

Introduction to Folklore II: Folk Genres and Analysis

2010-01-19 Manning's "Carnival in Canada"

FOLK AND FINA 113

CELEBRATION

- ✘ A paradox:
 - + It is *autotelic* (one celebrates for the sake of celebrating), purely *expressive*, and *ludic* (about play)
 - + It also has political connotations, a communication to outsiders of identity
- ✘ Both *culture* and *politics*

CARIBANA

- ✘ “West Indian” Festival in Toronto, originating in 1967 when West Indian community asked to participate in centennial
- ✘ Imported Trinidadian masqueraders: parade in downtown Toronto (moved to Montreal for Expo 67)
- ✘ Decision was made for it to be ongoing: original organisers became permanent committee

HOWEVER

- ✘ “West Indian” not a term of positive connotation for Caribbean people
- ✘ Island cultures largely defined in sharp contrast to other islands
- ✘ An implied hierarchy based on island size
 - + Smaller = backwards
 - + Larger = aggressive and domineering

SO...

- ✘ Jamaica (largest island) most unliked by all the others, reluctant to engage with others
- ✘ Trinidad (next largest) seen as small island by Jamaica, but dominates (and is thus unliked) by eastern Caribbean
- ✘ Smaller islands often unite in opposition to Jamaica and Trinidad *but* retain hierarchical divisions amongst themselves

PERSPECTIVE: CARIBBEAN ISLANDS



INSULARITY CONTINUES

- ✘ Insularity (Latin – *insula* “island”)
 - + literal and metaphorical connotations
 - + (cf. the persistent use of “Island” to refer to Cape Breton, even as a metonym)
- ✘ Social organisations, fraternal clubs, churches continue to be organised along island origins

SO...

- ✘ Jamaica drops out, having no “carnival” tradition
- ✘ Organization becomes dominated by Trinidad, for which carnival is the major festival

CARNIVAL

- ✘ from Latin *carne* “flesh” (as in reincarnate, chili con carne, etc.)
- ✘ A feast of flesh
 - + Literally, the eating of meat prior to a period of fasting and abstention (Lent)
 - + Metaphorically, focused on the body and not the spirit
 - ✘ Mardi Gras in New Orleans, etc.

FLESH!

- ✘ <http://www.cbc.ca/toronto/features/caribana2008/history.html>
- ✘ <http://www.tradebit.com/filedetail.php/80086051-street-dancing>

MORE COMPLEXITY

- ✘ Trinidadian committee members desired a Trinidadian-style carnival
- ✘ Smaller island representatives wanted a pan-Caribbean style carnival and other forms of display
- ✘ Trinidad eventually drops out, recreates carnival, replete with lingo, dance styles, etc.

EVEN MORE COMPLEXITY

- ✘ Trinidad historically multi-racial, with carnival understood as a black festival within but incorporating multi-ethnic musicians
 - + Trinidad see *cultural* similarity as basis of solidarity
- ✘ Smaller islands largely black-only, with a different history of influences
 - + *Racial* similarity basis of solidarity, despite cultural differences

CLASS

- ✘ Caribana (expensive, reserved) seen as a bourgeois, serious, educational festival
- ✘ As opposed to Carnival, open, exciting, etc.
- ✘ Funding eventually forced a merger

QUESTION OF THE WEEK

- ✘ Do you think of yourself as having an “ethnic” identity? Why or why not?

GO AWAY FROM THIS PLACE

- ✘ Read “Religious Folklore” by Danielson, from the *Introduction*
- ✘ I don’t like this reading much: in years past I have even skipped it. Try to figure out why.