



Anne of Tim Hortons: Globalization and the Reshaping of Atlantic-Canadian Literature

By Herb Wylie



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Anne of Tim Hortons: Globalization and the Reshaping of Atlantic-Canadian Literature is a study of the work of over twenty contemporary Atlantic-Canadian writers that counters the widespread impression of Atlantic Canada as a quaint and backward place. By examining their treatment of work, culture, and history, author Herb Wylie highlights how these writers resist the image of Atlantic Canadians as improvident and regressive, if charming, folk.

After an introduction that examines the current place of the region within the Canadian federation and the broader context of economic globalization, *Anne of Tim Hortons* explores how Atlantic-Canadian writers present a picture of the region that is much more complex and less quaint than the stereotypes through which it is typically viewed. Through the works of authors such as Michael Winter, Lisa Moore, George Elliott Clarke, Rita Joe, Frank Barry, Alistair MacLeod, and Bernice Morgan, among others, the book looks at the changing (and increasingly corporate) nature of work, the cultural diversification and subversive self-consciousness of Atlantic-Canadian literature, and Atlantic-Canadian writers' often revisionist approach to the region's history.

What these writers are engaged in, the book contends, is a kind of collective readjustment of the image of the region. Rather than a marginal place stranded outside of time, Atlantic Canada in these works is very much caught up in contemporary economic, political, and cultural developments, particularly the broad sweep of economic globalization.

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Editorial Review

Review

“One of the most striking revelations of *Anne of Tim Hortons* is the parallel paths of contemporary Atlantic Canadian literature and historiography. The work Wyle surveys reinforces the conclusions of the Acadiensis school of regional history. This school?ably represented by such historians as E.R. Forbes, David Frank, and Margaret Conrad?has consistently challenged the myth of Maritime conservatism. Through their studies of such topics as the feminist movement in late nineteenth-century Halifax, labour disputes in the Cape Breton coal fields, and regional cooperation among provincial governments in the 1950s and 1960s, the Acadiensis school has shown that the Maritimes was not the home of an entrenched conservatism, and was instead often at the forefront of adopting radical solutions to social, economic, and political problems. This is a historiography with which Wyle is well acquainted, for although his is clearly a work of literary analysis, he has thoroughly grounded in the region's history his study of the representations of Atlantic Canada in contemporary fiction.... *Anne of Tim Hortons* is an excellent overview of the ways that recent English-language Atlantic Canadian literature has challenged the myth of the idyllic, antimodern region to which so many continue to adhere. Well written and engaging, this study provides a convincing account of neoliberalism's impact on Atlantic Canadian fiction that is thoroughly situated in the region's history and historiography. This is a welcome addition to work on the region's literature, and would be equally at home in classes on Atlantic Canadian culture and Atlantic Canadian literature.” (Corey Slumkoski *H-Canada, H-Net Reviews*, May 2014)

“When you have one of the best Canadian literature book titles of the last several decades on your cover there is the danger that the contents will not live up to it. Herb Wyle more than delivers on the title's promise. This engaging and lively discussion of contemporary Atlantic-Canadian literature offers far more than an explication of the ideology that situates a fictional creation, the world-famous girl with the ginger hair, within a network of commodities that also contains Canada's favourite doughnut store chain. Simply put, Wyle's impassioned study reminds us why literature matters in neoliberal times. It matters because, as Wyle demonstrates repeatedly, literature can explore the human costs of living in a time of unfettered free-market economics in subtle and creative ways that render visible ambiguities as well as social and material inequities.... The book's introduction offers a compelling synthesis of theory about neoliberalism and globalization, as well as an energetic discussion of how and why contemporary Atlantic-Canadian writers understand and contest the political, economic, and cultural realities that surround them.... Wyle's study is a convincing analysis of a literature that articulates and reshapes the cultural and economic effects of globalization in a region that is often considered to be off the map, behind the times, or, at the very least, marginal to the centres of power. Equally impressive and significant is the confidence and clarity of the prose style: here is a book that is written out of a deep feeling for and extensive knowledge about the literary culture and social history of the four provinces. And that?quite apart from the seduction of the catchy title and the shock of red hair adorning the cover of the book?is the reason why *Anne of Tim Hortons* is such an absorbing study to read.” (Danielle Fuller *English Studies in Canada*, 38.2)

