

Intimate Relations: Family and Community in Planter Nova Scotia 1759-1800. Edited by Margaret Conrad. (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1995. Pp. vi + 298, index, \$21.95, ISBN 0-919197-42-7 pbk.)

Separate Spheres: Women's Worlds in the Nineteenth-Century Maritimes. Edited by Janet Guildford and Suzanne Morton. (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1994. Pp. 253, \$19.95, ISBN 0-919107-41-9 pbk.)

Diane Tye

Volume 19, numéro 2, 1997

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1087701ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1087701ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Association Canadienne d'Ethnologie et de Folklore

ISSN

1481-5974 (imprimé)

1708-0401 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce compte rendu

Tye, D. (1997). Compte rendu de [*Intimate Relations: Family and Community in Planter Nova Scotia 1759-1800*. Edited by Margaret Conrad. (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1995. Pp. vi + 298, index, \$21.95, ISBN 0-919197-42-7 pbk.) / *Separate Spheres: Women's Worlds in the Nineteenth-Century Maritimes*. Edited by Janet Guildford and Suzanne Morton. (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1994. Pp. 253, \$19.95, ISBN 0-919107-41-9 pbk.)]. *Ethnologies*, 19(2), 175-177. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1087701ar>

Williams, Raymond. 1989. Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory. In *Contemporary Literary Criticism: Literary and Cultural Studies*, ed. Robert Con Davis and Ronald Schleifer: 377-390. New York: Longman.

Said, Edward D. 1989. Reflections on American "Left" Literary Criticism. In *Contemporary Literary Criticism: Literary and Cultural Studies*, ed. Robert Con Davis and Ronald Schleifer: 579-594. New York: Longman.

MICHAEL A. ROBIDOUX
Memorial University of Newfoundland
St. John's, Newfoundland

Intimate Relations: Family and Community in Planter Nova Scotia 1759-1800. Edited by Margaret Conrad. (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1995. Pp. vi + 298, index, \$21.95, ISBN 0-919197-42-7 pbk.)

Separate Spheres: Women's Worlds in the Nineteenth-Century Maritimes. Edited by Janet Guildford and Suzanne Morton. (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1994. Pp. 253, \$19.95, ISBN 0-919107-41-9 pbk.)

Sometimes I feel like a theoretical pack rat. Like other folklorists I know, I happily "borrow" any interpretative models that attract me and test their applicability to the study of traditional culture. And, despite what others more discipline-bound than folklorists may say, I don't think such borrowing is a bad thing. Our perceptual world, one that is both fluid and interdisciplinary, is not only interesting but (I hope) more closely mirrors real life. So, I have to say that I agreed to review these recent historical collections only because I hoped they would contain material relevant for folklore study.

I wasn't disappointed. *Intimate Relations* represents twenty of thirty presentations given at the third Planter Studies Conference held at Acadia University in Wolfville, Nova Scotia, in 1993. The Planter Studies Conference has become a significant regional meeting and the theme of these proceedings, "Family and Community in Planter Nova Scotia, 1759-1800" (growing out of the tradition established by scholars such as John Demos), is particularly relevant to folklorists. In the opening essay, "Family and Community in Early America", Philip Greven Jr. writes of the importance of historical study going beyond a reconstruction of external lives of earlier generations of human beings.

He stresses the need to focus upon their innermost beings, their sense of self, their feelings and fantasies and thoughts, their personalities, their characters and their temperaments. If we do this, we will enhance our understanding of how successive generations of people sustain or transform the ways in which prior generations experienced themselves and their lives (p. 18).

Together the conference papers explore aspects of family, cultural, and religious life. Within the wide range are topics of specific interest to folklorists, such as the papers relating to material culture: Clary Croft and Sharon Croft's "Civilian Everyday Clothing of Adult Planters, 1759-1783" and James Snowden's "Regional Variations in Nova Scotia Planter Furniture."

