

Book Reviews

ANNE OF TIM HORTONS: GLOBALIZATION AND THE
RESHAPING OF ATLANTIC-CANADIAN LITERATURE.

BY HERB WYILE.

WILFRED LAURIER UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2011. 294 PAGES. \$42.95.

The contrasts at the heart of Herb Wyle's *Anne of Tim Hortons: Globalization and the Reshaping of Atlantic-Canadian Literature* are encapsulated in its title. The quaint pastoral vision of Atlantic Canada conjured by Anne of Green Gables is still a tourist draw, and yet, Wyle writes, "a young girl in Eastern Canada is less likely to be found in a quaint gabled farmhouse than in an internationally successful chain doughnut store." Atlantic Canada is indeed a region where the impression of an old and traditional culture comes into sharp contrast with the realities of globalization. Wyle's book locates these disparities within the region's burgeoning literature, arguing that "[c]ontemporary writing in the region reflects its position within a larger, postmodern, global consumer culture and, more importantly, reflects the degree to which the political and economic marginality of the region has been exacerbated by a neo-liberal emphasis on competitiveness, mobility, and profitability." Beneath the tongue-in-cheek wit of the title is a serious engagement with the economic and social dynamics of Atlantic Canada and their profound impact on the region's culture and artistic production.

Wyle's corpus, then, is contemporary, but his scope is wide, encompassing novels, plays, memoirs and poetry from all four Atlantic provinces, and including both powerful voices of the Eastern Canadian canon—the David Adams Richards, the Alistair MacLeods—and those who have not received much critical attention to date, such as Donna Morrissey. The analysis here is current and timely, engaging with recent works like Lisa Moore's masterful 2009 novel *February*. Wyle shows how major changes such as increasing out-migration and urbanization, crises such as the collapse of the cod fishery and mining industries, and the shifts to offshore oil and tourism as major industries, have all contributed to both regional redefinition, and a persistent cultural vitality.

Despite this sea change in the economic and social picture of the region, there is still a tendency, amongst readers, reviewers, and even liter-

ary critics, to read Atlantic Canadian literature for traces of the exotic and the traditional. Wyile effectively demonstrates how the writers of the East Coast play with the disparity between outsider's expectations and the realities of life in the region, and how they resist both damaging stereotypes and the kind of neo-liberal thinking that devalues the attachment to place. As Wyile points out his writers' resistance to the marginalizing forces of the tourist gaze and the Folk paradigm, he also resists them himself, refusing to allow the literary criticism of Atlantic Canadian writing to fall into the conservative traps of economic determinism and traditional regionalism.

Ironically, globalization does not lead to a reimagining of Atlantic Canada as a cosmopolitan centre; instead it works to entrench a commodified and homogeneous perspective of the region as a quaint culture of fiddlers and Irish dancers, the Great White East. In a chapter on "minority" writing, Wyile shows how what he calls "the exclusiveness of Folk stereotypes" is increasingly being challenged by Native, Black, and women writers. The region's economic pressures have admittedly prevented the kind of large-scale immigration that other parts of Canada have seen, making it much less demographically diverse. Yet there is also a long and important Black and Aboriginal history and community here. Wyile shows how work by Rita Joe, Maxine Tynes, George Elliott Clarke and others resists the erasure of the region's diversity. Africville is as much Atlantic Canada as Lunenburg.

As the author and editor of two important books on historical Canadian literature, *Speculative Fictions* and *Speaking in the Past Tense*, Wyile effectively applies his expertise in this area to his reading of Atlantic Canadian literature. Wyile contends persuasively that historical fiction is different in Atlantic Canada, displaying a unique set of preoccupations "that are very much related to the effects of restructuring and the political and economic marginality of the region." Historical fiction, here, is not invested in perpetuating a vision of Atlantic Canada as a throwback to a simpler time. Quite the opposite. He adds that "The historical fiction of the region, particularly of Newfoundland and Labrador, is thoroughly rooted in this economic and cultural reconfiguration and in the challenge to prevailing Folk stereotypes of Atlantic Canada. Thus it is a central part of the literary response to the current economic, political, and cultural tensions in the region." Works by writers like Wayne Johnston, Bernice Morgan, and Harry Thurston demonstrate how historical fiction often uses the past as a commentary on the present.

The particular attention that Wyile pays to Newfoundland and Labrador here is one of the book's main merits. Despite the impressive volume

of literary production in this province in recent years, there have been no recent monographs devoted to Newfoundland literature. Work on Maritime literature has rightly excluded texts from this province, as The Maritimes' distinct regional identity developed before Newfoundland joined Confederation in 1949. Wyle's analysis of work from Newfoundland here is therefore a valuable contribution; it is also both well-justified and carefully navigated. Wyle pays careful attention to Newfoundland's distinctiveness within this region: its long colonial history prior to Confederation, its brief existence as a self-governing dominion, its ongoing alienation from the rest of Canada. Yet he also demonstrates how the demographic, economic and geographical similarities between these provinces merit comparison, despite the fact that the term "Atlantic Canada" is relatively new. There is never a sense here that the borders of Wyle's subject of study have been arbitrarily drawn. Wyle effectively shows how reading the literature of these provinces together can be a fruitful endeavour, as they all are responding to the common challenges of demographic and economic change. Wyle demonstrates, moreover, how regional identities and perspectives play a key role in an increasingly globalized world.

