Ethnologies

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Gerald L. POCIUS, *A. Place to Belong: Community Order and Everyday Space in Calvert, Newfoundland* (Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991, xx, 350 pp. ISBN 0-7735- 0805-8 $ 44,95 cloth.).

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Gerald L. POCIUS, *A Place to Belong: Community Order and Everyday Space in Calvert, Newfoundland* (Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991, xx, 350 pp. ISBN 0-7735-0805-8 $ 44,95 cloth.).

Calvert is a small unexceptional fishing village located about forty miles south of St. John's on the Atlantic side of Newfoundland's Avalon Peninsula. Its "slightly fewer than five hundred inhabitants" earn their livelihood much as their forebears did: by exploiting the inshore fishing grounds and by harvesting the range of natural resources — the woodlands, meadows, fields, and marshes — which surround the inlet headed by Calvert.

By most assessments Calvert and most other Newfoundland villages like it are regarded as quaint survivals from a bygone age. The usual assumption is that such places are protected from the forces of modernity only by their geographic isolation and economic stagnation. Thus the decline of the true folk culture is inevitable as the material goods and the ideology of mass culture from the outside world penetrate into such remote "pristine" areas of folk culture. Indeed, this fear for the impending loss of our traditional past underlies much of the intellectual and academic advocacy for heritage preservation. Nevertheless, as Gerald Pocius argues in his outstanding book, *A Place to Belong: Community Order and Everyday Space in Calvert, Newfoundland,* reports of the death of the traditional ways in the Newfoundland village of Calvert have been greatly exaggerated!

In Calvert, the foundations of culture are more spatial than material. Once they have outlived their function, old buildings are simply torn down or renovated. Traditional household items are easily replaced with modern appliances, without any attendant sense of unease or regret. The microwave oven, the video cassette recorder and the satellite dish sit as easily in the cultural milieu of Calvert as do the dressers, tables, and stoves of earlier times. Change in the material expression of culture does not imply that the culture itself has changed. The essence of Calvert does not lie in the things which are owned and used by its people but in the social patterning of the spaces which hold these artifacts, and in

the complex of the attitudes, values, and obligations that delineate and structure the spaces of the community.

Space, Pocius argues, is the key to understanding culture. Understand the way in which space and places are perceived and used and one may begin to understand the way in which a community is socially structured, and to see the patterning which creates a community. This, of course, is more easily said than done. Indeed, what makes *A Place To Belong: Community Order and Everyday Space in Calvert, Newfoundland* , such a remarkable book is that it could only have been written by someone with keen powers of observation who saw the community from the perspective of an outsider, yet who had become such a familiar and trusted figure that he/she was able to become virtually a part of the community itself. To accomplish this difficult task necessitates the devotion of years of research time, but it is clear from reading this book that to Gerald Pocius this was a labour of love.

The book falls naturally into three major sections. The first, entitled "Preliminary Places", discusses the affinity to place felt by the people of Calvert and reviews the place of Calvert in history, describing its settlement and growth according to both oral tradition and the documentary archival record. Landscapes and gender, and property and work, are dealt with in the second section under the rubric of "Producing Places". The final section, "Consuming Spaces", describes and interprets the various aspects of material culture in Calvert and addresses the spatial rituals behind patterns of visiting, the choice of house location, the design and construction of houses, the social arrangement of space in their interiors, and the appearance of their exteriors.

In his concluding chapter, Pocius neatly synthesizes his material and provides an excellent, incisive discussion of the complex set of social relationships "which constitute Calvert's space". Although all of Calvert's spaces are used in different ways by different groups, Pocius argues, some places are gender specific, others are connected to certain neighborhood and family groups. Despite this diversity, there is a unity in that the community space as a whole is generally a shared experience. It is this commonality of experience which gives Calvert its sense of place, for in the sharing of place is found the essence of everyday life that orders the community.

A Place To Belong is profusely illustrated with photographs culled from archival sources and also from the author's personal documentation of Calvert since 1974. Numerous maps, diagrams, tables, and even an aerial photograph of the settlement, complement a text which is written in a clear straightforward style which is a delight to read. For the academic, the text is thoroughly referenced and an extensive bibliography and index conclude the volume.

This book will appeal to anyone with even a passing interest in Newfoundland's social history, folklore or landscape. Regardless of the geographic orientation of interest it belongs in the library of all folklorists, cultural geogra-

phers, social anthropologists and sociologists. I think it is safe to say that this book will become a model for others to follow, but Gerald Pocius has set a high standard for those who might aspire to emulate his work.

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William W. SAVAGE, Jr. *Comic Books and America, 1945-1954*
   (Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1990, 151 pp., ISBN
   0-8061-2305-2).

In quantitative terms of production and consumption alone, comic books must be considered a socially significant medium of popular culture. During the postwar, "golden age" decade of comic books in the United States, it is estimated that 500 to 650 comic book titles were issued each month for an astounding total production of sixty million copies monthly (xi). As cultural artifacts, however, they present complications that plague the analysis of many sectors of popular culture and folklore, and such factors may have contributed to their general disregard by academics. These include: their ephemerality and the problems this poses in accessing and publishing data; a confusion of medium and content; the dilemmas of analyzing a complex media conflation; their low-brow status; their association with children's culture; and their reputation as a cause of social problems.

Notwithstanding these difficulties, several folklorists have examined comic books, and their cousins the comic strip and the cartoon, from various viewpoints: in a comparative frame with the folktale (R.W. Brednich, Harold Schechter); from a feminist outlook (Kay Stone); as being structurally analogous to myth (Ellen Rhoads); and as influencing narrative performance (Sylvia Grider). In addition, Martin Barker's thoughtful and provocative case studies in *Comics: Ideology, Power and the Critics* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989) should be mentioned along with folkloristic approaches because of his use of the structuralist methodology of Vladimir Propp.

While there have been few sociocultural surveys of these materials (exceptions being M. Thomas Inge, *Comics as Culture* [Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1990] and Randall Harrison, *The Cartoon: Communication*