

Ana María Fraile-Marcos, ed. 2014. *Literature and the Glocal City: Reshaping the English Canadian Imaginary*. New York and London: Routledge. 195 pp. ISBN: 978-1-138-77563-3.

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Volume twenty-nine of Routledge's prestigious "Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Literature" series brings together ten insightful essays addressing both the impact of globalization on Canadian culture and the ways in which critical discourses are dealing with it. This is not an unprecedented endeavor, as for the last decade a number of monographs and collections have attempted to "unsettle" Canadian literature—to echo the subtitle of Laura Moss's *Is Canada Postcolonial?* (2003)—from different approaches. However, *Literature and the Glocal City* makes an original contribution to ongoing critical conversations on the subject by locating a niche in the interface of the global and the local. The work's emphasis on the city as the hub where these two opposing forces struggle for control displaces the canonical preference for Nature (with a capital "n") in traditional literary and cultural analyses which found in the natural environment the *essence* of Canadian identity. While the conceptualization of space continues to be vitally important, and indeed one might say that it binds the essays together, the book turns towards more recent understandings of space as relational, and at the same time fraught with conflict and with fresh possibilities. Drawing from theorists such as Doreen Massey, Marc Augé, Edward Soja, Manuel Castells and Zygmunt Bauman, the book's contributors strive to resituate the study of Canadian Literature by engaging with diverse literary manifestations of the trope of the 'glocal' city. For the editor, Ana María Fraile-Marcos, Canadian cities are thus reimagined as "sites of resistance, conflict, creativity, and agency that challenge or alter previous homogenizing understandings of globalization and exclusionist imaginings of national subjectivity and (literary) identity" (8).

To that purpose, Fraile-Marcos has brought together an international team of scholars who examine Canadian literature from within and without, crisscrossing the nation from city to city. *Literature and the Glocal City* opens with two chapters on indigenity. This is an interesting editorial choice, suggesting as it does that indigenous matters deserve prominence in all things Canadian. Deena Rymhs focuses on two plays by Métis

playwright Marie Clements, *The Unnatural and Accidental Women* (1999) and *Burning Vision* (2003), to reflect on mobility, territory, and the racialization of space or, as the chapter's title proposes, "Mobility and its Disenchantments" (21-38). The earlier play memorializes the women murdered by Gilbert Paul Jordan in Vancouver's downtown Eastside between 1965 and 1988, eight of whom were indigenous, thus exposing the racialized histories of violence within segregated urban space. *Burning Vision* expands those insights onto a transnational sphere, the so-called "highway of the atom" connecting the extraction of uranium in the Northwest Territories via North American laboratories to the atomic bomb's targets in 1945 Japan. For Rymhs, Clements's fusing of worlds is paradigmatic of a glocal imaginary. Less enthusiastic about her chosen corpus is Michèle Lacombe in the second chapter, "Embodying the Glocal" (39-54), which examines how Caribbean writer Tessa McWatt tackles immigrant and indigenous ideas of home in her first novel, *Out of My Skin* (1998). Set in Montreal during the 1990 Oka crisis concerning Mohawk defence of their ancestral burial grounds, this novel has received wide critical attention to date precisely because of its unusual double perspective. Lacombe, however, contends that, while it successfully highlights how the city is inhabited by people with different kinds and degrees of agency, ultimately it fails to support indigenous rights and land claims, preferring to endorse a neoliberal version of multiculturalism.

"From Rowanwood to Downtown" (55-68) turns the gaze towards Toronto and sets out to account for the changing representations of the city over fifty years. Coral Ann Howells's contrastive analysis of Phyllis Brett Young's *The Torontonians* (1960) and Maggie Helwig's *Girls Fall Down* (2008) allows her to identify a shift from the modern to the postmodern, and from the affluent suburb to the inner city as a site of social exclusion. Furthermore, Howells's gender analysis pinpoints major modifications in the representation of women: the conservative 1950s confined them to domestic private spaces while in the 2000s Helwig emphasizes the vulnerability of women's bodies alongside other forms of inequality. Women's bodies and inner cities also preoccupy Belén Martín-Lucas in "Dystopic Urbanites" (69-82), a chapter dealing with renderings of Toronto and Vancouver in two speculative fictions published around the turn of our century: Nalo Hopkinson's *Brown Girl in the Ring* (1998) and Larissa Lai's *Salt Fish Girl* (2002). In the grim futures of these authors, the geography of the cities has been invested with new meanings by the workings of globalized capital, its spaces being similarly restructured according to hierarchies of wealth and power. The survival of the dispossessed can be achieved only through building new networks of exchange, solidarity and cooperation, which is the ideological message encoded in these two alternative futures that Martín-Lucas concludes are "moderately optimistic" (79).

