Going Out of Their Way: Tourism, Authenticity, and Resistance in Contemporary Atlantic-Canadian Literature

Herb Wyile
Acadia University

Tourism, observes newfoundland writer Edward Riche in a recent interview, "is a kind of pollution." "[A]s something that one has to rely upon for economic survival," he adds, "it is the last act of desperation" ("Equal-Opportunity" 212). Riche's critical view of tourism is widely echoed in contemporary writing in Atlantic Canada, reflecting the importance of tourism to the economic and cultural life of the region but also reflecting an increasingly sophisticated theoretical appreciation of the dynamics of tourism as a global phenomenon. As Riche's comment suggests, there is a significant structural relationship between tourism and economic underdevelopment, a relationship which has been a central theme in the growing body of commentary on the cultural, political, social, and economic consequences of tourism. Tourist destinations are more likely to develop not out of an ingrained sense of hospitality and an instinctive inclination of host societies to share the bounty of their locale with others but out of economic necessity. Tourism, as Kevin Meethan argues, reconfigures "the boundaries between hospitality as a form of social obligation ... and hospitality as a commodified form" (149). Consequently, tourism is commonly characterized by a fundamental tension: that it requires a staged hospitality, an openness to visitors that, while potentially genuine, is also to

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Herb Wyile is a Professor in the English Department at Acadia University in Wolfville, Nova Scotia. He is the author of *Speculative Fictions: Contemporary Canadian Novelists and the Writing of History* and *Speaking in the Past Tense: Canadian Novelists on Writing Historical Fiction*. He co-edited with Jeanette Lynes *Surf's Up! The Rising Tide of Atlantic-Canadian Literature*, a recent special issue of *Studies in Canadian Literature*.

some degree compelled. That is, tourist destinations—particularly ostensibly "exotic" locales—tend to be framed within an economic and political asymmetry between hosts and visitors and, indeed, are often characterized by conditions of economic exploitation and coercion. In short, rather than an innocent, free flow of people from one area to another, tourism involves a kind of coerced hospitality, with host societies compelled to *go out of their way* to cater to tourists' expectations and needs. Unsurprisingly, one result of such asymmetrical power relations is a resentment of and resistance to the material and symbolic imposition that tourism typically represents. Such a reaction is increasingly visible in the literature of Atlantic Canada, an economically underdeveloped and vulnerable region particularly reliant on tourism.

Much contemporary Atlantic Canadian writing—the fiction of Riche, Alistair MacLeod, and Lynn Coady,[1] for instance, and Frank Barry's trenchant play *Wreckhouse*—highlights the ways in which tourism in the region amounts to commodifying underdevelopment and affords valuable lessons about the economic, political, and cultural tensions and conflicts elided by the buoyant hyperbole of tourist promotion. As Graham Huggan argues in *The Postcolonial Exotic*, the construction of the global margins as culturally exotic leisure spaces amounts to an extension of colonial relations. One of the more positive valences of postcolonial discourse, he contends, is its resistance to exoticism as a profoundly subordinating paradigm that "must be confronted, incorporated into works that challenge—often looking to subvert—metropolitan mainstream cultural codes" (27). Given that Atlantic Canada's position within Canada has been described by numerous scholars as being characterized by a kind of internal colonization,[2] such a description (in appropriately modified form) seems apt for describing the tenor of much contemporary writing in the region. Tourism increasingly seems to be a preoccupation of writers in Atlantic Canada, and there is a profound dissonance between the testy attitude of writers such as Riche and Barry toward tourism and the cheery boosterism of the tourism industry itself. This attitude is nicely captured in one of MacLeod's

1 For a discussion of tourism in Coady's work, see my article "As For Me and Me Arse: Strategic Regionalism and the Home Place in Lynn Coady's *Strange Heaven*" in *The Literature of Atlantic Canada,* eds. Coral Ann Howells and Marta Dvorak, a special issue of *Canadian Literature* 189 (2006), 85–101.

