche for Prat, but it also fills an essential niche

in the aesthetic *communitas*. The success of an aesthetic *communitas* relies on successful symbiotic relationships such as these.

Music, specifically bluegrass and old-time music, is a defining factor in Prat's life—as it is with many musicians. His social life most often involves music related activities, and most of his friends are people with whom he plays music with. His family life is centered around music, in fact he met his partner and the mother of their two children at an Irish jam. Together they have made apprenticeship pilgrimages to Appalachia. They have been to the venerated Appalachian String Band Music Festival, commonly referred to simply as “Clifftop,” and the old-time jam at Jack in The Woods in Asheville. It only makes sense that a part of his economic life would be tied to the community. In addition to building instruments for the community, Prat and his partner Lena Uria run a café which hosts an old-time jam twice a month and occasionally serves as a venue for bluegrass and old-time acts passing through Catalonia. Prat is often relied upon to perform at the Al Ras Festival and has been an instructor in old-time Banjo at the Barcelona Bluegrass Camp.

Lluís Gómez

Lluís Gómez got his start on the banjo about 25 years ago after listening to the *Banjo Paris Session* record. This was an influential record in Europe, and featured the renowned French banjo player Jean Marie Redon. One can only learn so much from a record, and Gómez had to travel at first to find people to teach him. He was able to work with Sedo Garcia, a first-generation banjo player in Spain, and Ricky Araiza, who was something of a mentor to Gómez in his earlier years. He made his first apprenticeship journey to France to take lessons from Jean Marie Redon, and soon traveled to the United States to study under and meet some of his banjo

heroes like Bill Keith, Tony Trishka, and Pete Wernick¹¹. His band, The Barcelona Bluegrass Band, even traveled to IBMA in 2010. Since bluegrass is not yet a very popular genre in Catalonia, Lluís Gómez sees himself as a banjo player first, a bluegrass picker second. He plays or has played banjo in combos and groups focused on jazz, manouche, blues, and other musical styles. Lluís' dedication and energy has made him a central driver of the community. In many ways he has given his life to the banjo and to the styles that grew out of Appalachia. He makes at least some if not all of his livelihood from it—I am not sure since I never asked him financial questions. Gómez is clearly in the Professional tier of the community. His economic well-being is tied to the community, although he surely gives more than he gets. A Professional tier in an aesthetic communitas is simply a matter of economics: if you spend all your time playing music, you don't have time to work and pay your bills- so if you are going to survive you have to figure out a way to combine work with your passion. Gómez serves as an interface for the community and the rest of the bluegrass world. He has written articles for Bluegrass Today, Action Banjo, and The Banjo Newsletter about Camps and Festivals in Catalonia, and travels throughout Europe to perform and teach. Whether Lluís is the “king of the banjo in Spain” or not, to many he is the face of it. He is an active promoter of bluegrass and old-time music in Barcelona and the aesthetic communitas that has grown up around it.

Richard da Silva

Richard da Silva is a mandolin player and music store owner. His band, The Damned Hellbillies, has performed at numerous Al Ras Festivals, and he has a group of musicians with which he performs regularly in various line-ups with music that is not just bluegrass, but also

¹¹ https://banjonews.com/2015-03/Lluis_Gomez_interview_by_tony_trischka.html

country and rock and roll. He has been in love with bluegrass, which his father called “hillbilly music,” since he first heard the sound of the banjo on records that his father’s family in the states had sent overseas. Da Silva grew up at the tail-end of the Franco dictatorship. The Franco government repressed all forms of outside culture, and Catalan culture, until Franco’s death in 1975. The resulting infusion of cultural influences after 1975 “arrived here like a chaotic tsunami,” according to da Silva (R. da Silva, personal communication, July 19, 2018). One of the many styles and influences to arrive was the Rockabilly culture, influenced by the British Teddy Boy style. You can see this influence today in the style of da Silva and his friends, who grew up seeing the Rockabilly style on the streets.

Like Prat, music is a large part of da Silva’s identity. It plays a determining factor in his social life and his business life. While Prat has come to focus on old-time music, da Silva loves bluegrass. He has an awareness of its origins in Appalachia, and spoke to me about the need for younger members of the community to learn more about the history of the genre. He is a primary and essential part of the aesthetic communitas in Catalonia. I place him in the Professional tier not only because of his band The Damned Hellbillies, but because of the symbiotic economic relationship that he has developed with the community and Guitarland.

Da Silva waxed philosophically in English about the differences in bluegrass and old-time as he allowed me to take photos of his store and workshop. Da Silva dressed like a biker, like a rockabilly, a chain on his wallet, a “redneck” patch on his jean jacket, a baseball cap, jeans, and a goatee. He had a Confederate flag at the back of the store, and freely uses symbols and signs from Appalachia, the American South, or even Ulster. An interesting exchange took place on Facebook when a video of da Silva and The Damned Hillbillies appeared playing in front of the backdrop of the Confederate flag at a biker rally performing “Down in the Hills of

Tennessee.”¹² Several people, unknown to da Silva, attacked him for playing in front of that symbol, which is laden with meaning in the United States. da Silva did not come to the defense of the flag, or shy away from its use, but rather stated that he and the band had nothing to do with the flag being there, as it was the organizers of the event who had placed the flag, and proceeded to rail against “political correctness,” which he views as “a tendency towards the forced uniformity of a stereotype of American way of life designed for political power” (R. da Silva, personal communication, July 19, 2018).

Greg Ryan

Greg Ryan is an American expat from Indiana, outside of Muncie. He was playing country music in Barcelona and other parts of Europe for a few years before deciding to settle down in Rubí because of his kids. His wife is Catalanian and a dance instructor. They started a bar/dance hall/performance venue that is known as El Barn D’en Greg.

Ryan was raised in the suburbs of middle America. He is competent on a number of instruments in addition to singing. He has three kids with his Catalan wife. I met his oldest son, Pol Ryan tending bar. He spoke English, but not quite like a native speaker. Pol is the likely product of a dancer from Catalonia and a country musician, and is member of the outstanding country line dance team Lizard’s Angels¹³.