Anne of Tim Hortons will be an important contribution to the study of both specific authors and Atlantic Canadian literature more broadly. But as a text that turns its attention to the realities of regional definition and equality in Canada, and to the impact that globalization and neo-liberal thinking has on cultural production, it will also be an important book for anyone who studies Canadian literature as a whole.

JENNIFER BOWERING DELISLE

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*NARRATIVES OF CITIZENSHIP: INDIGENOUS AND DIASPORIC
PEOPLES UNSETTLE THE NATION-STATE.*

EDITED BY ALOYS N.M. FLEISCHMANN, NANCY VAN STYVENDALE
AND CODY MCCARROLL.

EDMONTON: UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA PRESS, 2011. 358 PAGES. \$39.95.

Starting with the premise that a passport is a kind of book, Amitava Kumar argues that "the immigration officer, holding a passport in his hand, is also a reader, but unlike the immigrant, whose reading of the passport in his hand inevitably evokes personal memories of past experiences and connections to various places, the officer is paid to make a connection only between the

book and person standing in front of him” (*Passport Photos* [University of California Press, 2000] 3). With the growing use of biometric technologies, it is increasingly difficult for citizens to access or understand the networks of coded writing used to produce instrumentalized “readings” of them. And so, as the editors of *Narratives Citizenship* argue, it becomes particularly important to “interrogate and realign entrenched reading habits that construct the citizen” (xv) and, more generally, to consider how “citizenship is narrativized” (xiv).

Narratives of Citizenship succeeds in “enlarging the interdisciplinary scope of citizenship scholarship” through its careful attention to the kinds of citizenship claims made in and by literature, film and photography. Yet, there are some important things missing. Although the Introduction begins with an incisive commentary on the refusal of a number of reserves to be counted in the most recent census, very few of the collection’s essays offer a sustained engagement with official state documents. Also, regrettably little attention is paid to the real or imagined experience of contemporary undocumented workers, migrant workers, asylum seekers, and others who live within our borders but are denied the basic rights of citizens. This is particularly regrettable given the wealth of recent creative writing that takes up these themes. (See, for example, Jane Urquhart’s *Sanctuary Line*, Rawi Hage’s *Cockroach*, Michael Helm’s *City of Refuge*, Souvankham Thammavongsa’s *Found*, Kyo Maclear’s *The Letter Opener*, and Dionne Brand’s *What We All Long For and Inventory*.)

On the other hand, the collection contains a number of strong essays that consider how First Nations have responded to the assimilative call of universal citizenship in Canada. Most notably, Daniel Coleman surveys the historical background to the ongoing land dispute between the Six Nations of the Grand River and the federal and Ontario governments in order to present a very lucid and carefully grounded account of the ways in which the “Eurocentric assumption of the positive good of universal citizenship has enabled successive British colonial and Canadian governments to poach upon Six Nations territory” (177). Focusing on late-nineteenth-century B.C. missionary narratives, Aloys Fleischmann offers a cogent analysis of the important but limited role of mixed-blood children in such narratives. Specifically, he suggests that the brief references to mixed-blood children represent them as “anti-citizens” and reveal much about settler anxieties to do with intermarriage, conflicting traditions of gendered wealth transmission, and citizenship.

Following James Clifford, who argues for a “loosening [of] the common opposition of ‘indigenous’ and ‘diasporic’ forms of life” (quoted by Fleischmann and Van Styvendale, xxvi), the editors foreground connections between Indigenous and diasporic peoples in national and global contexts. The inclusion of a cluster of essays that cross-reference one another in their exploration of the possibilities and challenges of citizenship for diasporic peoples creates a valuable archive for scholars interested in the politics of displacement or the losses felt by the displaced. Here, Jennifer Bowering Delisle’s essay on Wayne Johnston’s *Baltimore’s Mansion* and the Newfoundland diaspora is notable for its original and engaging account of the crucial role that nostalgic narratives of out-migration play in creating Newfoundland as “the nation of origin”(xxxv). Also, in response to Lily Cho’s essay tracing the importance of melancholia for an understanding of “diasporic citizenship,” David Chariandy offers a timely call for a carefully grounded citizenship discourse that attends to the particular challenges faced by racialized Canadians: for example, he supports his suggestion that the category Black Canadian might “articulate a concept like diasporic citizenship in ways that are distinct and important to appreciate” (324) by demonstrating that Blacks have been perceived as “a peculiar threat to citizenship not simply because they are imagined to be incompatible both culturally and ‘racially’ with Canadian and customs ..., but specifically because the very abuse they suffered through the institution of slavery is imagined to have fatally damaged their ability to partake responsibly in citizenship” (326).

All of the essays mentioned so far take up aspects of Canadian citizenship, but five of the thirteen essays collected in *Narratives of Citizenship* do not focus on Canadian material. Given the recent explosion of creative and scholarly material on Canadian citizenship, and given the previously mentioned gaps in this collection, the decision to intersperse essays focused on Canada with essays on non-Canadian material is surprising. However, a few of these essays are strong. Most notably, Paul Ugor’s examination of what Nigerian popular video films reveal about changing patterns of citizenship, and more particularly about the active mobilization of youth, is fascinating and offers a very useful counter-example to scholars interested in voter apathy in Canada and across much of the western hemisphere.