

Pauline GREENHILL, *Ethnicity in the Mainstream: Three Studies of English Canadian Culture in Ontario*, (Montreal & Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994, viii + 193 p., acknowledgments, notes, bibliography, index, ISBN 0-7735-1171-3, \$34.95)

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questions it raises. Hopefully, future studies will draw on these to provide more fully satisfying accounts.

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“Culture, none; manners, beastly,” the English explorer in an anthropological cautionary tale is supposed to have reported about the “natives” he discovered, thereby elevating British practices as the absolute exemplar of civilization and “culture.” In the twentieth century, as Dean MacCannell and others have noted, the assignment of “culture,” although not the distribution of power, has been inverted. “Mainstream,” white Americans, Canadians, and Europeans see themselves as cultureless, colourless, and bland; we insist that only exotic “others”—ethnics and natives—still have an authentic culture. With her new book, Pauline Greenhill takes us a giant step further toward making sense of this nexus of ethnic identity, culture, and power and of folklorists' role in it.

The study of ethnicity in Canada has been flawed, Greenhill argues, by an implicit reliance upon three erroneous assumptions: 1) ethnicity has been seen as a quality of minority groups only, with the term “applied to a specific group of sociocultural collectives, always excluding Englishness” (15); 2) ethnic carnival and display events have been perceived as benignly apolitical; 3) English-background Canadians, because they have not been considered an ethnic group, have been seen as lacking carnivalesque traditions. In this provocative and penetrating book, Greenhill turns all three assumptions on their heads. Her crucial—and well-supported—assertion is that English Canadians behave just like any other ethnic group to the extent that they use various forms of display to propound and maintain their cultural distinctiveness, but that they are unique in denying or masking this display and that such denial—such self-construction as non-ethnic—is central to their (also unique) use of carnivalesque cultural display to maintain social dominance. Greenhill sets out to “deconstruct the ideological employment of culture as a method of marginalization” (28).

Greenhill's technique is to bring together three topically and methodologically disparate case studies: of narratives told by recent English immigrants, the practices of Morris dance groups, and the Stratford Shakespearean Festival. Some may find this ranging across genres distracting or theoretically problematic, but the convergence of the three investigations makes for a particularly convincing argument concerning the submerged alignment of ethnicity, gender, race, class, and power.

English immigrants, Greenhill notes, find life in Canada to be far more different from life in England than they expected. In their stories they complain about the strangeness of Canadian practices and assert the superiority of the English alternatives as both more polite and more practical. While thus separating themselves from Canadian culture, however, they also depict themselves as non-ethnic because English is their native tongue. Englishness is portrayed even in a private, small-scale genre as simultaneously superior and normal.

Morris, the revival of an English dance custom now engaged in recreationally by middle-class, usually liberal men and women, seems politically harmless, but Greenhill reveals its problematic aspect. While contemporary scholarship demonstrates that Morris was a quèting custom—a means whereby working-class people could extract money from the upper classes in hard times—contemporary dancers prefer earlier scholarly explanations that create ties to an agrarian, pagan past or to medieval pageantry.

Because “dance” tends to be gendered feminine, dancers stress the male/English (in contrast to the female/ethnic) quality of Morris to demonstrate the distinctiveness of this expressive activity, but thereby denigrate the female, the ethnic, and the non-white. Greenhill identifies Morris as a form of powerful, English carnivalesque behaviour and suggests that, although it now functions regressively, it has the potential to subvert hegemony. The study of the Stratford, Ontario, Shakespearean Festival reveals the English carnivalesque in action on the largest stage, yet also demonstrates that at this scale there is plenty of resistance to hegemonic forces. Favoured accounts of the founding and maintenance of the Festival paint “culture” as British, male, non-commercial, and external. While the identity of the town as a manufacturing centre remains buried, local accounts and practices emphasize authentic links between local culture and Shakespearean Culture, connect the local/feminine with the authentic and fine, depict as positive the unusual alignment local/female/money-making, and promote tourist appreciation of the local (parks, bed and breakfasts) as well as the imported Festival culture. In contrast to the covert debate about Morris, in Stratford the dialogue is overt and brisk.

There are points, especially in the chapter on Morris, at which Greenhill's discussion of the shifting alignment of factors becomes dizzying, but the common structural underpinning to the three methodologically distinct studies serves her well. Different genres, different research methodologies, different audiences,

different scales: and yet the same issues manifestly do recur, convincingly demonstrating Greenhill's contention that there is no essential English identity in Canada, but that there is a common disputed cultural territory in which power and legitimacy are at stake.

Greenhill's contribution is not limited, furthermore, to the central argument of the book. In the course of building that case she also makes significant methodological and theoretical points with application in areas quite separate from the study of ethnicity. In chapter 2 she proposes the concept of the "generalization narrative," a story, not about a specific past incident, but about how the respondent *used to* do something. While feminist scholars have identified this as a quality of some women's stories, most narrative scholars have tended to ignore such accounts as lacking the "it happened one time" quality essential to "narrative." Greenhill urges acknowledgment of this kind of discourse as a recognized mode of communication about the past, an emic genre. Her capsule critique in chapter 3 of early and contemporary Morris scholarship will be of interest to many who examine traditional festivity in the light of economics and class relations. Her participation in a Morris group also prompts a telling meditation on the curious experience of doing field work in a situation wherein the role of group-internal ethnographer/documenter/explainer is culturally recognized and institutionalized.

The slimness of Greenhill's volume belies the importance of her case. Her book, she states, is "intended to raise issues rather than to resolve them" (152). Indeed, her work challenges all of us who study festival or ethnic culture or folklore in the mainstream to reconsider our practices, the alliances between our disciplines and the dominant culture in which most participate, and particularly the acceptance of the ethnic/mainstream dichotomy. Before continuing to apply our old categories we must examine the crucial differences *and similarities* in the self-construction conducted by members of a country's mainstream and a country's minorities and we must understand the extent to which the denial of ethnic identity on the part of the mainstream serves to support classism, sexism, and racism.

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