¹² The following link has the mentioned video
<https://www.facebook.com/events/187750718486540/permalink/233608730567405/>

¹³ This video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=067u1FLzW8g>, posted to the YouTube channel of mycountrycat from November 2015 is one of the tightest line dance vids I have seen. It deservedly has almost three million views. It was filmed on location at El Barn D’en Greg, danced to a recording of Blake Shelton singing “Footloose.” Ryan’s son is the tall, good looking young man in the center of it all. This video, not quite as popular, also features Lizard’s Angels, showing the distinctive hand on the belt that is indicative of Catalan style of country line dancing:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rUrFQYqPYE0>

Although Greg is originally from the US, his interest in square dances and old-time music happened in later years. Since living in Catalonia, he has made apprenticeship pilgrimages back home. It is also a combination family and business trip, as they get props and stage material for the set that is El Barn D'en Greg when they go to the US. On one trip, Ryan learned to call for square dances in Black Mountain, NC. He has been to contra dances at Warren Wilson in Swannanoa, NC and at the Grey Eagle in Asheville, NC¹⁴.

The square dance community is not as big nor as popular as that of the line dancing, but he does have them occasionally¹⁵, with a regular Thanksgiving Day meal followed by a square dance for several years running¹⁶. Ryan is in the Professional tier in the line dance community, but I would place him in the Amateur tier in the bluegrass and old-time community. He has an interest in seeing the community continue to grow and succeed, but is not exactly tied to his economic success. Ryan is more directly tied in with the country line dance community.

Hillbilly Gypsies

Jamie Lynn Buckner and Trae Buckner are a musical couple from West Virginia who perform as the Hillbilly Gypsies. Back home they have a full band, but on tour they perform as a

¹⁴ Greg posted footage from his apprenticeship pilgrimage under the YouTube username barndance. It is of a contradance on August 27, 2007 at the Grey Eagle in Asheville, NC <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NQZiooW5jxg> at minute 4:47 you can hear Ryan saying to a stranger, "I've got to show them back in Spain what real dances are like"

¹⁵ Unfortunately, this short fifty second video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZsL4cp3Uc9s> uploaded by the YouTube user barndance (an older YouTube username of Ryan) does not show us the musicians, but you can hear the music and Greg calling a full dance floor. From an April 11th, 2010 square dance a El Barn, after "a typical Catalonian feast of grilled onions (calçots) and the local sausages (botifarres)." In this video of a program made by the local network TV channel, you can see Greg playing and calling a square dance by himself at 2:35 and 6:35 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E-S5CR70Vx4>

¹⁶ Prat, on banjo, accompanies Ryan on voice and fiddle, along with an unidentified dobro and guitar player, in this Thanksgiving 2017 square dance, uploaded by the El Barn D'en Greg YouTube channel <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DQhf5b93KuU> .

duo or with local musicians. Having played in Barcelona a number of times before, including two times at the Al Ras Festival, they had an ongoing relationship with da Silva. When they visit Catalonia, they often stay with da Silva at his home. Da Silva played in and helped organize the backup band for the Buckners for the shows that they were playing in Catalonia. The Hillbilly Gypsies were not at Al Ras this year, but da Silva's band, the Damned Hellbillies, backed up the Hillbilly Gypsies for a few shows in the area. For the locals, it is not just a gig with economic compensation, but a pleasure to play music and experience *communitas* with these players born into the aesthetic. The Hillbilly Gypsies, while not Catalanian, are still Professional members, although only occasionally, of the aesthetic *communitas* in question. Over the course of ten years, the Hillbilly Gypsies have created a lasting impression on the community. The Hillbilly Gypsies have built up a network of people and places in Catalonia that they can rely upon when booking a European tour. It is a mutually beneficial relationship. Catalonia provides a leg of their European tour, and the Hillbilly Gypsies provide the community with exposure to talent from Appalachia. When an aesthetic *communitas* is just getting started, it relies on dedicated community members to put on special events and guarantee payment in order to lure professionals in the aesthetic to visit a nascent community. If the community grows successfully, there is less reliance on these organizations, and locals can experience the aesthetic without having to put forth a strong combined local effort. This type of situation, where the Hillbilly Gypsies were coming into town to perform at a car show and some other dates that were not associated with the Al Ras Festival, is actually the result of years of effort by the local community to create a reality where the Hillbilly Gypsies could perform in Catalonia without needing subsidy from the community

The Hillbilly Gypsies are strong signifiers of Appalachia for the community in question. They signify authentic Appalachia to bluegrass and old-time musicians in Catalonia. Cybergrass.com, the Bluegrass Music News Network, describes them as “a West Virginia native string band” who “play a mix of traditional bluegrass and catchy old fiddle tunes” (BMNN, 2016). They are authentic, generational to Appalachia, and international representatives of Appalachia on stage to the world. Jamie Lynn was dressed in an international modern style, but Trae was wearing overalls¹⁷, the traditional working dress of Appalachia, when we walked together through the Gothic quarter of Barcelona that night.

Places

The people in an aesthetic communitas come together to create a structure that allows them to experience spontaneous communitas on a regular basis. This section outlines several locations and businesses that are central to the community structure that creates the aesthetic communitas.

Café Pámpol

Café Pámpol is located in the town of Rubí, located on a Barcelona metro line, situated off of an old Roman road. As you walk into this café, you are likely to hear some version of Americana music being played. Often bluegrass and old time. Prat is behind the coffee bar, probably knows your order and is ready to serve it. The daily papers, in Spanish and Catalan, are on the counter. There is a stencil for “Sí” on the wall, a graffiti that has been all over Barcelona

¹⁷ ““Hillbilly Sold Here””: Appalachian Folk Culture and Parkway Tourism”, which does a good job of exploring some of the tropes that have become signifiers of Appalachia, Jean Haskell Speer presents several stereotypical depictions of the Appalachian clad in overalls.

that indicates Café Pámpol's support for independence in the recent referendum. The playlist is of exquisite taste, and the audible landscape is not too different than a café in Appalachia. There is a piano, an upright bass tucked into a corner, and fiddles, mandolins, banjos, and dulcimers on display on the wall, stands, and shelves. On the bookshelf, there are books about natural and organic living, novels in Spanish and Catalan mixed with books in English about banjo building techniques, bluegrass songbooks, a collection of Foxfire books, and other classics associated with Appalachian culture and music. There are painting of pastoral mountain scenes on the wall. There are no identifying features about the paintings that would explicitly place them in Appalachia, but they evoke a mountain scene that could very well be Appalachia.