2 See, for instance, Marc Epprecht, "Atlantic Canada and 'the End of History': Postmodernism and Regional Underdevelopment," *Dalhousie Review* 70.4 (1991): 429–58, and Tony Tremblay, "'Lest on too close sight I miss the darling illusion': The Politics of the Centre in 'Reading Maritime,'" in Wyile and Lynes, 23–39.

most powerful stories, "Clearances," set in a Cape Breton increasingly being transformed by the forces of a leisure economy. Bristling at tourists' objections to his cutting down trees to make a living, a young man bitterly complains, "This isn't my recreational area. This is my home" (426). As Meethan observes, the "development of tourist space means change at the level of lived experience for those whose space of home, or of work, is the space of leisure for others" (37), and this conflict is registered in a number of ways in contemporary writing in Atlantic Canada. The preoccupation with tourism in Atlantic-Canadian literature tells us much about current economic, political, social, and cultural conditions in the region but also tells us much about tourism as an extension of an ambivalent and often imperializing globalization.

Atlantic Canada is a popular tourist destination, but its appeal is part of a more complex and divided attitude toward the region in the rest of the country. For many if not most Canadians, Atlantic Canada is a nice place to visit but otherwise a nagging burden on the federal coffers. This attitude, however, is typically uninformed by an understanding of the historical conditions that have contributed to the region's marginal position relative to the rest of the country, a position that goes back beyond the Maritimes' and Newfoundland's respective entries into Confederation and that has been intensified in the current atmosphere of neoliberal austerity. As various historians in the Atlantic provinces have argued, the marginality of the Maritimes and Newfoundland to the rest of the nation is a dynamic extending back to Confederation, a time at which the colonies on the east coast were enjoying a much greater level of prosperity than they are today. Indeed, the overwhelming sentiment in the region was opposition to "the unpalatable terms" of Confederation (Forbes and Muise 48), amid fears of central Canadian domination, fears which were borne out in the Maritimes over the ensuing decades.[3] Although the eclipse of the traditional Maritime economy of "wood, wind, and sail" in the latter part of the nineteenth century and the progressive decline in the region's resource sectors—particularly the crisis in the fisheries—have been important historical factors in the region's economic woes, such problems, scholars from the region have underscored, were exacerbated by the political and economic reorientation that Confederation entailed, particularly for the Maritimes. The system of protective tariffs, a cornerstone of the National

3 See also Phillip A. Buckner, "The 1860s: An End and a Beginning." *The Atlantic Provinces to Confederation: A History*, eds. Phillip A. Buckner and John G. Reid (Toronto and Fredericton: University of Toronto Press/Acadiensis, 1994), 360–86.

Policy reinforcing east-west continental integration, as economist Donald Savoie argues, strengthened central Canada as the base of industry and manufacturing, at the expense of the Maritimes. Federal economic policies from then on favoured Ontario and Quebec, leading to a concentration of economic and political power in central Canada (Savoie 27). As Savoie concludes, national policy since Confederation has had a particular, disguised "regional" orientation, prioritizing the interests of central Canada and serving "to define a national perspective that speaks to the economic interests of central Canada and to concentrate Ottawa's development efforts in this region" (306). Newfoundland's much later entry into Confederation in 1949 if anything proved even more ambivalent and conducive to a lingering sense of grievance. Having achieved in the early twentieth century the status of a quasi-independent nation (the only province to have done so), Newfoundland was forced to surrender that status in 1934 in the midst of a fiscal crisis brought about by various economic and political factors. For many in Newfoundland, the ensuing convention and referendum on Newfoundland's constitutional future constituted a hijacking of Newfoundland's autonomy, with the United Kingdom and Canada actively if quietly collaborating to promote the unpopular option of Confederation with Canada (Baker 37–40). As Melvin Baker asserts, an appreciation of the conflicted historical and political circumstances of Newfoundland's entry into Canada "is important to all Canadians wishing to know why Newfoundlanders and Labradorians still have a strong sense of political grievance over their place in the Canadian nation and why the people of the province feel a need to 'renew and strengthen' their place in Canada" (65–66).[4] Thus Newfoundland shares with the Maritimes a sense that the primary source of their economic woes is that the terms of Confederation with Canada were insufficient to guarantee their financial health and that control over their political and economic fate resides not in their hands but in Ottawa's.