Separate Spheres, edited by Janet Guildford and Suzanne Morton, is more narrowly focused in that it consists of solicited and specifically written papers rather than those arising from a conference. Articles explore the applicability of the separate-spheres ideology to women's lives in nineteenth-century Maritime Canada. They cover topics ranging from the married women's property law in Nova Scotia to the feminization of teaching and the plight of female industrial workers. Several — Bonnie Huskins's "The Ceremonial Space of Women: Public Procession in Victorian Saint John and Halifax", a text that explores custom, and Suzanne Morton's "Separate Spheres in a Separate World: African-Nova Scotian Women in Late-19th-Century Halifax County", which includes a discussion of women's traditional skills such as wreath and basketmaking — could be defined as having "folklore" topics.

The value of these books to folklorists goes beyond the contribution of scattered articles, however. In general, they provide important historical context. Many of the cultural expressions folklorists study have a long history. For example, W. Roy Mackenzie, one of the earliest ballad collectors in North America, wrote of a time when Nova Scotians eagerly awaited the newest shipment of broadside ballads from Britain (Mackenzie in Fowke and Carpenter 1985: 100). What kind of society embraced this form so enthusiastically? It seems to me that folkloristic textual analyses too often overlook the immediate historical context. Discussions of law, religion, commerce, and family life (including domestic violence) such as those contained in *Intimate Relations* and *Separate Spheres* create a collage of what life was like for earlier generations of Maritimers and a context into which we might fit some of our studies of folk culture.

Secondly, several of the papers suggest new sources for many folklorists. In *Intimate Relations*, Gwendolyn Davies compares diaries kept by father and daughter; Judith Norton draws on court records to develop an understanding of domestic violence; and Elizabeth Mancke assesses women's role in the economy of Horton, Nova Scotia through an analysis of a general store ledger. Folklorists have not yet made full use of these kinds of primary documents, and in this regard the papers present a spectrum of possibilities. For example, because

of men's reliance on the general store as a gathering place, Elizabeth Mancke believes that ledgers might also reveal patterns of male sociability.

The theme of resistance emerges as central in *Separate Spheres*, with articles illustrating ways in which women coped with the constraints of the separate-spheres ideology. A powerful example is Rusty Bitterman's paper on women's involvement in the escheat movement on Prince Edward Island. He documents their physical resistance to landlords' claims, as they actively defended their households and were involved in larger community-organized acts of resistance. Such explorations help focus one's thinking about folklore as resistance that grows out of daily life. How might traditions of witchcraft, for instance, fit into this discussion?

Intimate Relations and *Separate Spheres* show that there is room for more cross-fertilization between historians and folklorists. Just as our work sometimes would be enhanced by a better appreciation of the historical context of the place and traditions we study, so might we be able to contribute to a clearer understanding of particular issues. In her article, Suzanne Morton talks about the dearth of records documenting lives of past African Nova Scotian women. And while Morton draws on Arthur Huff Fauset, a collector of African Nova Scotian folklore in the 1920s, an analysis of his actual texts would reveal more about the inner lives of those who shared their stories. Study of African Nova Scotian material-culture forms — architecture, basketry and gardening — would say still more.

Thus, *Intimate Relations* and *Separate Spheres* offer several things to a folklorist pack rat like myself. They provide a few new articles on folk culture, but more significantly the collections contribute to an expanded understanding of historical context and suggest new sources and new opportunities for future folkloristic investigation.

References Cited

- Mackenzie, W. Roy. 1985. Ballad Singing in Nova Scotia. In *Explorations in Canadian Folklore*, ed. Edith Fowke and Carole H. Carpenter: 96-104. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart. Rpt. *Journal of American Folklore*, 22 (1909): 327-31.
- Fauset, Arthur Huff. 1931. *Folklore from Nova Scotia*. Memoir 24. Philadelphia: American Folklore Society.

DIANE TYE
Memorial University of Newfoundland
St. John's, Newfoundland