The café is open from 8 am to 8 pm M-F, and closed on the weekends. One Saturday night, Lena cooked up a Paella for everyone and we talked about their experiences in Appalachia, complete with snake handling at a church in Kentucky, while drinking craft beers I had brought from Asheville (a place they had visited several times). We played music together after dinner late into the night while the children were sleeping upstairs. Lena on fiddle, Prat on one of his old-time banjos, and myself on guitar. We played classics of old-time music such as "Cripple Creek," "Angeline the Baker," and some more obscure tunes that I would encounter again in my research like "Shove the Pigs Foot Further into the Fire,"¹⁸ along with other American classics like Elvis and Hank Williams. It was a firsthand dive into the pool of local knowledge that makes up the regional repertoire of shared music in the community.

The cafe where Prat and Uria spend their work days is full of signifiers of Appalachia, some explicit and others only tangentially. The clearest, non-musical signifier of Appalachia is

¹⁸ Perhaps it's just fun to say the title, but this tune has real currency in Catalonia

the collection of *Foxfire* books on the bookshelf in the cafe. *Foxfire*, named after a phosphorescent lichen that grows on trees in the Appalachian Mountains of Northeast Georgia, started out as a magazine in 1966 at the Rabun-Gap Nacoochee School in Rabun County, Georgia (about 50 miles from where I grew up in Hall County, Georgia). It started out as an experiment in experiential education, and was envisioned as a way for students to interact with the elders in their Appalachian community, to document the old ways, and to provide the students with writing and editing experience¹⁹. In a paper discussing Mountain to Mountain development in which an indigenous leader from the mountains of Ecuador visits Rabun Gap, Rhoades describes the purpose of *Foxfire* to be one of “encouraging local young people to record for prosperity the wisdom of the elders of the community” (2000, p. 7). Kant-Byers claims *Foxfire* “emphasized simple lifestyles and strong kin connections as regional cultural traits” (2016, p. 163). The simple lifestyle coincides with ideals held by Prat and Uria in their business. They use simple, organic ingredients and try to create a friendly, local environment. Compilations from the *Foxfire* magazine were published as a series of books starting in the 70’s. Cafe Pámpol has what looks like first editions of volumes 2,4, and 5 and a later edition of volume 3 (the edition that I had growing up in Northeast Georgia), placed on the public shelf without demarcation. According to Kant-Byers, the regional cultural traits depicted in *Foxfire* “became emblematic of perceived Appalachian Values of family and place” (2016, p.163). They strongly represent Appalachia, but they are left for the individual to find them sitting on a shelf.

The second clear signifier of Appalachia present in Cafe Pámpol is the traditional Appalachian Mountain dulcimer placed on a wooden crate hung up over the piano. This is an

¹⁹ For more information on *Foxfire* and its history, please look at J. Oliver’s doctoral dissertation “The story and legacy of the *Foxfire* cultural journalism program.”

overt signifier of Appalachia²⁰. It is prominently placed, and clearly Appalachian²¹. As has been previously discussed, the dulcimer is not just an empty signifier of Appalachia, it is imbued with Appalachian significance from its very construction. Prat and Uria had both taken apprenticeship pilgrimages to Appalachia, and Prat studied how to construct mountain dulcimers in the Berea region of Kentucky- a region renowned for producing not only the most famous dulcimer player in recent history (Jean Ritchie), but also several masters of dulcimer craftsmanship²².

I found a third possible signifier of Appalachia, although perhaps arbitrarily assigned by me, in the paintings of mountain scenes on the wall of the café. There are uncountable locations in the world that could look like the scene depicted in the accompanying images. By themselves, these pictures have no overt signification of Appalachia. I can put meaning into them, Prat and Uria can place signification of Appalachia in them, but does the average customer from Rubí, Catalonia? I think it is possible, in the situation that is Café Pámpol. These paintings are not just pictures in a frame— the web of their significance, the context of their interpretation, continues past the frame and onto the wall, incorporating the entire “set” of the cafe, with the aforementioned Appalachian dulcimer on a wooden crate hung to the wall and the other traditionally old-time instruments around such as banjo, mandolin, and fiddle. In addition to

²⁰ Smith, R. (2010). *Appalachian Dulcimer Traditions*. Lanham : Scarecrow Press.

²¹ For insight into the ties of the dulcimer to Appalachia, the Appalshop movie *Sourwood Mountain Dulcimers* (1976) is available online at <https://www.appalshop.org/media/sourwood-mountain-dulcimers/>

²² Please see *Dulcimer Maker: the craft of Homer Ledford* Alvey, R., & Schureman, J. (2003). *Dulcimer Maker : The Craft of Homer Ledford*. Lexington, Ky. : University Press of Kentucky.

these visual clues, when a customer enters the web of signifiers that demarcate Café Pámpol, they are exposed to the contextual audio as well, which is well-cultivated old-time music playlists either hand-picked by Prat or on Spotify. The images did it for me, they looked like home, like Appalachia, like scenes from the mountains I had just left, but I cannot say for sure if they would be interpreted as such to the average Catalanian.

Prat Instruments

Prat Instruments is located in the courtyard behind Café Pámpol in the town of Rubí. It is a small block structure, about six feet wide and ten feet long, with a workbench, machinery, and materials in a state of use. Prat is a skilled luthier of banjos, ukes, and Appalachian style dulcimers, and he has been building instruments since the late 1990s. At this moment I would like to talk about the methods of construction that Prat employs, and the sourcing of material for these three types of instruments.

Prat works late in the evening, after the Café has closed and the kids are in bed and on the weekends. He builds commissions and stock, which is sold online and at various music stores in Europe such as Kieran Moloney Musical Instruments in Galway, Ireland. He has had his banjo's reviewed in the Banjo Newsletter (BNL), most recently a bluegrass banjo reviewed by Lluís Gómez in the January 2018²³ edition and an open back banjo reviewed by Seppo Sillanpää in the February 2018²⁴ newsletter.

