

children may be a more valuable contribution than a change in legal theory.

Pauline Greenhill and Diane Tye (eds.), *Undisciplined Women: Tradition and Culture in Canada*, Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997, 306 pages.

Reviewer: *Heather Howard-Bobiwash*
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Undisciplined Women is more than a clever title for this volume, it is a concept. "Acts of indiscipline" (p. xi) characterize this book from how it came into being, to the multiple forms of feminist critical reflection which form its framework of analysis. The contributors challenge not only conventions within the discipline of folklore studies, they also unsteady the borders between disciplines, between academic and non-academic research, between feminist perspectives and between definitions of tradition and culture.

The idea for the book originated in the early 1990s as researchers, attending the annual scholarly meetings of the Folklore Studies Association of Canada/Association canadienne d'ethnologie et du folklore (FSAC/ACEF), contemplated the dearth in the discipline "of recognition of women's culture, women collectors' contributions, and feminist perspectives" (p. x). The "Undisciplined Women Collective" was formed and, over the next few years, met whenever possible to discuss these concerns. Contributors include non-academic folklorists and writers as well as academicians in anthropology, religion, women's studies, art and English. The volume emerged collectively in terms of both its intellectual directions derived from the group discussions, and its content as all the chapters were circulated among all the contributors for comment and development. This "indisciplined" approach to pulling together this edited collection makes it more cohesive and readable than it might otherwise have been given the wide topical and experiential range of its contributors. While certainly labour intensive, this volume also represents a model for feminist mentoring in publishing.

This collection is also situated within the framework of feminist trends more widely. Following somewhat along the path taken over the last three decades in other disciplines, including anthropology, *Undisciplined Women* embodies for folklore studies in Canada the voice of feminist critique and the value of a women-centred approach to theoretical development. In their introduction, Greenhill and Tye outline these tasks for the volume, as well as for the discipline more widely: "to recover women's traditions," to "include critique of patriarchal scholarship," to provide a "reassessment of women's scholarly work" and to create an environment for "gynocriticism"—the generation of "new, feminist scholarship" (p. 7). Regarding this last point, Greenhill and Tye observe how slow off the mark Canadian folklore studies has been in fostering and developing feminist perspectives, as

contrasted with their U.S. counterparts: Where "feminist readings and feminist practice are now part of the American folklore scene. Alas, this is not the case in Canada" (p. xiv). This lag can be said to be paralleled by Canadian anthropology (see Cole and Phillips, 1995; and Bridgman, Cole and Howard-Bobiwash, 1999). American volumes most akin in their aims to *Undisciplined Women* include Jordan and Kalcik's (1985) *Women's Folklore, Women's Culture*, Radner's (1993) *Feminist Messages*, Young's (1993) *Bodylore* and Hollis, Pershing and Young's (1994) *Feminist Theory and the Study of Folklore*.

Twenty chapters contribute to one or more of the tasks set forth by Greenhill and Tye, thematically divided into the following sections: "Identifying, Collecting, and Interpreting Women's Folklore," "Images of Women in Canadian Traditional and Popular Culture" and "Women Transform Their Lives and Traditions." These are bracketed by brief but quite useful section introductions and an "Editors' Concluding Statement." Laurel Doucette's opening chapter, "Reclaiming the Study of Our Cultural Lives" provides a very useful critical overview of the development of the exclusion of women and feminist perspectives in Canadian folklore studies, and supports the Collective's assertion that "within the Canadian context there has been a clear discursive struggle played out between folklore as academic study—a largely male-dominated activity—and as non-academic collection—generally a female domain" (p. 14).

As is characteristic more generally of the field of folklore studies, Eastern Canada features most prominently as the geographical location in eight chapters. However, this does not take away from the balance in Canadian diversity that is achieved in this volume. For example, several contributors situate their work in culturally transcendent spaces rather than physically fixed locales: Janice Ristock's chapter which examines the connections between popular film portrayals of independent and/or lesbian women and the growth of misogyny, and Kay Stone's (with Marvyne Jenoff and Susan Gordon) description of women storytellers' creative adaptations of popular fairy tales are two fine examples. Two chapters in French are also important contributions to this volume. Ronald Labelle's account of the work of soeur Catherine Jolicoeur, and Jocelyne Mathieu's analysis of class and women's attire in 20th-century Quebec provide insights on the often subtle tenacity and creativity in women's constructions of the past.

Christine St. Peter and Robin McGrath provide enlightening reflections on the scholarly usage and interpretations of writings by and about Aboriginal women (St. Peter writes about teaching Anne Cameron's *Daughters of Copper Woman*, and McGrath analyzes gender in Inuit autobiography). However, there are no first-hand contributions by Aboriginal women, a lacuna the editors acknowledge and interpret as "omissions result[ing] from a variety of forces, including but not limited to the domination of academic work by whiteness and the power/knowledge base that it implies." This, they

emphasize, underscores the necessity for scholars to challenge these silences by “attending more thoroughly to the issues of gender, sexuality, ethnicity” raised in this volume (p. xiii).