The following three chapters introduce an urban semiotic approach in considering the materiality of cities. Eva Darias-Beautell's "The Intrinsic Potential of Glassness" (83-100) divides the modes of signifying the urban in Vancouver into three classes: narcissistic, opaque, and organic. An example of the first is Douglas Coupland's *City of*

Glass (2000), where the fractal city stands as an image of idealized space. On the contrary, in David Odhiambo's *diss/ed banded nation* (1998) the descriptions of the poorer Eastside enact the critique of idealization that characterizes the opaque; in the organic mode, the combination of above and below views of the city produces glocal confluences such as the sculptural installation *Lookout*, which reminds us of the unpredictable, complex negotiations between site and bodies. In "The Refugee as Signifier in the Semiotics of the Glocal City" (101-116), Ana María Fraile-Marcos looks into the city as a space of encounters with the foreigner/stranger by means of Michael Helm's Toronto-set *Cities of Refuge* (2010). Rather than one city, the multiple perspectives in the novel (to which Fraile-Marcos adds the reader's) create many separate cities, as the author contrasts the easy mobility of citizens, for whom the city has no borders, to the constrained mobility of the undocumented, who are left to inhabit a handful of restrictive places within a city full of invisible borders. Helm's novel thus invites us to reflect on the diversity of systems and ideologies operating within the city. "Responding to Late Capitalism" (117-129) by Kit Dobson follows, and enquires into cultural responses to shopping in Canada. The mall, now perhaps on the wane, became prominent in North America in the postwar period. This is a glocal site where goods from afar reach the hands of consumers, an urban space at the crossroads of the private and the public that both departs from and is continuous with previous forms of shopping experience, e.g., nineteenth-century arcades. Dobson examines what is allegedly the largest mall in North America alongside Heather Spears' poetry sequence "The Dolphin in the West Edmonton Mall," confirming a sense of malaise at how we are embedded within the ideologies of neoliberalism.

The next two essays in the collection continue the thread of the critique of globalization and neoliberal policies. Brandon McFarlane's "Hipster Urbanism and Glocal Toronto" (130-144) charts 1990s anxieties about the generational shift in Canadian literature and dispells misunderstandings around the Toronto writers controversially labelled "the Brat Pack." For McFarlane, this group is skeptical of neoliberalism because it has been disenfranchised by the recession. While it is true that they valorize the post-industrial, globalized city as the metaphorical basis for a contemporary national mythology, rather than the rural landscape favored by the established writers of the centennial generation, they do not constitute a true alternative, but rather a reimagining of the same cultural nationalism and regionalism that is "decidedly reactionary" (140). In "Glocalization and Liberalism in Michael Winter's *The Architects Are Here*" (145-159), the late Herb Wylie offers a close reading of Winter's novel as an exploration of a globalized economy in which the city, whether a large metropolis like Toronto or a relatively small location like St. John's in Newfoundland, is part of a network of global flows of people, goods, money, and information. Rather than standing in isolation from, or even in opposition to, each other, the city and the rural are connected by just such ongoing, ceaseless flows in a tangled (hi)story that brings to the fore the narrative of Canada's internal as well as external diasporas.

Closing the collection, George Elliott Clarke's "Ian Fleming's Canadian Cities" (160-182) traces Canadian connections in Fleming's biography, particularly during World War II, when he learnt about Canadian spy activities on behalf of the Allies. From that vantage point, Clarke then surveys the presence of Canadian cities in the James Bond stories, concluding that they fulfil a "go-between" function between the declining British Empire and the (rising) American one. Generally, Canadian cities—and Toronto most of all—are rendered as multicultural, multilingual sites that can be deployed by the forces of both good and evil.

Literature and the Glocal City is a strong collection of essays, both individual contributions and as a whole. The introduction identifies several key topics and overarching themes that are aptly pursued by contributors in threads running through the book and connecting the chapters. Thus readers can see the continuities within the collection even though there may not be explicit cross-referentiality. *Literature and the Glocal City* also enters into critical dialogue with other notable books of the last decade, namely Kit Dobson's *Transnational Canadas* (2009) and Herb Wylie's *Anne of Tim Hortons* (2011) alongside the earlier collection edited by Smaro Kamboureli and Roy Miki, *Trans.Can.Lit* (2007). All of them constitute worthy attempts to resituate the study of Canadian literature within the transnational while keeping the nation well in sight. *Literature and the Glocal City* also moves forward a critical conversation that started in *Unruly Penelopes and the Ghosts* (2012), an earlier collection edited by Eva Darias-Beautell featuring the work of several of the contributors and attesting, like this one, to the high quality of the research on Canadian Literary and Cultural Studies carried out in Spain. These essays knowledgeably tap into contemporary cultural concerns and anxieties arising from the shifts and transformations brought about by globalization, and thoughtfully identify the changing role of cultural artefacts arising in these times of crisis and renewal.

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