²³ I assisted Gómez with his English for his review: https://banjonews.com/2018-01/prat_resonator_banjo.html

²⁴ In this review, Seppo Sillanpää claims "In Finland alone, I've played more than a dozen different Prat openback banjos because many of my workshop students have acquired those. Round Peak fretless models, large mountain banjos, ordinary looking clawhammer banjos with rare wood combinations etc." https://banjonews.com/2018-02/prat_openback_banjo.html

When I visited the workshop, Prat had a dulcimer on the bench that he was finishing up. I found an interesting point about this dulcimer is the headstock²⁵. Similar in so many other ways to the traditional Appalachian Mountain dulcimer. Prat is aware of the traditions employed in Appalachia for dulcimer making, attended a workshop on constructing dulcimers in Kentucky during an apprenticeship pilgrimage, but in an environment freed from the confines of a tradition, he is able to approach engineering problems with a different method.

What looked in every other manner as an Appalachian dulcimer had a guitar-type headstock. Prat explained to me the reason for this innovation in economic terms. As dulcimers are not as popular in Catalonia, he does not get as much for them as he does for his banjos, even though they can cost much more in labor to construct. One of the most time intensive aspects of the dulcimer is the unique headstock that is like a fiddle, so Prat took the more labor efficient construction method used for banjos and guitars and applied it to the dulcimer.

Inside the workshop, Prat has a collection of gourds sourced from the dry central region of Spain, banjo heads sourced from Tennessee, hardware from both the Czech Republic and Balsam Banjoworks in Fairview, North Carolina. Some of the hardware he constructs himself.

In the world of small-time banjo luthiers, Prat is doing well. His business is growing, he is selling at stores, receiving commissions, and getting good reviews from his fans. In the spring of 2018, after I had done my fieldwork, Prat and Uria sold Café Pámpol, and are in the process of moving to the Isle of Mull in Scotland for another adventure where Prat will be able to focus more on growing his banjo business.

²⁵ Prat's webpage clearly shows the two different models. <http://pratinstruments.com/index.php/dulcimer/dulcimer-n001> is the more classic peghead, and <http://pratinstruments.com/index.php/dulcimer/dulcimer-n002> is the guitar headstock

Prat first started making Appalachian instruments in the late 1990s (D. Prat, personal communication, March 17, 2017). He started with making dulcimers, learning the craft from a book, but later getting some experience in instrument making by working under a guitar-maker in Spain. Prat took an apprenticeship pilgrimage to Kentucky where he took a workshop on constructing dulcimers. He lists Homer Ledford and Jethro Amburgey, two giants in the field of Appalachia Dulcimer construction, as major influences. The apprenticeship pilgrimage is a key aspect of aesthetic communitas. Not necessarily defining, it still remains a strong indicator that there exists a group of people seeking to improve local knowledge of an arcane art. He still constructs dulcimers, but today he is mostly busy with banjos. Prat posts a video demonstration of him playing most every instrument he constructs before sending it off for sale, and from his YouTube channel you can see not only his old-time musical style, but also the wide variety of banjos that he constructs, including electro-acoustic banjos, tack head banjos, bluegrass banjos, mountain banjos, banjoleles, tenor banjoleles, five-string banjos, fretless banjos, gourd banjos, short scale half-fretted banjos, travel banjos, internal resonator banjos, soprano banjos, soprano banjoleles, minstrel banjos, and many more with differentiations on the tone ring, type of wood, and other hardware²⁶. He is a central node in the aesthetic communitas of bluegrass and old-time music in Catalonia, and has dedicated a significant part of his life to sharing the music with others, supplying quality instruments to members of the community, and helping himself and others better themselves in the aesthetic. Prat Instruments regularly donates a banjo to the Al Ras Bluegrass and old-time Musical Association to raise funds for the annual Al Ras Festival.

²⁶ The Prat Instruments website is <http://pratinstruments.com/> and his YouTube channel is username David Prat, <https://www.youtube.com/user/banjopratt/videos>

Guitarland

Located in the heart of the Gràcia district and in business for over fifteen years, Guitarland is self-described as the benchmark for bluegrass in Barcelona- “Somos el referente del bluegrass en Barcelona.”²⁷ The shop has banjos, fiddles, Martin guitars, and mandolins for sale in the front half, and a repair shop, Guitarhospital, that serves as a clubhouse/hangout space in the back half. A poster of Bill Monroe hangs prominently over Richard’s desk in the back half of the shop. Similar to Prat Instruments, Guitarland is a key element in the aesthetic *comunitas* in Catalonia because it is a place where new initiates and seasoned community members can go to get the instruments they will need to perform the aesthetic. These relationships become symbiotic and mutually beneficial, in that as the community grows, and as someone like Richard begins to dedicate more of his inventory to accommodate bluegrass and old-time musicians, they rely on each other to be successful. These loops seem to evolve naturally in an aesthetic *comunitas*. More than just a place to purchase instruments, Guitarland serves as a community gathering spot—much like music stores across the globe. A room in the back of Guitarland has in the past served as a location for banjo instruction, and Lluís Gómez gave lessons out of there for many years. Guitarhospital, the workshop where da Silva repairs instruments, serves as a clubhouse for da Silva and his bandmates, friends, and members of the aesthetic *comunitas*.

