

Stephen STERN and John Allen CICALA (eds.), *Creative Ethnicity: Symbols and Strategies of Contemporary Ethnic Life* (Logan, Utah State University Press, 1991, pp. xx+242, ISBN 0-87421-148-4)

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of the traditional meaning and symbolism is lost. On the other hand, *pysanka* traditions in Canada have developed many positive attributes as well. The intricate, sometimes virtuosic technical characteristics reflect Canadian aesthetic sensibilities. The objects are highly prized for evoking memories, as well as for marking cultural identity. Both of these functions are new or heightened specifically in the Canadian context.

The highlight of the book, however, remains the collection of images selected by Klymasz to enhance the articles and give an impression of the exhibition. The works speak most eloquently of the issues discussed above. I very much look forward to the exhibition's tour, and to treatments of other aspects of Canada's culture in the same vein.

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Stephen STERN and John Allen CICALA (eds.), *Creative Ethnicity: Symbols and Strategies of Contemporary Ethnic Life* (Logan, Utah State University Press, 1991, pp. xx+242, ISBN 0-87421-148-4).

When I requested a review copy of Stern and Cicala's *Creative Ethnicity*, I fully intended to assign this collection of original essays elsewhere. However, on the book's arrival, I found myself reading through it, marking it with comments, and noting statements I might want to quote in my own writing on ethnicity, or in lectures and seminars on the topic. That I chose to review this book myself rather than sending it to someone else is testimony to its interest and importance. While it is not without flaws, it is a very useful work.

Looking at the Preface, I was impressed by the writers' opening critical stance toward "prevailing academic models of ethnicity, both those which characterize ethnicity as abstract group processes and those which view ethnicity as emerging in small networks of interaction" (p. ix). These approaches, the authors contend, "restricted folklorists to thinking about ethnicity in terms of specific stereotypes, identity complexes, values, and bodies of tradition" (*ibid.*). It is difficult not to agree that ethnicity needs a more

dynamic, less merely trait — or origin-based approach, and that detailed ethnographic studies can contribute to providing alternatives.

Yet almost immediately a problem arose. “We are both ethnic ourselves” (*ibid.*), the editors say. Searching for an explanation of what this statement might mean, I looked in vain for a definition of ethnicity. In fact, the groups which are the foci of *Creative Ethnicity*’s essays are limited to non-white, non-Anglo immigrant cultures and aboriginal peoples — and all the examples are from the United States. I find it naive, at the very least, that the editors apparently do not recognise the politically charged problem in excluding American mainstream Anglo cultures. I might have found myself in a more forgiving mood if Stern’s Introduction had problematised ethnicity — or addressed it at all. Rather, this section avoids or sidesteps the issue, and instead problematises ethnic expression only.

Of course, for non-dominant ethnic groups, folklore offers alternatives or solutions to problems not encountered in Anglo mainstream society. Yet if ethnicity is a subcultural form through which groups express how they contrast with others, particularly by way of variations in cultural or geographic origin and in distinctive traits, there are no “non-ethnics”. My research with Anglo Canadians shows that while they do not normally describe themselves as “ethnic,” they see, explore, and evaluate their own variations based on origins and traits from those they do define as “ethnic”, thus ethnicising themselves (Greenhill forthcoming). Until the ethnic dimension of the dominant is at the very least recognised, the “orientalisation” (Said 1978) of power relations remains; the suggestion is that exotic others make up for their lack of hegemony by having “soul”. Clearly my difference with the editors is ideological.

However, I have no quarrel with the case studies; they are uniformly stimulating and suggestive. Yvonne C. and William G. Lockwood’s work on foodways in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula and Carolyn Lipson-Walker’s consideration of southern Jewish weddings reflect upon the conflation of region and ethnicity. The conflation and juxtaposition of various ethnic traditions is discussed in James P. Leary and Richard March’s work on Dutchman bands in the American Midwest and Olivia Cadoval’s on the Latino festival in Washington, D.C. Intensification of ethnicity is found in Barre Toelken’s examination of powwow, and in Larry Danielson’s of St. Lucia in Lindsborg, Kansas. The manipulation of insider/outsider traditions is evident in Janet S. Theophano’s study of Italian-American weddings, Betty A. Blair’s examination of Iranian immigrant naming, and Carol Silverman’s work on Gypsies.

Madeline Slovenz-Low provides a fascinating account of how her research on Chinese lion dancing in New York eventually resulted in her

marriage to one of her Chinese American collaborators, and formal adoption by another. Though it was apparently not envisioned as such, it provides some indication of the ambivalent place of many women fieldworkers, including but not restricted to those "forced to balance the two sides of [their] hyphenated identity—folklorist-wife" (p. 68) — or folklorist-daughter. Ambivalence about maintaining an ethnic tradition is explored in David Shuldiner's examination of passover among Jewish radicals. Ambivalence is also found in inter-ethnic relationships, cogently discussed by Patricia A. Turner on the Atlanta child murders, Maria Herrera-Sobek on undocumented immigration by Mexicans to the U.S., and Susan Auerbach on the Cityroots Festival in New York.

I am sorry to have to be so critical of the preface and introduction, because the individual essays are such useful, thoughtful, accessible case studies of the expression and employment of ethnic culture. Their focus, as Stern's introduction suggests, is upon the strategic adaptation of folklore; "observing how folklore offers solutions to problems caused by living in a modern world" (xiii). Their quality makes me all the more distressed that the editors avoided a direct confrontation with the issue of ethnic power relations.

I already think of Utah State University Press as a publisher of collections which are useful to the academic folklorist, but also serve well as introductory and/or undergraduate texts. In some ways, *Creative Ethnicity* is clearly within the tradition of Elliott Oring's two really helpful compilations, *Folk Groups and Folklore Genres: An Introduction* (1986) and *Folk Groups and Folklore Genres: A Reader* (1989), both also published by USU. Stern and Cicala's collection is a worthwhile contribution to folkloristic studies of ethnicity. It would be so much more useful, however, with a good introduction.

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