

FOLKLORE AND LITERATURE: HISTORICAL APPROACH TO GENERIC,  
THEMATIC, STRUCTURAL AND STYLISTIC RELATIONS

Objectives

This course will stress the reciprocal relations of folklore and literature. The integrating principle will be the notions of genre and decorum: genre will be seen in terms of how it regulates the choice and combination of appropriate themes, styles and structures in folklore and literature in a particular place and time with reference to an immediate or imagined audience. The notions of genre and decorum will also be applied to the analysis of the appearance of folkloristic themes, structures and styles in literature.

The first objective is to develop a framework for drawing meaningful distinctions between folklore and literature. The second is to develop techniques for identifying folkloristic themes, structures and styles and for analyzing their appearance in literature. The third is to classify the types of literary manifestations of folklore using such categories as oral performance, written or printed record of oral performance, edited collection, popular culture, literature. The student will be exposed to the range of literary manifestations of folklore in almanacs, chapbooks, jestbooks, broadsides, newspapers, weeklies, handbooks of exempla and fables, compendia of saints' lives, fabliau, nouvelle, literary collections, literary reworkings, literary imitations, literary parodies and other types of literary use of folklore: He will be exposed to Poggio, Perrault, Penzer, Basile, Countess D'Aulnoy, Henryson, Straparola, Boccaccio, Wilde, Tolstoy, George Washington Harris in addition to modern literary manifestations of folklore and authentic oral performances of folklore. The student will also be exposed to the theories of such scholars as Bedier, W. P. Ker, Pound, Courthope, Chadwick, Friedman, Bauman, Brunvand and Ashton.

I. Conceptual Framework

Distinctions and similarities between folklore and literature will be discussed with reference to

- a) the distinctions made between oral transmission, writing and print by Parry and Lord, Gerhardsson, Chaytor, McLuhan and Ong;
- \* b) the concept of tradition in folklore and literature (literary conventions; literary revival of folk traditions; accepted range of individual creativity and innovation in oral tradition);
- c) the concept of authorship in folklore and literature (theories of folklore genesis; ~~ideas~~ <sup>concept</sup> of writer-artist in various periods of literature);

- d) the audiences of literature and folklore;
- e) the cultural, historical and social relativity of aesthetic criteria.

## II. Historical Framework

Theories of the evolution of literature will be discussed with reference to the various evolutionary, devolutionary and other types of historical relationships which have been posited among folklore, popular culture and literature. It is in the context of this historical framework that types of literary manifestations of folklore will be classified.

## III. Techniques

Techniques for identifying folkloristic themes, structures and styles and for analyzing their appearance in literature will be discussed with reference to

- a) genre definition, terminology and classification and the distinction between analystic and native categories;
- b) annotation as a means of establishing thematic relationships;
- c) structural analysis (Propp, Olrik, Raglan, Dundes, Levi-Strauss, Ben-Amos, Jason) as a means of identifying traditional forms and revealing the rules for ordering and combining thematic elements;
- d) stylistic relations with reference to the nature and varieties of oral styles and the notion of the rhetoric handbook as an inventory of culturally relevant units of style and the rules for their appropriate use.

## IV. Literary Manifestations of Folklore

Each major type of literary manifestation of folklore will be discussed. For example, literary genres such as chronicles, travel books, 'lives' and journals will be viewed as 'oral' or 'folk history' and will be analyzed in terms of processes of legend formation. Particular reference will be made to Bede, A History of the English Church People and Aubrey, Brief Lives. Detailed comparisons will be made between specific examples of a particular genre of literature and their folkloristic counterparts (verbatim transcriptions of oral märchen will be compared with the edited märchen of Grimm, Jacobs and Lang and with the literary fairy tales of Anderson, Wilde and

Tolstoy). The ethnographic value of period pieces and the writings of Hardy, Twain, George Washington Harris and Sholem Aleichem will be examined and the function of folklore in these writings explored from both anthropological and literary viewpoints.

The theories of Wesselski and others regarding the influence of literature and print upon oral tradition will be discussed with reference to the notion of the 'great' and 'little' traditions.

Finally, the ethnography and folk or native autobiography will be analyzed as genres of literature with particular reference to Malinowski, Argonauts of the Western Pacific; Levi-Strauss, Tristes Tropiques; Talayesva, Sun Chief; Agee, Let Us Now Praise Famous Men; Castenada, The Teachings of Don Juan or Yoors, The Gypsies as works of literature.

Birger Gerhardson Memory and Manuscript : Oral Tradition and Written Transmission  
 Chaytor From Script to Print  
 Marshall McLuhan The Gutenberg Galaxy  
 Father Walter Ong studies on Tudor style