Guitarland’s owner, Richard da Silva, freely uses signifiers from the Southern United States and beyond. From personal conversations with him, I know that he is well informed on the origins of bluegrass and old-time music in Appalachia—but does Guitarland display any signifiers of Appalachia? The musical instruments traditional to bluegrass and old-time music

²⁷ As found on the page for Banjo, Mandolin, Dobro, and Fiddle <http://guitarland-bcn.com/37-banjo-mandolina-dobro-fiddle>

such as banjos, mandolins, fiddles, and guitars are one thing, although that is a loose association. An Appalachian Mountain Dulcimer can be strongly linked to Appalachia, but the number of distinct cultural traditions that use some sort of permutation of guitar, fiddle, mandolin, and banjo is numerable. Martin guitars are strongly associated with bluegrass music, and Guitarland proudly displays a vinyl banner for Martin guitars. As George Gruhn states in an interview with the popular bluegrass-centered website *Bluegrass Today*, “Martin dreadnoughts were standard equipment for bluegrass players from the earliest conception of this music” (Thompson, 2016). Aside from the instruments, I had a hard time finding what I could interpret as Appalachian signs in the sea of signifiers that make up the “clubhouse” area of Guitarland. Da Silva was gracious enough to allow me to take photos of his office. A closer study of them back home demonstrated a multitude of signifiers on display, from the Confederate battle flag to the red hand of Ulster, yet the lack of any clear signifiers of Appalachia. It is a postmodern pastiche of symbols.

My attention was drawn to a picture of two men sitting on a porch. For me the porch looked familiar—the faux-brick asphalt siding and the level of apparent decay look like any number of homes in the Appalachian Mountains. But these signifiers are not sufficient enough. Perhaps if the photo included more context, a backdrop of mountains or someone playing the fiddle, we would be able to place it as Appalachian. Without any more context it could be anywhere. One of the men pictured was shirtless man and had a tattoo of the Confederate battle flag fading into the Catalanian flag, in an apparent attempt to link the United States Civil War with the Catalanian struggle for independence. Clearly, the associations that the Confederate battle flag has in the United States, where it is more likely to be associated with violent acts of race-based aggression such as the 2015 Charleston church shooting, are different than the associations it has Catalonia. To a Catalanian, the Confederate battle flag symbolizes the same

thing that an exhibit of Meiselas' photojournalistic work on revolutions—a symbol of anti-authoritarianism, of rebellion, a defiant stone thrown at a powerful oppressor. A full-scale study of this powerful symbol outside of the United States could yield insight into the nature of signs, but from my limited analysis of the situation it would appear that few Catalonians are invoking racism when they display the Confederate battle flag. Da Silva has a photo of Bill Monroe framed on the wall. Bill Monroe could signify Appalachia, and he does to many, but someone's fondness for a major player in the genre does not indicate an association of that player with Appalachia.

La Sonora de Gràcia

La Sonora is a small bar and music venue in the same neighborhood as Guitarland that hosts the monthly Barcelona Bluegrass Jam and is friendly towards the bluegrass and old-time musical community. It is a local place that people can return to, a familiar setting where the *communitas* of bluegrass and old-time communal music-making can take place. Although La Sonora serves many uses, it is a key part of the normative *communitas* of bluegrass and old-time music in Catalonia. An aesthetic *communitas* has certain locations, or hubs, that become a familiar place, known for where the *communitas* is experienced. Not all of them are exclusively dedicated to it. Some only serve as friendly venues that allow a community to use their facilities in a mutually beneficial relationship. I remember in Asheville there was a club called 11 on Grove, which was a three-story dance club complex, with different things going on every night of the week. One night of the week there was a tango dance class followed by a Milonga in the basement. Although 11 on Grove was important to countless other dance communities, it also became known as a place to experience the *communitas* of tango in Asheville.

La Sonora is a youthful bar, it has room for about 10 tables. There is no stage, but the music happens at the end of the room where musicians set up. The aesthetic of the room was rock and roll, Americana but not completely. The venue hosts acoustic based musical acts, and a few different regular jams in addition to the bluegrass Jam.

El Barn D'en Greg

I went to El Barn D'en Greg the night I arrived and the night I left. It is located on a side street in Rubí, a square, industrial warehouse. The rafters nailed to the boxy, stucco facade give a hint of what is inside.

When you walk through the door, you are confronted with the splash of Barn red paint and white trim typical of a barn in America, or at least the cultural notion of a barn, and once through the antechamber you enter the great hall, a simulation not of the inside of a barn, but of the simulation of the inside of a barn. It looks like the main hall at the Renfro Valley Entertainment Center²⁸, The Hatfield & McCoy dinner theatre in Pigeon Forge, The Stompin' Ground in Maggie Valley²⁹, or any numerous staged "barn dance" radio and television shows in the 30's-60's all over the US. The rafters only hinted at on the outside continue on as faux rafters throughout the grand hall. There is a stage where the band performs, but the entire venue is a set, with quilts and hexafos hanging from the wall, and hutches stashed in the corner setting the stage for the performance of an American Barn Dance aesthetic.

²⁸ YouTube user Renfro Valley Entertainment Center published the "Renfro Valley Keep Sake Video in Sept. 2011 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oTj-td2WOt0>. It shows different ways that the idea of Renfro Valley was sold over time, from the original radio show, the tourist destination, the 50's tv show, the motion picture, and the live entertainment complex that is featured in this video uploaded by Rural Rhythm Records entitled "Renfro Valley Barn Dance in Kentucky had some great Bluegrass Entertainers 2013" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0EiMiYUHoC4>

²⁹ The YouTube user RomanticAsheville calls The Stompin' Ground the "clogging capital of the world" in this video posted August 2016 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i4XEZooaukk>

My first night there, I picked up a glossy, high quality magazine called *D'Country*, which focuses on the country line dance scene in Spain. The aesthetic communitas of country line dancing in Catalonia is much bigger than the bluegrass and old-time aesthetic communitas. A magazine such as *D'Country* is indicative of a strong aesthetic communitas, although if it remains to be in the age of the internet is unclear. El Barn D'en Greg is clearly a big player in the aesthetic communitas of country line dancing, and features prominently in several articles. It's taken years of trial and error, but Greg Ryan, with El Barn D'en Greg, has found a niche (well, actually he played a large part in creating that niche) in the Catalonian economy.