This sense of historical grievance has been augmented by a profound difference of opinion with much of the rest of the country over the system of financial transfers developed later in the twentieth century to compensate for regional disparities and to ensure equality of standards of living across the federation. This system, the cornerstone of so many Canadians' disparaging views of Atlantic Canada, emerged in response to the struc-

4 A telling sign of the magnitude of the sense of crisis of political identity in Newfoundland, the latter phrase refers to the *Royal Commission on Renewing and Strengthening Our Place in Canada* struck by the government of Newfoundland, the findings of which (including Baker's analysis) were published in 2003.

tural inequalities and regional disparities ensuing from such a centralized national policy. As Savoie underlines, however, such programs did little to improve long-term economic prospects in Atlantic Canada because they did not lead to the region's integration into "national" economic policy, in part because economic development funds and government contracts were still heavily biased toward central Canada under the guise of "national" economic priorities. Thus Atlantic Canada suffers from a double standard in economic policy: what's good for central Canada is "national" and what's good for Atlantic Canada is "regional."[5] With little success in encouraging regional economic development and faced with the continuing decline in its traditional resource industries, the region has become increasingly reliant on the service sector, to the point that, as Thom Workman notes, in "the year 2000, the service sector in Atlantic Canada employed more than two thirds of the region's working people" (40). In recent decades, furthermore, the region's precarious economic position has been exacerbated by a gradual erosion of the commitment to this kind of redistributive federalism, arguably as a consequence of the increasing sway of the mantra of global competitiveness and of neo-liberal solutions which, as David Harvey argues, tend "to increase social inequality and to expose the least fortunate elements in any society … to the chill winds of austerity and the dull fate of increasing marginalization" (118). Starting in the late 1970s, Margaret Conrad and James Hiller observe, "neo-liberal assertions that government assistance, whether to the poor or to outlying regions, was counterproductive gradually became conventional wisdom" (211). Such received wisdom in business and political circles in Canada, Workman contends, informs a neo-liberal policy framework that has drastic implications for Atlantic Canada, "including the rising concerns about public debt, the celebration of the free market, extensive restructuring to social assistance, stagnating minimum wages, the downsizing of government, the privatization of public firms, the weakening of labour laws and municipal restructuring" (29). In this climate of neo-liberal austerity, politicians, pundits, and business people have increasingly viewed compensatory mechanisms such as regional economic development and equalization programs as discouraging productivity and weakening the country's position vis-à-vis its global competitors. Such a

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5 See also some of the essays in E. R. Forbes's collection *Challenging the Regional Stereotype: Essays on the 20th Century Maritimes* (Fredericton: Acadiensis, 1989) and Robert Finbow, "Atlantic Canada: Forgotten Periphery in an Endangered Confederation?" in *Beyond Quebec: Taking Stock of Canada*, ed. Kenneth McRoberts (Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 1995), 61–80.

regime, moreover, as both Workman and Savoie note, cultivates a more public atmosphere of intolerance toward Atlantic Canada, with the region more frequently stereotyped and denigrated as a welfare basket case, "a burden on the national economy" (Savoie 13).

This is, however, only one side of a profoundly ambivalent attitude toward the Atlantic provinces. While in this view Atlantic Canada's lack of development, manufacturing, and industry is distinctively a disadvantage, in other respects it is the source of a more positive view of the region as Canada's "ocean playground"—officially a slogan of Nova Scotia but an apt metaphor for the increasingly prevalent construction of the region as leisure space. As Ian McKay's influential study *The Quest of the Folk: Antimodernism and Cultural Selection in Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia* and James Overton's *Making a World of Difference: Essays on Tourism, Culture, and Development in Newfoundland* have underlined, the two sides of this Janus-faced attitude, rather than dissonant with each other, are structurally related. That is, governments, cultural producers, businesses, and tourist promoters have consciously turned the region's lack of development—which much of the country otherwise holds against it—to its advantage, repackaging the region as unspoiled and culturally distinctive rather than underdeveloped and backward. Tourist development on the east coast, responding to the need to generate revenue and diversify economically, for much of the twentieth century has promoted the region's pristine ecology, opportunities for outdoor recreation, and unique cultural atmosphere. That promotion, as McKay and Overton argue, catered to a prevailing sense of antimodernism, a negative reaction to the homogeneity and inauthenticity associated with technological progress and mass consumption. The east coast, their analyses suggest, provided to outsiders a "therapeutic space" (Overton 15) offering the possibility of contact with ostensibly authentic and unspoiled peoples. However, in presenting such a profile to lure tourists, as McKay and Overton have demonstrated, tourist promoters in Atlantic Canada have trafficked in very problematic stereotypes of the region as pre-modern, rural, and small-m maritime, projecting a mythical culture imbued with what McKay calls the ideology of Folk Innocence. The Folk in Nova Scotia, McKay argues, "lived, generally, in fishing and farming communities, supposedly far removed from capitalist social relations and the stresses of modernity. The Folk did not work in factories, coal mines, lobster canneries, or domestic service: they were rooted to the soil and to the rockbound coast, and lived lives of self-sufficiency close to nature" (26). Overton similarly argues that tourism in Newfoundland capitalizes on highly selective, "idealized and romanticized"

