

***Undisciplined Women: Tradition and Culture in Canada.***  
**Edited by By Pauline Greenhill and Diane Tye. (Montreal and  
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style dislike than informed commentary, since the work alluded to, *Piss Christ*, is neither anti-Catholic nor a sculpture, despite its controversial title and materials. When a market-minded artist is said to have given up on “the pretense of cultural significance” (79), Plattner reveals himself: the paradox is only a paradox because some artists are deluded about their own artistic endeavours.

The use of scare quotes around terms is confusing and adds to the implicit debunking: does their use mean “so-called” (implying his own doubt of the term’s accuracy, as on page 42: “his ‘primitive’ style”) or is it to indicate what he considers jargon (such as on the same page, “cultural capital”, or page 60, “diversity”), or is he quoting some unnamed source?

I used this book in an interdisciplinary graduate seminar on visual anthropology. The visual arts students did not think the book had anything relevant to offer them. They found its portrayal of an art community simplistic and flat. For the anthropology students, the book was an old-style ethnography that adhered to an outmoded analytical framework. For me as an anthropologist involved with local arts communities, the book has an anachronistic air, as if the author found himself stranded in a world that operated just beyond his conceptual reach. Not only does the book fail to illuminate questions about art and commodification, it leaves a niggling doubt about some anthropological approaches’ capacity to make sense of worlds even less familiar.

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***Undisciplined Women: Tradition and Culture in Canada.*** Edited by By Pauline Greenhill and Diane Tye. (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1997. P. ii + 306, ISBN 0-7735-1614-X, cloth.)

Produced by a collegial, intellectual powerhouse of independent and university-affiliated Canadian scholars for all readers interested in the past, present, and future of folklore, ethnography, and women’s studies in the Canadian context, the twenty essays in *Undisciplined Women* are most meaningful if read as both a product and a critique of the milieu of the female folklore scholar working within and outside the margins of Canadian academe. The anthology offers a fact-filled and darkly insightful — if somewhat

understated — history of gender, ethnic, and sexual politics in Canadian folkloristics. If this short review can achieve anything on behalf of the body of scholarship contained in this volume, I hope it may encourage humanities and social science scholars above and below the U.S.-Canadian border to put this sophisticated, solid collection of studies of women's reformatory and performative roles in Canadian contexts immediately to use — as a textbook in upper-level undergraduate courses and graduate seminars examining ethnography, disciplinary politics, and the relationships between women's and gender studies approaches and field data.

For starters, the book provides a valuable template for the cooperative, collective construction of a critical, scholarly anthology. As Greenhill and Tye, folklorists at the University of Winnipeg and Memorial University of Newfoundland, respectively, explain in their introduction, the project grew out of communications among the editors and interested scholars at national academic conferences, but also in small regional collectives, which met in less formal settings to discuss and envision the project as a whole. Drafts of all essays contributed were then circulated back to all possible contributors, resulting in a finished product in which each of the final contributors could and did speak to and about the work of the others. Is there any other anthology in North American folkloristics which can boast an editorial process which — disregarding the fear of delays which this might entail — managed to enable twenty scholars to read each other's work and write in true symphony, as an intellectual community, in just such a way?

The essays, editorial prefaces, and section summaries in this volume are fresh, free of jargon, reflexive, and full of grounded theoretical insights on gender, sexuality, race, class, and politics across a wide variety of ethnic and regional groups in Canada. Citations from each of the three anthology sections may serve to justify these descriptors. Given that one of the collective's primary goals was to fill previous disciplinary lacunae — to rectify the undervaluation of women's traditions, women's scholarship, and women's performance in Canadian folklore scholarship — it is not surprising that Section One presents essays which recover and reassess the roles of several remarkable contributors to the study of traditional and popular culture in Canada. Ronald Labelle chronicles the immensely productive career and rich archival legacy of Sr. Catherine Jolicoeur, educator and collector of Acadian legends and tales; Diane Tye analyzes the coded feminism of Jean Heffernan, a Springhill, Nova Scotia newspaperwoman and local ethnographer; Christine St. Peter offers a

provocative discussion of the inadvertent silencing and exploitation involved with using a white, Euro-Canadian collector's book of Native myths and woman-centered stories, rather than using materials collected and presented by First Nations authors themselves. The late Edith Fowke's candid account of her long career as a leading Canadian folklore collector and disseminator is also showcased here. These contributions join forces under the banner of Laurel Doucette's powerful opening essay assessing the ideological approaches in Canadian folklore scholarship which, unlike more reflexive modes, have promoted and sustained the "intellectual colonialization" of various subjects, implicitly or explicitly presented as "other" than the great white (heterosexual) male ethnologist in Canada.

Section Two blossoms into an equally piquant set of considerations of popular and traditional images which background Canadian women's self-definitions. Images considered here range from the malevolent culprits presupposed and pinned by male practitioners of Newfoundland witchcraft remedies, to the Icelandic-Canadian Fjallkona (maternal mountain-woman personifying hearth and homeland) and the "killer dyke" glamorized in thrillers and slasher films, who diverts attention from the less titillating, more ordinary, and complex loving and/or violent realities of lesbian life. In addition, contributors unlock the multigendered and multioriented meanings of folk dance in Cheticamp, male and female cross-dressing in mock wedding rites on the Canadian prairie, and cross-dressing ballads in festival, rural, personal, and archival contexts.

In the third section, the anthology blooms fully into yet another set of thought-provoking essays: contemporary ethnographies of women on the job, women as performers, women as producers, women as creators, across Canada: preaching, gossiping, quilting, laying-on-hands, telling tales, and developing occupational survival strategies. Independent Francophone scholar Vivian Labrie's essay in English, "Help! Me, S/he, and the Boss" — which suggests that subversive alliances between underlings inside and outside corporate and academic institutional venues already form a hero/justice pattern common to fictional genres, films, and folktales (not to mention real life for women in Canadian and American folkloristics), is an ironic masterpiece of social commentary which ought to be required reading at every liberal arts graduate student orientation in North America. In summary, I hope there will be a second volume of *Undisciplined Women*, along the same lines. Could a collaborative project even be in order — to unite the legacy of Jordan and

Kalcik (1985) and other American feminist folklorists with the cooperative inter- and extradisciplinary pluralism advocated by Greenhill and Tye, along with the continuing, fresh, comparative scholarship of the next generations of Canadian and American women in folklore?

### **Reference**

Jordan, Rosan, and Susan Kalcik, eds. 1985. *Women's Folklore, Women's Culture*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

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