

Introduction to Folklore II: Folk Genres and Analysis

2010-01-17 Oring's "Ethnic Groups and Ethnic Folklore"

FOLK AND FINA 113

ETHNIC GROUPS AND ETHNIC FOLKLORE

- ✘ What is meant by “ethnic”?
- ✘ From Gr. → related terms for alternately “nation” and “heathen/Gentile”
 - + Just as “folk” had connotation of “not us” (the educated, urban, male, middle class)
 - + So too “ethnic” had connotation of “not us” (Anglo-European)
- ✘ Again, like “folk” it tends to retain that connotation
 - + Increasingly less so as a pejorative
 - + Sometimes as a measure of authenticity

TODAY:

- ✘ Connotes groupings “culturally distinguishable from a larger social system of which they form a part”
 - + Members of an ethnic group “it is claimed, share and identify with a historically derived cultural tradition or style”
 - + Membership is “acquired primarily by descent”

THE “CLAIM”

- ✘ Groups result from perceiving some similarity within a broader population of individual elements
- ✘ Groups may be merely statistical
 - + Size nine shoe; athlete’s foot sufferers
- ✘ Folk groups emerge when such similarities are branded as “significant”
 - + By the members themselves
 - + By outsiders

EXAMPLE: THE “GYPSY”

- ✘ Perceived by the general population as one cultural group with shared traditions, practices, language, etc.
- ✘ Actually a number of nationalities (Rom, Ludari, Romnicel) with very little interaction: more likely to intermarry with “non-Gypsy” than with each other

A “SENSE” OF IDENTITY

- ✘ Can conflict with established categories
 - + (When ethnicity is a matter of public policy)
- ✘ Can be defined by context
 - + The example of Freud and “German” or “Jewish”
- ✘ Can be informed in part – but not wholly and not necessarily – by “racial” identity
 - + Physical, genetic properties (skin colour, physiognomy, etc.)
 - ✘ (Often cause for categorization by outsiders)

3 SOCIAL FORCES INFLUENCING “ETHNICITY”

- ✘ Nationalism, Colonialism, Immigration
 - + Nationalism: A sense of collective identity distinct from an outside or colonial power
 - + Colonialism: A sense of being under political control by an outside power
 - + Immigration: A sense of moving from one’s own nation to another(‘s)
- ✘ (These can all be genuine historic moments, but we focus on the perception of these events)

ETHNIC FOLKLORE

× Folklore which

- + plays a part in the definition of ethnic groups;
- + comments upon or governs the interactions between different ethnic groups;
- + contributes to a sense of ethnic identity; or
- + constitutes and contributes to any ethnically based action

FORGED IN CONTRAST

- ✘ The esoteric/exoteric factor
 - + We have folklore that is based as much in our sense of identity as it is in our sense of other's identity
 - + (Let's flip on over to Word and have some fun)

GO AWAY FROM THIS PLACE

- ✘ Read “Carnival in Canada” by Manning, from the *Reader*