

Jennifer Bowering Delisle, *The Newfoundland Diaspora: Mapping the Literature of Out-Migration*. Waterloo, ON: Wilfred Laurier UP, 2013.

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Novel theorizations of diaspora have proliferated in the last few years, particularly with interventions from transnational, queer, and globalization studies (Gopinath 2005). Similarly, diasporic literature has been subjected to exhaustive analysis from literary critics in Canadian Studies, who have insisted on exploring how the rhetoric of tolerance that is intrinsic in official versions of multiculturalism masks race, sex, and class issues (Kamboureli and Miki 2007). Contemporary diasporic writers have also played a crucial role in examining hegemonic constructions of Canada and Canadian identity and challenging constricted definitions of subjectivity and nation (Gunew 2009). The particular case of Newfoundland, nonetheless, needs further examination, particularly of the applicability of the term “diasporic literature” in this context. It is here where Bowering Delisle’s book *The Newfoundland Diaspora: Mapping the Literature of Out-Migration* (2013) makes a timely and original contribution to the field, within and beyond the confines of the Canadian imaginary. Through a detailed analysis of a variety of 20th-century texts, this study proposes alternative lenses through which to look at the complex phenomenon of Newfoundland out-migration and its literature, paying particular attention to the affective and ethical realms. This turn to Newfoundland literature as diasporic writing becomes the central tenet of a study that resists chronological or generic order. Instead, Delisle takes on a comparative approach, cutting across different periods and genres, thus bringing the reader on a transnational journey within the borders of the nation. This is particularly relevant in the context of Newfoundland, since nationalist tensions, as the author claims, have been a shaping force in the history of this territory in relation to the rest of Canada before and after

Confederacy. As Delisle's study demonstrates, Newfoundland diasporic writers certainly demonstrate an awareness of these processes.

A particular strength of the book is the attention that Delisle pays to affective terrain, an area of study that has grown in popularity in the Canadian context, particularly in the social sciences and the humanities due to Massumi (2002) and others, although there are, as yet, just a few examples to be found in literary criticism (Brydon 2007). The author manages to re-examine the entanglements between diasporic subjectivity and affect in innovative ways, particularly in Part II, where she analyses Donna Morrissey's novel *What They Wanted* (2008). In the following chapter, Delisle coins the term "experiential nostalgia" in order to examine how Carl Leggo's work revisits the trope of nostalgia as a productive force, particularly for diasporic populations. By resisting a sentimentalized nostalgia, the author claims that Leggo's poetry conveys a kind of countermelancholy that pushes readers to think of the socially-constructed concepts of history and belonging differently. While Delisle makes a strong point in stressing the centrality of affect, particularly loss, in her analysis of Newfoundland diasporic literature, I believe this section should address more explicitly how this form of experiential nostalgia can mobilize political intervention. In the study *Affective Mapping: Melancholia and the Politics of Modernism* (2008), for instance, cultural critic Jonathan Flatley positions history at the centre of his analysis in order to conceptualize melancholia as an affective energy that can enable social transformation. In a similar line of argumentation to Judith Butler (2004), Flatley proposes to look at melancholia as a site of resistance to hegemonic structures that have historically shaped the lives of subjugated populations. His concept of collective melancholias could be useful in tracing the historicity of such affective routes in the particular context of Newfoundland diasporic literature.

In the memoir *A Map to the Door of No Return*, Caribbean-Canadian poet Dionne Brand claims that to live in the Black Diaspora is “to live as a fiction--a creation of empires, and also self-creation” (19). In related ways, Delisle’s study suggests that to inhabit the Newfoundland diaspora also involves a process of self-invention where the imagination plays a crucial role in reconstructing diasporic subjectivities. Part III thus becomes extremely relevant in that the author examines the works of figures such as E. J. Pratt and Wayne Johnston through a revised theorization of “authenticity” and “appropriation,” thus challenging received versions of regionalism, historiography, and nationalism. The analysis then transitions into a necessary examination of the roles that the categories of race and ethnicity play in the *oeuvre* of Newfoundland diasporic literature. In the last section of the book, the author proposes an analysis of Helen M. Buss/Margaret Clarke’s *Memoirs from Away: A New Found Land Girlhood* (1999) and David Macfarlane’s family memoir, *The Danger Tree* (1991) in terms of what she refers to as a “strategic ethnicity” (149). Such a bold move allows the author to propose a novel critical modification of the loaded term “ethnicity” to investigate the ways that Newfoundlanders often strategically construct their identity as ethnic in order to mark their difference within Canadian society during its multicultural make-over. By examining diasporic subjects whose identities are constantly subjected to processes of interrogation and renewal, the writers analyzed in this study are shown to destabilize fixed notions of identity, home, and nation. Thus Delisle’s study compellingly opens up new spaces for the redefinition of Newfoundland subjectivity and its relation to received versions of multiculturalism in Canada.

Works Cited

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