The following chapters are particularly effective, well-written and insightful in their observations of women’s forms of expression and the power of gender dynamics in a range of Canadian cultural contexts: Barbara Reiti’s study of violence against women and witch legends in Newfoundland, Anne Brydon’s presentation of the multiple dimensions of the use of the *Fjallkona* female image by Icelandic settlers in Canada, Pauline Greenhill’s description of gender-switching and ambiguity in Maritime ballads, Michael Taft’s account of wedding-theatre transvestism in the Prairies, Marie-Annick Desplanques’ discussion of women’s informal gathering and time-management in a small town in Newfoundland and Susan Shantz’s story of a lone woman quilter in Saskatchewan.

This collection provide extremely useful analyses of the diversity of ways in which women participate in preserving, interpreting and generating culture and traditions, as conscious agents in the power relations of both processes of making meaning and the practices of everyday life.

References

- Bridgman, Rae, Sally Cole and Heather Howard-Bobiwash (eds.)
1999 *Fire under Moss: Feminist Ethnography in Practice*, Peterborough: Broadview Press.
- Cole, Sally, and Lynne Phillips (eds.)
1995 *Ethnographic Feminisms, Essays in Anthropology*, Ottawa: Carleton University Press.
- Hollis, Susan T., Linda Pershing and M. Jane Young
1994 *Feminist Theory and the Study of Folklore*, Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Jordan, Rosan, and Susan Kalcik (eds.)
1985 *Women’s Folklore, Women’s Culture*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Radner, Joan N. (ed.)
1993 *Feminist Messages: Coding in Women’s Folk Culture*, Urbana: University of Chicago Press.
- Young, Katherine (ed.)
1993 *Bodylore*, Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press.

David Palumbo-Liu and Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht (eds.), *Streams of Cultural Capital*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997.

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Well, I have to confess it took me a while to get over the title of this collection. I am afraid it brought out the brat in me; I tried rhyming alternatives (*Creams of Cultural Capital*) and water metaphor alternatives (*Swamps of Cultural Capital*) to exercise/exorcise my annoyance, with limited success in each area. However, the title, which I found off-putting in its natu-

ralizing and reifying of the concept of cultural capital, provides my only real quibble with this book. (And, after all, irritation is memorable.) But the contents are solid and valuable, and that is what should always count.

I should add that *Streams* also came with at least two marks in its favour. First, it is part of the series “Mestizo Spaces/Espaces Métisses,” in which *Open the Social Sciences*, the Report of the Gulbenkian Commission on the Restructuring of the Social Sciences (1996), is also published. This small, eminently readable work not only gives a useful capsule history of the disciplining of the social sciences, including anthropology, but also asks critically what value such disciplining has for academics and for society today. Clearly, this series is in the forefront of critical and accessible writing on issues of concern to anthropologists and other students of culture. Second, a glance at the contributors shows that this is a truly international collection, not just another reproduction of the same old, same old “what Americans think about everything” publication that is all too characteristic of what gets published—and reviewed—in the U.S.

I think it is always necessary to refute the belief that what is published in the U.S. is international, and what is published in Canada, Mexico, Papua New Guinea, etc., is national or regional. Collections like this, by juxtaposing sociocultural contexts and texts, contradicts those who assume that “we” are always interested in everything that happens in the U.S., but only specialists are interested in Corsican identity (discussed by Anne Knudsen with respect to the writing of history and literature) or in theatre in China (explored by Xiaomei Chen, who looks at “Occidental” productions).

This is a very useful, thought-provoking collection of concrete, specific examples from a diversity of genres and locations. It is a series of situated elaborations of the concept of cultural capital, particularly useful for showing the value of anthropological views on colonizers as well as colonized. For those of us who are tired of the backlash against poststructuralism, which has in many cases taken the form of an anti-intellectual move against critical thinking of any kind in anthropology, collections such as *Streams* can provide hope that it is not all over but the crying.

Streams is taken from a special issue of *Stanford Literature Review* (1993), but has two additional essays which open and close the collection. The book’s aim is to examine “transpositions and recontextualizations of cultural objects as they move across and between national borders” (p. 3), particularly in terms of effects upon the materiality of the notion of culture. The simple/simplistic concept of national borders invoked in the quotation above is, indeed, seriously questioned and problematized by most of the essays, which show how the “mass (and often “illegal”) (re)production and circulation of cultural objects [becomes] less and less controllable and predictable and their points of origin more and more difficult to discern” (p. 4).

Most of the essays draw on Pierre Bourdieu’s conceptualizations of habitus and cultural capital in *Distinction: A*