(106) definitions of rural Newfoundland culture as organic and authentic, shaped by the maritime environment and built around "the way of life and attitudes and experiences of the rural small producer" of the outport (52). In short, for over a century the culture and environment of the Atlantic provinces have been constructed as a restorative antidote to the alienating inauthenticity of a dog-eat-dog, technological, modern society, and the marketing of the region as such continues apace (a recent tourist pitch described Newfoundland and Labrador as "about as far from Disneyland as you can possibly get").

That cultural atmosphere, however, has been a thoroughly packaged one, and thus one of the key concerns about tourism is the inequitable economic and political relationships that such packaging entails. One of the central insights of McKay's study is that the construction of this essentialist, pre-modern Folk identity was to a great degree cultivated by the state and capitalist entrepreneurs. Thus, while provincial culture was presented as an escape from capitalist modernity, "it was almost always a *commercial* antimodernism, structured by the very modern capitalism from which it seemed to provide a momentary and partial escape, and reliant upon its fast-developing technologies of persuasion" (35). Likewise, Overton stresses that successive "attempts at economic diversification and reconstruction" in Newfoundland "have included attempts to develop tourism *not* as an alternative to industrialization but as a key component of the modernization of the economy" (11). Thus tourism, rather than an escape from capitalist modernity, is instead perhaps one of its quintessential manifestations.

In that sense, one of the problems with tourism is the way in which it transforms local cultures in order to attract tourists and generate a profit, little of which typically goes to the "folk" themselves. As numerous critics have argued, tourism is a reconfiguration of place with the intent to please others and, depending on the host culture's economic circumstances, usually involves asymmetrical relations of power. Tourism, as Overton argues, drawing on the work of Henri Lefebvre, is part of "the spread of industrial capitalism into the realm of leisure" (4), and tourist development thus "has proceeded, overall, in an uneven and, for the most part, unplanned fashion" (4–5). In his influential early study of tourism, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*, Dean MacCannell argues that sightseeing is "a kind of collective striving for a transcendence of the modern totality" in response to the fragmentation, discontinuity, and alienation of modernity, an impulse that "is doomed to eventual failure: even as it tries to construct totalities, it celebrates differentiation" (13). With the spread of tourism to

every corner of the globe, however, critics have become more inclined to see tourism as a form of neocolonialism, a central expression of the structural inequities of globalization. For Huggan, the paradox of tourism that MacCannell describes is very much a product of the homogenizing mechanics and logic of global capitalism. While ostensibly seeking the exotic and novel, tourists implicitly demand the familiar and predictable, and in the process tourism "contributes to the sameness of a world whose difference it needs to make its profits. Tourism thus requires the other that it repeatedly destroys" (178). For Zygmunt Bauman, tourism is a particularly palpable instance of what he sees as a central feature of globalization: a pronounced spatial "asymmetry" between an increasingly mobile, unburdened, global capitalist elite and others such as working families who have much less capacity to assert control over their own locality or to cut "themselves free in order to move elsewhere" (18). It is important not to caricature tourism either as a simplistically harmonious sharing of the natural and cultural wealth of a particular locale with others or (as is more likely the case) as a homogenizing, neocolonial juggernaut. At the same time, however, it is also important to recognize that tourism is, as John Urry argues (57), often the last resort, particularly in developing countries. When we travel, according to Urry, "we gaze at what we encounter," and that gaze is "socially organised and systematised" (1); this gaze, furthermore, "orders and regulates the relationships between the various sensuous experiences while away, identifying what is visually out-of-ordinary, what are the relevant differences, and what is 'other'" (Urry 145). Tourist destinations thus feel compelled to stage a kind of spectacle of the extraordinary or the exotic in order to satisfy their tourist clientele, and that sense of compulsion has significant political, economic, and cultural implications. Tourism, Overton contends, is marked by conflicts that "may arise over control of resources, access to land, and even access to affordable housing" as well as "over how history and culture are packaged and presented" (7). As Overton, Urry, MacCannell, and others suggest, the host society may come to resent being compelled to perform their culture for visitors, to provide it in packaged, consumable, ersatz form, through staged events, the framing and construction of tourist sites, and so on. Thus many regions reliant on tourism as an economic mainstay, including Atlantic Canada, nonetheless exhibit resistance to its influence. Indeed, such a reaction to tourism is more and more visible in contemporary Atlantic Canadian literature, reflecting how tourism provides a powerful frame through which the region is viewed, as well as how tourism, in

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the minds of many Atlantic Canadians, is thoroughly bound up with the region's economic, political, and cultural marginalization.