El Barn D'en Greg is a full of non-musical signifiers, some of them Appalachian, some of them not. The square dances that Ryan hosts are non-musical signifiers of Appalachia, at least to a certain degree. Ryan has made an apprenticeship pilgrimage to Appalachia to be closer to the square dance tradition, even learning how to call in Black Mountain, NC³⁰. While Ryan might intend Appalachia in his presentation of square dancing, there is no guarantee that the dancers in Catalonia will interpret a square dance to be Appalachian as opposed to generic rural origins of the more popular country line dancing that takes place at El Barn D'en Greg. Does the community of line dancers that regularly go to El Barn D'en Greg to experience communitas with each other have a notion of Appalachia? Although they are surrounded by signs that are strong indicators of Appalachia such as the movie poster for John Lair's Renfro Valley Barn Dance, the line dance community is not focused on Appalachia, but rather a romanticized version of the American West that is more Texas than North East Tennessee. I poured over the glossy, full color, 102-page magazine which prominently features El Barn D'en Greg in several articles

³⁰ From Private Conversation with Ryan, 11-x-17

for signifiers of Appalachia. I did find one signifier of Appalachia, although it was not demarcated as so. On page 46 there is a short article about The Carter Family entitled Archivos de Country (Terrades, 2017). The picture which accompanies the text shows the Carter Family nicely dressed in a well-appointed room. The picture in and of itself does not indicate Appalachia, although the Carter Family does to many. The text of the article, intended to educate readers about the history of country music, makes no mention of Appalachia or the geographical placement of the group. The need to explain this group lends the conclusion that the Carter Family as a cultural signifier in Catalonia is empty. Clearly the photographic representation of these people who used to exist and were known as the Carter Family is significant in only a small segment of the population. This article, in fact, is an attempt to imbue not only this picture, but also the rhetorical construct of the Carter Family, with meaning—and that meaning does not have anything to do with Appalachia.

The quilts, the hexafos, the hutch in the corner of the room, and various other signifiers that Ryan has placed around the venue have Appalachian interpretations, but also generically signify a mythical rural America. In a segment produced by the Barcelona Television station TV3, Ryan gives credit to Appalachia as the place origins of the music he plays, but the web of signifiers at El Barn D'en Greg is too muddled to tie more than just a few to Appalachia.

Events

A key part of an aesthetic communitas is the reoccurring schedule of events that allow for spontaneous communitas, and function as part of the normative structure of the community. This section discusses in further detail a few of the events that I outlined my fieldwork narrative.

Barcelona Bluegrass Jam

The Barcelona Bluegrass Jam is in many ways the center of the aesthetic communitas in question. It is the main place where people go to experience the sociomusical aesthetic. It is a place where new players can gain experience in the style, where veterans share knowledge with neophytes, and a steady and consistent place where aesthetic communitas is experienced in Catalonia.

There are two important and helpful documents concerning the jam online and accessible from the Barcelona Bluegrass Jam Facebook group page. The first is a listing of songs that are played at the Jam, along with an entry on what date they were played³¹. This single document, in a way, captures the essence of the shared knowledge of the community. It answers the question of what songs do they know in common. It is, plus or minus, the shared repertoire of the group—or at least the smaller set of community members who regularly make it out to La Sonora. The second document is another collaborative document, although this time accessible as a google doc, that gives the chord structures of the songs played at the jam.³² Since the members of the community enjoy the aesthetic communitas of playing this genre with each other, they want to help other members of the community become better players and more familiar with the material.

I created the following chart of songs that had been played three times or more at the jam according to the online collaborative document entitled “Tunes of the Barcelona Bluegrass Jam.” I think we can be sure that most everyone knows “Old Joe Clark”:

³¹ <https://www.facebook.com/notes/barcelona-bluegrass-jam/tunes-of-the-barcelona-bluegrass-jam/713832695466832/>

³² <https://docs.google.com/document/d/10K4qEXLbhe8BWVgNyaCfXuUJLipW-AUAoYVjf1R7Fgs/edit?usp=sharing>

Table 1. Most popular songs at the Barcelona Bluegrass Jam

Tune Name	Key	Number of times played
Big Sciota	G	7
Folsom Prison Blues	G	6
Old Joe Clark	A	6
Salt Spring	A	6
Jerusalem Ridge	Am	5
Angeline the Baker	D	4
Blue Moon of Kentucky	G	4
Foggy Mountain Breakdown	G	4
Hey Good Lookin’	C	4
Red Prairie Dawn	A	4
Shove That Pig’s Foot A Little Closer to The Fire	G	4
Soldier’s Joy	D	4
Will The Circle Be Unbroken	G	4
Earl’s Breakdown	G	3
I Saw the Light	G	3
John Hardy	G	3
Let the Train Whistle Blow	C	3
My Walking Shoes	G	3
Wagon Wheel	G	3

Tunes like “Earl’s Breakdown,” “Foggy Mountain Breakdown,” “Blue Moon of Kentucky,” and “Jerusalem Ridge” are widely considered bluegrass standards. Some, such as “Old Joe Clark,” “Angeline the Baker,” and “Will The Circle Be Unbroken” are considered both old-time and bluegrass. Others have varied origins but have been incorporated into the bluegrass canon. “Folsom Prison Blues” is a song originally by Johnny Cash while “I Saw the Light” and “Hey, Good Lookin’” are by Hank Williams—two well-known country music artists. This list reflects the interpretation of the local community of bluegrass and old-time, genres that are not strictly Appalachian and that take songs from a myriad of sources and claim them as their own. This is much the same as Appalachia has done in claiming bluegrass and old-time as its own. There are elements of truth in saying that these genres are Appalachian, but the facts are much more nuanced. The aesthetic communitas in Catalonia mixes Americana and Appalachia freely

in its construction of bluegrass and old-time, but this is no different than bluegrass and old-time communities in Appalachia and the rest of the United States.

There was a crowd of 12 people in the audience, not necessarily regulars, but people who were out and came to see live music on a Sunday night. Perhaps they had heard about the jam and wanted to hear something different. The evening culminated with Ryan leading a rousing rendition of the call and response song “Y’all Come.”

