

Introduction to Folklore II: Folk Genres and Analysis

2010-02-02 Bell's "Tending Bar at Brown's"

FOLK AND FINA 113

BUT FIRST...

- ✘ My week
- ✘ Why I haven't done the updates for notes
- ✘ Why I'm even more frenetic than usual
- ✘ Why this is over soon

'OCCUPATIONAL FOLKLIFE'

- ✘ “Occupation” implies a set of techniques and skills
- ✘ The ‘canon of work technique’
 - + Not an *explicit* skill-set, but an *implicit* standard against which a worker is measured
 - + Status in the group is determined by one’s mastery of the canon

WHAT IS A BAR FOR?

- ✘ A “third space”: somewhere distinctly different from both work and home
- ✘ An opportunity for leisure activities in a non-hierarchical place
 - + *Communitas*
- ✘ Play

BARTENDING AS ARTISTIC PERFORMANCE

- ✗ What does this mean?
- ✗ Bartending not a passive profession
 - + Drink distribution
- ✗ But active profession
 - + “Standing at the center of the societal ambivalence over public drinking”
- ✗ Bars:
 - + Sell as much alcohol as possible *but*
 - + Not so much as to develop a bad reputation

THE BARTENDER

- ✘ Creates an atmosphere in which people keep drinking, but not allowing people to become so drunk as to constitute a threat to the social order
- ✘ This ethnography
 - + A middle-class black bar in Philadelphia
 - + Focussed on two female bartenders
 - ✘ Transform Brown's into a "lively place"

PERFORMANCE

- ✘ A framework for their participation in the life of the bar
- ✘ Explicit expectations and rules for conduct
- ✘ Presented themselves not as “who they were” but as “who they needed to be for the job”
 - + Patrons: reflexive, not an act of conscious purpose
 - + Bartender: reflective, deliberate (self-) presentation
- ✘ Different roles for different “bars”

HARRIET (DAYTIME)

- ✘ Saw her role as creating liveliness in the otherwise quiet bar
- ✘ Establishing connections between customers
 - + “Most of the customers who come here during the day are looking to bullshit with someone. [...] If I can get something happening, they’ll play with it and keep it going.”

(MORE HARRIET)

- ✘ Building “frame” supportive to “talking shit”
- ✘ Evoking relevant expressions of play within that frame
- ✘ I won’t type it out, but
 - + Passage on page 151, last full paragraph.
- ✘ “Raps” like a man

SARAH (NIGHTTIME)

- ✘ “The people who come here at night don’t need me to tell them to party. [...] My problem is slowing their roll.”
- ✘ Preserve the frame rather than create one for them.
- ✘ Flow of social life maintained by regulation of social boundaries: action left to the patrons

THE POINT?

- ✘ Certain occupational roles are best understood as extended artistic performances by highly conscious actors.
- ✘ Above the execution of the explicit task (dispensing drinks), the technique of the bartender is a highly developed implicit skill-set of maintaining a frame for appropriate performance

QUESTION OF THE WEEK (THE FOURTH)

- ✘ If you have had a job or occupation, how did you know you were “good” at it? What defines “good” in this instance? (Remember, you can extend occupation to include anything that requires a specific skill-set, not just waged employment.)

GO AWAY FROM THIS PLACE

- ✘ Read “Children’s Folklore” by Mechling, from the *Introduction*