Tourists are often figures of fun in Western culture, and certainly one recurring response to tourism in Atlantic-Canadian literature is an inclination to satirize tourists as naïfs propelled by a kind of wilful self-delusion. As commentators on tourism such as Urry and MacCannell note, tourism is a highly overdetermined process, in which tourist expectations, often informed by essentialist cultural stereotypes, shape and frame tourism as an encounter with different places and cultures. What tourists want, as Newfoundland poet Mary Dalton's "Lies for the Tourists" suggests, is a highly airbrushed experience. Thus Dalton's speaker provides reassurances that "that rug was hooked by a sweet white-haired grandmother / for love, not money" and that "Those children playing in the crooked streets—so friendly / so quaint— / are fed on the milk and honey of our simple island kindness" (45). Because of a pragmatic reluctance to disabuse tourists of their routinely unrealistic and misguided assumptions, the host society must take pains, in effect, to give tourists what they want. Thus a paradoxical process occurs in which hosts cater to the desires of tourists to the degree that the tourists experience not an authentic other but a performance of culture and place tailored to their expectations and needs. In that sense, tourism is an instance of what Jean Baudrillard describes as the hyperreal, the displacement of the real by the simulacrum, "substituting signs of the real for the real" (2).

This aspect of tourism, as Paul Chafe has nicely illustrated, is deftly spoofed in Riche's novel *Rare Birds*, which revolves around the concocted sighting of a rare duck near the restaurant of Riche's protagonist Dave Purcell in order to revive the restaurant's flagging fortunes. As Dave's co-conspirator Alphonse Murphy presciently argues, what matters is the spectacle rather than the substance, the perception of authentic experience rather than the experience itself. "One will catch a gull or a kittiwake out the corner of his eye," Phonse reassures Dave, "and say 'Did you see that?' and another one will say 'Yeah! I saw something!' and they'll go wild for it. Psychology of the mob, Dave, mass hysteria!" (80). As Chafe argues, such deception is facilitated by tourism's reliance less on authentic experience than on tourists' perceived consummation of their preconceptions: "These birders do not need to *see* the duck so much as they need to be in the presence of its mystique" (182), and, in staging that presence as a lure, "Dave and Phonse commit the central deception of the tourist industry" by "creating their own exploitable 'reality'" (180).

In a similar vein, in her poem "Markings" Jeanette Lynes highlights tourists' pursuit of an illusory, mythical Maritime culture. Evoking tourists' desire for the idyllic pastoral society of *Anne of Green Gables* or the imaginary happy fisherfolk McKay describes— two staples of tourism in the Maritimes—Lynes likewise suggests that what matters is the anticipation rather than the consummation:

> There's an island where
> lives, much of the world believes, an orphan
> with red hair. She has never been home.
> There's a regal shore where fishermen dance,
> women gather moss in contentment. No one
> has ever found it. Perhaps no one
> wants to. (86)

She likens tourists in Cape Breton to the disappointed Vikings who, while searching for the mythical Vinland, "a land where you could hump and eat grapes all day long," instead discovered Newfoundland's Great Northern Peninsula, where "they beat their fists / against the barely thawed ground, wept bitterly." In their giant RVs, "not so different from Viking ships," these tourists—parodic, latter-day adventurers with "tanned skin, plastic cards"—"have no idea how lost they are" (86). Lynes, like Riche, suggests that what tourists consume is a preconceived image rather than the reality, highlighting how, as Overton nicely puts it, "It may be that people are perpetually cheated of that which they are offered and forced to consume the menu rather than the meal" (110).