The Al Ras Bluegrass and Old Time Festival

The main event of the Al Ras Bluegrass and Old-Time Music Festival, which was central to my fieldwork, took place at El Mercat Vell de Mollet del Vallès. This festival has been running for 16 years, and has developed a community of people who help put it on. It is the firmest indicator of aesthetic communitas in Catalonia. It supports local bands, promotes the aesthetic in Catalonia, provides a calendric opportunity to experience aesthetic communitas, and brings visiting artists and experts in the style to the region. It was not the Al Ras Appalachian Music festival, and their musical programming did not seem to indicate much about Appalachia. The examples of aesthetic communitas that took place during the jams did, though. I also found signifiers of Appalachia in some of the styles of dress at the event. I observed a participant wearing a coonskin cap, although its association with Appalachia is loose at best. Traditionally associated with Daniel Boone, this is a strong signifier of frontier America, specifically the Appalachian frontier, although anachronistic in 2017. It also gained association with Davy Crockett from a television series produced by Disney with a world-wide reach. While overalls like Buckner wears are still common in Appalachia, I believe that this was the first time that I have seen someone actually wearing a coonskin cap. Perhaps I have seen it on stage in a performance, and this audience member was in many ways “performing” Appalachia. A more

contemporary dress of Appalachia can be seen in the camouflage jacket worn by one participant. The Hermanos Cuberos are well-respected musicians in the community- they were present at that first Al Ras when it was “in the open air”³³ and make use of bluegrass instruments and style to play songs traditionally from Guadalajara³⁴. But their signifiers, which include cowboy boots, tight jeans, and Stetson hats, seem to indicate more Texas than Appalachia.

The amount of time I was able to spend in the field was short, but with my online research I was able to make the most of time for this case study. With the assistance of social networks I was able to get a good picture of the community, its people, places, and events, before actually stepping foot in Catalonia. These are the primary aspects of any community. The community might be based around the music, but it is enacted by the people at agreed upon times and locations. Although I was apprehensive about my fieldwork due to the potentially explosive political situation, the peaceful and friendly nature of Catalonians ensured that my trip was safe and successful. I was able to gain invaluable insights that allowed me to construct an accurate picture of the aesthetic community by identifying its spontaneous and normative components. Although I am satisfied with the information I was able to get during my fieldwork due to the research that I had conducted online, there is no doubt that longer fieldwork and multiple visits to the community would yield a more complete picture of this growing community.

³³ From private conversation with Roberto Cubero

³⁴ For more information on Hermanos Cuberos, please see the following articles from El Pais:
https://elpais.com/cultura/2018/04/23/actualidad/1524511470_245898.html
https://elpais.com/ccaa/2016/03/23/catalunya/1458768719_853364.html

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This case study was guided by two sets of research questions. The first was concerned with the structure of the community as a possible example of aesthetic *communitas*. As an instrumental case study, it was hoped that the answers will give insight into and help build theory for the aesthetic *communitas* model. The second set was concerned with the perceived origins and associations of the music in the case study community, specifically if the musicians in Barcelona associated bluegrass and old-time music with Appalachia.

Every example of aesthetic *communitas* is based around a performative aesthetic. Performing said aesthetic with others has the ability to result in a pleasurable feeling, something described by some scholars as *communitas*. The knowledge of how to accurately produce that spontaneous *communitas* is contained in the experience of the *communitas* itself. Although the basics of the aesthetic can be learned through digitized media, the knowledge of spontaneous *communitas* resists textual and discretized storage and resides within the people who have paid close attention to the experience of it. The experience of aesthetic *communitas* resonates at different strengths with different individuals. With some individuals it resonates so strongly that they become devotees of the aesthetic.

In order to experience the spontaneous *communitas* again, devotees of the performative aesthetic create structures that assist in building a local pool of knowledge to allow themselves and others to participate and better themselves in this activity. These often happen in regular, calendrical cycles.

In my analysis of the bluegrass and old-time community in Catalonia, I have discovered seven traits that are characteristic of normative aesthetic *communitas*:

1. A civic organization spearheaded by key, dedicated members of the community that help to plan large scale events. In many cases of aesthetic communitas, these are legally recognized not-for-profits that provide the framework for working with governmental and grant-making organizations. The Al Ras Society for Bluegrass and old-time Music organizes two main events a year. Primarily, the Al Ras Bluegrass and Old Time Festival occurs the second weekend of November and is in its seventeenth year. The Barcelona Bluegrass Camp is in its third year, and provides an opportunity for both beginners and seasoned members of the community to learn the aesthetic communitas from skilled practitioners. Both are held in a variety of community centers and municipal buildings and require the joint effort of many devoted community members.

2. A regular opportunity to share in the aesthetic communitas is a vital characteristic of a successful aesthetic communitas so that community members can build up a shared vocabulary, skill-set, and repertoire. A bi-monthly public jam has occurred in Barcelona on and off for over ten years, and the resulting local pool of common knowledge is most explicitly defined in a set of documents shared online. “Angeline the Baker” or “Old Joe Clark” were performed at every instance of aesthetic communitas I witnessed or experienced during my fieldwork.

3. Members of the aesthetic communitas have a shared repertoire. This allows the members to further refine their expression of the aesthetic amongst each other. As noted, this repertoire is formed through the reoccurring experiences of spontaneous communitas and assisted with online documents.

4. There are specific locations that members of the community can go to experience aesthetic communitas. In Catalonia, several locations have evolved to become regular meeting

places for the community. These include La Sedata, La Sonora de Gràcia, El Mercat Vell de Mollet del Vallès, Café Pámpol, Guitarland, and El Barn D'en Greg.

5. The aesthetic *communitas* allows space for certain members to devote more of their time to the aesthetic by providing opportunities for individuals to receive economic remuneration. I provided an actor-by-actor analysis in chapter four, dividing the musicians into Professional and Amateur tiers. A Professional is defined as a musician who receives a portion of their livelihood in conjunction with the aesthetic community either through performance, instruction, or supply of services. In some ways, this is no different for an aesthetic community that is local to the source of the aesthetic than for a cross-cultural one such as the community that is the focus of this study. Amateur and Professional can be equally devoted, talented, or experienced in the aesthetic—the distinction is an economic one and nothing more.

6. For aesthetic *communitas* based on a foreign aesthetic, certain devotees will make an apprenticeship pilgrimage to the perceived place of origin for that aesthetic in order to steep themselves in an experience of the *communitas* that is in many ways viewed as more knowledgeable or authentic. This apprenticeship pilgrimage informs their experience and enjoyment of the aesthetic, which is shared upon their return with the rest of the community. Chapter four outlined the examples of David Prat, Lena Uria, and Greg Ryan.

