

4: Creating a 'Folk' Quotes, Texts and Sources

Introduction

Definition of Folk Song

'Any song composed in the past or the present for other purposes can be used to bond a community together, and if and when it does, it takes on the function of a "folk song".'

Watts and Andres Morrissey 2016

Three containers

The Eel's Foot Eastbridge, Suffolk

Announcement on the BBC radio documentary of 1947

'There is in Suffolk in sound of the Trinity House foghorn **a remote hamlet** reached by narrow high-hedged lanes. Among its few cottages and farms is a single inn, 'The Eel's Foot'. To the passer-by this beer house, for that all it is, is like many another country pub. **It's small and undistinguished**, except for its curious name. But on Saturday evenings 'The Eel's Foot' is **the scene of a dramatic rite, which after years of acquaintance is still exciting**. The bar, a room some 15ft square with tables at either end, is full. Darts is impossible. And at the end of one of the tables sits Philip Lumpkin under an oil lamp and in his hand is a cribbage scoreboard one corner of which is strangely rounded. Near him is the fiddler with his concertina. He starts to play, and Mrs Howard climbs onto the table and begins to dance. This is **the traditional overture to an evening of song** over which Philip rules with his cribboard, but its corner has been rounded by years of beating on the table to call for "Good order! Good order! Ladies and gentlemen, please".' (quoted in Watts and Andres Morrissey 2016, bolding by the authors)



<http://thebertonandeastbridge.onesuffolk.net/history/history/new-contentpage/>
Picture Post December 1941

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| | ‘The Eel’s Foot’ |
| <i>Frequency and venue</i> | (1) Sessions <i>regular</i> : every Saturday evening. (2) ‘Container’ a small room called the ‘snug’, <i>Physical proximity → intimacy and exclusiveness</i> |
| <i>Musicians, type of organisation, MC, musical contributions, performance aims, comments on performance</i> | (3) <i>Local</i> musicians and non-musicians (4) <i>Those not performing became members of the audience.</i> (5) <i>Master of ceremonies</i> , Philip Lumpkin, with his old cribbage board. (6) <i>Participants expected to provide input</i> or contribute towards a round of drinks. (7) No ‘professional musicians’, <i>musical proficiency, let alone virtuosity</i> not crucial (8) <i>Purpose: entertain and be entertained</i> |
| <i>Material</i> | (9) <i>Song and dance</i> were valued more than instrumental performance. (10) Songs with choruses not in the majority, but <i>enthusiastic overall participation</i> in them. Comments allowed by non-performers during the performance of a song. (11) <i>Lively conversation between songs</i> |
| <i>Style and accent</i> | (12) <i>Conversation in local dialect; songs not sung in dialect nor standard</i> |

Community in Sociolinguistics

‘This is a more puzzling question than it seems, and *one we seldom ask ourselves*. There is no utilitarian answer, for despite its profound social functions – of linking people, giving them identity and status, and making out and constituting the rituals of our time – music of itself has no essential use. Why after all should people engage in music? ... [M]usical enactment is not an essentially utilitarian practice at all but one form of celebratory and non-useful artistic action, one unparalleled mode to realise and create the age-old blend of fantasy and reality, ritual and ordinariness, sacred and profane of our human existence. *Musical practice is essentially of society, dependent on and expressed in all kinds of activities and settings described in [Finnigan’s] book*; but it is also perhaps a unique and distinctive mode through which people both realise and transcend their social existence.’ (Finnegan 2007: 339; italics added)

Coperformance / Co-Production

Take this Hammer

Take this hammer, carry it to the captain
Take this hammer, carry it to the captain
Take this hammer, carry it to the captain
Tell him I'm gone, tell him I'm gone

If he asks you was I runnin'
If he asks you was I runnin'
If he asks you was I runnin'
Tell him I was flyin', tell him I was flyin'

If he asks you was I laughin'
If he asks you was I laughin'
If he asks you was I laughin'
Tell him I was cryin', tell him I was cryin'

I don't want no peas, cornbread and molasses
I don't want no peas, cornbread and molasses
I don't want no peas, cornbread and molasses

They hurts my pride, well, they hurts my pride

I'm gonna bust right bust right by this shooter
I'm gonna bust right bust right by this shooter
I'm gonna bust right bust right by this shooter
I'm goin' home, I'm goin' home

The Old Battalion / Hanging on the Old Barbed Wire

If you want to find the lance-jack,
I know where he is (3x)
If you want to find the lance-jack, I know where he is
He's scrounging round the cookhouse door.
I've seen him, I've seen him
Scrounging round the cookhouse door (2x)

The sergeant-major
Thieving all the squaddies' (soldiers) rum.

...Company sergeant
Lying drunk on the latrine floor

...Quarter Master
Miles and miles behind the lines

...C.O. (Commanding officer)
Down in the deep dugout

If you want to find the brasshats [commanders]
I know where they are (3x)
If you want to find the brass hats,
I know where they are
Drinking Claret at the Brigade HQ.
I've seen them, I've seen them
Drinking Claret at the Brigade HQ.

...the politicians
Drinking Brandy in the House of Commons Bar.

...the buckshee Private
buried in a deep shell hole

...Tom Driscoll
On the firestep with half his head
blown away

...the Old Battalion
Hanging on the Old Barbed Wire

References

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- Finnegan, Ruth. 2007 [1989]. *The Hidden Musicians: Music-making in an English Town*, Middletown, CO: Wesleyan University Press [first printing Cambridge University Press].
- Wenger, E. 1998. *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.