“Anyone interested in Canadian literature or Atlantic Canadian culture will welcome this excellent overview of the re-imagining of Atlantic Canada. Indeed, given its engagement with political economy and especially of region, I can imagine many geographers (of whatever region) and political theorists (of whatever sphere) finding interest in its careful articulation of literature and non-literary theory. No decent university library will be without it; anyone remotely in the field should own it.” (Daniel Samson)

“[*Anne of Tim Hortons*] is a significant contribution to Canadian literary criticism and cultural studies for three major reasons. Firstly, its regionalist focus is thoroughly resistant to neoliberalism, using the theories of space à la Edward Soja and David Harvey. It problematizes, in the manner of Ian McKay and James Overton, nostalgia for ‘folk’ culture and themes often driven by tourist dollars and Central Canadian chauvinism. It astutely explores the multiple ways in which so much contemporary literature of Atlantic Canada imaginatively contests the negative dictates of globalized capital. All of these approaches simultaneously allow Wyile to foreground and focus upon what is culturally distinct about each of his selected literary examples.... Secondly, the book's multidisciplinary introduction, like the framing political-economic, historical, and cultural material and analyses for each of the literary works under study, can serve as exemplary models for materialist, politically engaged critiques of other contemporary Canadian and postcolonial literatures.... Thirdly.... time will tell to what extent *Anne of Tim Hortons* is recognized as an indispensable canary in the coalmine for Atlantic Canadians and Canadian cultures.” (David Leahy *Canadian Literature*, 214, Autumn 2012)

“In *Anne of Tim Hortons* Herb Wyile makes a compelling and sometimes provocative argument about the effects of globalization on Atlantic-Canadian literature, for despite its economic and political problems, Atlantic Canada is a remarkably vital area of literary activity, with many prize-winning novels and internationally respected authors. Regionalism is at its best in Wyile's book, which should be read by anyone interested in Canadian literature.” (Tracy Ware)

“Wyile's study brings together much of his previous work on Atlantic Canadian literature (and adds a great deal of new material). In addition to a fantastic title, which always causes a stir when people come in my office and see the book on my desk, *Anne of Tim Hortons* provides a comprehensive examination of the relationship between contemporary English writers in Atlantic Canada and what he calls the ‘folk paradigm.’ Leaning heavily on McKay's *Quest of the Folk* as well as Thom Workman's analysis of the impact of globalization on Atlantic Canada's economy, Wyile suggests that contemporary Atlantic Canadian writing is characterized by a defiant tone in which writers call attention to the disparity between the expectations of outsiders and the conditions of life in the region. While visitors to Atlantic Canada might look for a quaint region steeped in history and free of the pressures of modern society, Wyile suggests that contemporary writers such as Lynn Coady and Edward Riche insist that Canada's East Coast has been, like every other place in the world, reshaped by globalization, the expansion of consumer culture, and an increasingly neo-liberal climate all of which seem to counteract received ideas about the region. Wyile's critical introduction blends the work of Atlantic Canadian scholars from a variety of disciplines, including history, literary studies, and political economy, and employs them alongside major international theorists such as Edward Soja and Henri Lefebvre. Wyile's study focuses on three key elements in the changing nature of life in the region: the rise of the service sector that pushes ‘flexible’ employment, the influence of tourism (an economic strategy that he suggests has actually commodified underdevelopment in the region at the same time as it has inspired writers to satirize the pre-packaged version of regional culture it creates), and the role of historical fiction in charting ‘the region's tenuous place in Confederation, the impact of economic trends and the restructuring of work, the experience of marginalized groups, and the commodification of cultures and heritage’ (169). The wide range of texts that Wyile selects demonstrate a collective resistance to the folk paradigm and the commodified, over-simplified, and romanticized version of Atlantic Canada that circulates outside the region and to a certain degree within it as well. I think it is safe to say that, for the most part, Atlantic Canadian literary criticism is in a very good place.” (Peter Thompson *Acadiensis*, Winter/Spring 2012)

About the Author

Herb Wyile is a professor of English at Acadia University. He is the author of *Speculative Fictions: Contemporary Canadian Novelists and the Writing of History* (2002) and *Speaking in the Past Tense*:

Canadian Novelists on Writing Historical Fiction (WLU Press, 2007). He co-edited, with Jeanette Lynes, *Surf's Up! The Rising Tide of Atlantic-Canadian Literature* (2008) and created the website *Waterfront Views: Contemporary Writing of Atlantic Canada*.

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