

Folk 267: Food and Culture

**MARCH 24: DIANE TYE'S
CH. 4 "BAKING FOR A
THIRD PLACE"**

Reminder

- ⦿ I have to run at the end of class, quickly.
- ⦿ I am contactable by email, through Facebook, twitter, etc., so you can ask questions and I will get back to you
- ⦿ Specifically for BHTM students: next Thursday's class is the same day as the Evening of Food and Wine. Please try to attend class that day, but if you can't, the film we will be watching is available for viewing online. The link will be on the webpage.

Baking for a Third Place

What did *you* think of it?

The book takes a twist

- ⦿ In the previous two chapters, much had been made of the expectations of baking placed upon the mid-century wife/mother, and the heightened connotations of being a minister's wife
 - “Catering to tastes”
 - “Women's role”
 - “Invisible work”
 - “Volunteering”
 - Cooking as expression of middle-class status: *daintiness*

This chapter...

- ◎ Suggests that, within those strictures and expectations, baking can be a form of *resistance and subversion*
- ◎ Premise: within structures of power inequality (here, gender, but the argument can be made for any subjugated group), the subjugated can employ tactics of critique of the dominant power that are not comprehensible to the dominant power

Coding

- *Feebly remembered last class, refreshed for this one (see page 233)*

⊙ Appropriation:

- Adapting to feminist purposes those forms or materials normally associated with male culture or androcentric images of the feminine

⊙ Juxtaposition:

- The ironic arrangement of texts, artifacts, or performances

⊙ Distraction:

- Strategies that drown out or draw attention away from the subversive power of a message

Coding (cont.)

- ◎ Indirection:
 - Indirection or distancing that includes metaphor, impersonation, and hedging
- ◎ Trivialization:
 - The employment of a form, mode, or genre that the dominant culture considers unimportant, innocuous, or irrelevant
- ◎ Incompetence:
 - Demonstrating incompetence at conventionally feminine activities
 - (from Radner and Lanser 1993)

Why?

- ⦿ Sometimes, the communication of experience is impossible using the dominant modes
 - Unspeakability
- ⦿ Most of the time, it is because the expressions are “messages critical of some aspect of women’s subordination”
- ⦿ “The essential ambiguity of coded acts protects women from potentially dangerous responses from those who might find their statements disturbing.”

To make things, um, easier

- ◎ Coding can be read into a performance, irrespective of whether the woman specifically intended a coded message
- ◎ It is a hermeneutic for interpreting women's acts
 - (This could be a slippery interpretive slope, but I like it nevertheless)
- ◎ Again, other groups can code
 - “Ethnic” minorities; LBGT; children

Food at church meetings

- ◉ Why the (intense) expectation?
- ◉ Food allows the lubricant for sociability (“That’s your chance to get to know them”)
- ◉ Historically, these meetings have not only been for the “service” of the community, but also places of intense social change (suffrage, social justice, etc.)
- ◉ Display of “conventional femininity” through baking, tea, etc. undercuts the potentially radical activities that take place therein

But, more importantly...

- ⦿ Even when not engaged in “politics,” food extends the meeting time, draws out the time away from home
 - ⦿ “Banana Bread and Pineapple Squares were subversive because they helped to carve out precious social time for women.”
- ⦿ Bring together two indulgences: sweets and time away from home
 - ⦿ “Baking intended for their enjoyment and not their family’s provisioning became a subservice treat. Time for themselves and with one another was another indulgence.”

Third Place

- ◎ From Oldenberg:
 - “A generic designation for a great variety of public places that host the regular, voluntary, informal, and happily anticipated gatherings of individuals beyond the realm of home and work.”
- ◎ Neutral ground where conversation was the main activity
- ◎ Historically, women excluded from ordered third spaces, so they create their own

Carving out time for themselves

- ◎ “Coffee” as a social act
 - Whether drop in or scheduled
- ◎ Communities of choice
 - From a larger network of obligation, she chose (women choose) networks of voluntary associations
- ◎ The rise of using convenience foods
 - Graham crackers, Dream Whip, Jello, pudding mixes, cake mixes, etc.
- ◎ The skill set for rapid production

Go away now

- Next class, Chapter 3: “Church Lunches and Ladies’ Teas”