7. Since only a small percentage of devotees can make an apprenticeship pilgrimage, Professional members of the aesthetic from other communities will travel to the home community to give workshops, lessons, and performances. After several return visits by the same experts, these experts become members themselves of the local community. The Hillbilly Gypsies are clearly members of the aesthetic *communitas* in Barcelona while Michael Miles and Jakes Schepps are not, at least not yet.

This case study has given the specifics of the aesthetic communitas in Catalonia centered around bluegrass and old-time music, and provided a set of seven characteristics that can help define the aesthetic communitas model. The most obvious mode of research that can be done to expand understanding of the aesthetic communitas model is to conduct more case studies. It is through the participant observation of these communities that a scholarly understanding of the abstract generalities of aesthetic communitas can be achieved efficiently. A prime example demanding study that intersects with this research is the aesthetic communitas of Line Dancing in Catalonia that I observed at El Barn D'en Greg.

The second group of questions that this study was concerned with centered around the idea of Appalachia as the cultural homeland of bluegrass and old-time music. Placing the origins of bluegrass and old-time music completely in Appalachia is not historically accurate as discussed in chapter two. Old-time music is certainly more strongly rooted in Appalachia but bluegrass is a modern genre that evolved out of a mixture of several different types of music from varying places, but the popular perception of the genre in American culture grants a mythologized Appalachia cultural ownership. In most academic places where bluegrass and old-time is taught, it is closely associated with Appalachian Studies. I set out to see if that perception holds outside of America, if Appalachia as the origins of bluegrass and old-time music has transmitted, along with the music, to the community in Catalonia. Every musician that I spoke with in Catalonia placed Appalachia as the cultural home of bluegrass and old-time music. Even those who credited Bill Monroe as the creator of the bluegrass genre claimed its antecedent in Appalachian music. In chapter four I discussed the varying extent that members of the community were aware of Appalachia and its role in the music. Some members made apprenticeship pilgrimages to Appalachia to learn more about the aesthetic. Most interviewees

mentioned moonshine, an Appalachian traditional distilled alcoholic drink that has become a stereotypical trope, and many members of the community dressed in an aesthetic that, while not exactly Appalachian, reflected the style of popular bluegrass and old-time artists.

The aesthetic *communitas* in Catalonia centered around bluegrass and old-time music is clearly existent and thriving. Throughout the course of this thesis I have attempted to describe the unique characteristics of the community. An aesthetic *communitas* is made up of people, places, and events that foster the experience, and the fieldwork I was able to perform details the specific aspects of this community. The people profiled are just a representation of the larger community, which probably numbers more than a thousand when we look at the number of people who have participated over the last twenty years.

The people, places, and events outlined in chapter four answer the questions of who, what, when, and where the aesthetic *communitas* takes place. They may not completely answer why the community exists in Catalonia and not elsewhere, but the people, place, and events are the reason why the community is successful. As discussed in previous chapters, many Catalonians of today were raised on the sounds of American folk music, often recorded with a banjo, as translated into Catalan by members of the “Grupo de Folk.” One can only speculate that it was perhaps this reason that musicians were interested in bluegrass and old-time music and open to its experience of *communitas*. Credit for the continued success of the community clearly belongs to the dedication and support of its members. There are a number of people who play the banjo in Catalonia in 2017 because people like Lluís Gómez have been teaching banjo for twenty years. The Barcelona Bluegrass Jam has had bimonthly public jams for over ten years. David Prat has been making Dulcimers in Catalonia for twenty years. The students who came to the first Al Ras Festivals have now grown up and have their own bluegrass and old-time

bands. Toni Giménez has been playing banjo in front of groups of children since 1977. I recognize a similar characteristic in my experiences with Tango in Asheville: the success of an aesthetic *communitas* is based on the hard work and dedication of its members who work tirelessly for many years to realize a normative structure that allows the repetition of a performative aesthetic.

One thing this study does show, conclusively, is that there exists a community of musicians in Barcelona who constitute an example of aesthetic *communitas* based around bluegrass and old-time music. These musicians have a basic knowledge of Appalachia and often a curiosity and desire to learn more. This presents an enormous opportunity for cultural outreach, which can create strong connections both civil and economic between regions, whether it be in promoting apprenticeship pilgrimages to Appalachia or encouraging local experts in the style to perform in Catalonia. There are several institutions in the Appalachian region with music programs focused on bluegrass and old-time music that could create a cultural exchange with Catalonia, fostering international understanding and appreciation for the aesthetic of bluegrass and old-time. Additionally, there is an opportunity to provide a cultural center devoted to Appalachia that would help existing structures like Al Ras promote bluegrass and old-time music while educating Catalonians about the rich cultural history of the region. Likewise, as in any cultural exchange, Appalachia would have the opportunity to learn more about the rich cultural history of Catalonia.

Further research is needed into not only this community in Catalonia, of which my research was brief, but musical communities elsewhere to gain a better understanding of the aesthetic *communitas* model. As the model has been constructed, it can be applied to other communities such as dance or theatre, and one of the prime examples for this type of research is

the line-dance community in Catalonia and other parts of Europe. A more precise understanding of aesthetic *communitas* could help in the formation and perpetuation of such groups, giving clues to how the groups can be successful.

A more evolved understanding of aesthetic *communitas* can hopefully provide insight into two far-reaching topics than this study barely scratches the surface on: the transmission and storage of knowledge and the organization of social groups. As the globe moves towards an information society, and more and more forms of knowledge yield to digital conversion for storage and transmission, study of forms of knowledge that require experiential transmission, forms of knowledge that resist digitalization, can help lay the groundwork for a modern framework of phenomenology for the information age. And any understanding, however small, of what makes individuals work together for a common cause, can help to contribute to a stable, positive, peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable future. Musical communities such as the bluegrass and old-time community in Barcelona help to demonstrate the shared humanity of different cultures, and their existence can go a long way towards cross-cultural understandings.

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