However, Overton also argues that "to see people as dupes who are manipulated by the advertising industry does not get us very far" (110), and he emphasizes that the myths retailed to tourists work because they cater to their needs and desires (111). Meethan more strenuously resists what he sees as the "mistaken assumption that people are simply passive consumers or even cultural dupes, in particular that 'the masses' are easily fooled into accepting contrivance as the 'real thing.' Such a position is both arrogant and patronising and … quite erroneous" (112). Meethan furthermore resists the view of tourism as a form of neo-colonialism, especially in the developing world, arguing that "the notion that other cultures need preserving from the onslaught of a totalising modernity and that their authenticity is under threat" is a potentially disempowering form of essentialist Folk romanticism (65). While there is merit to Meethan's stance, however, it arguably underestimates the degree to which tourism constitutes a serious political, economic, and spatial imposition on the

lives of local inhabitants, an understanding that is increasingly visible in contemporary Atlantic-Canadian literature.

One of the potential problems with tourism, as Mike Robinson asserts, is that it usually involves sharing, and even vying for control of, places: "A more intangible and yet fundamental characteristic of contemporary tourism is the extent to which it converges on the spaces and places occupied by the host community. Tourists at various times occupy the places which 'belong' to others and which carry cultural meanings for the host community" (48). This competition for space is central to MacLeod's "Clearances," in which MacLeod's aging protagonist sees his Cape Breton homestead increasingly encroached upon by the forces of a leisure society. The decline of the resource sector, increasing out-migration, and the outsiders' view of Cape Breton as leisure real estate combine to create conditions that replicate the earlier Highland clearances that led to the migration of the protagonist's Scottish ancestors to Cape Breton in the first place. The story dramatizes the disruption of familial and occupational continuity that has been a central consequence of the Maritimes' economic plight from the late nineteenth century to the end of the twentieth century, during which, as David Creelman notes, nearly one-hundred-thousand Maritimers left the region every decade (13). Near the end of a life that he has lived much as his forebears did, the protagonist has witnessed one son go off to fish in Lake Erie after the decline of the local fisheries, while, after the accidental death of his other son, his daughter-in-law has sold off the part of his homestead that she inherited to "a surly summer couple who erected a seven-foot privacy fence and kept a sullen pitbull who paced relentlessly behind it" (423). Furthermore, the government has curtailed salmon fishing by locals "for the benefit of the summer anglers" (426), while a nearby park increasingly encroaches on their lives, traveling "like a slow-moving glacier, claiming more and more land to be used as hiking trails and wilderness areas, while the families in its path worried about eviction notices" (426). The sense of rupture and dispossession that these developments cultivate is reinforced for the protagonist by the arrival of a real estate agent, trying to broker the purchase of his land by a pair of German visitors "looking for land with ocean frontage" (427), who fail to appreciate the irony that the area is "[n]ice and quiet" because, as the protagonist observes, people have been forced to migrate to the U.S., "Halifax or southern Ontario" (429). Thus "Clearances" serves as a succinct allegory for the politics of the transition from a resource economy to a leisure one, highlighting the vulnerability and aggrieved dignity of those who find themselves effectively being evicted in the process. As the protagonist's

young relative complains, "People like you and me … are no match for the Government and the tourists" (426). Though the story ends on a note of resistance to such encroachment—with the protagonist and his faithful sheepdog (an emblem of Gaelic heritage characteristic of MacLeod's work) confronting the neighbours' pit bull—the outcome of that resistance is inconclusive and the tone of the ending profoundly ambivalent. Nonetheless, through its portrait of the external pressures eroding the foundations of a long-standing way of life built around natural resources, "Clearances" succinctly dramatizes how tourism so often is a literal contest over territory and over how physical spaces are to be configured and used.

Another recurring response to tourism in Atlantic-Canadian literature is the depiction of tourism as more than a physical imposition. While recognizing that tourism entails a certain level of self-deception, most writers also appreciate the power exerted by such preconceptions and thus the need to counter the symbolic imposition that such preconceptions involve. One strategy for doing so is the reassertion of the complexity of place in the face of the simplistic reconfiguring of place for consumption by tourists. As Overton argues, "Space is transformed by tourism, but so is the meaning and representation of space" (7). With the tourist industry "skewing the built environment to meet the expectations and preferences of the tourist," Robinson argues, "the cultural elements of placeness—continuation, evolution, stability and familiarity—are eroded" (50–51). Part of the response to tourism in Atlantic-Canadian literature is thus a contesting of such touristic definitions of space and place. In Prince Edward Island poet Brent MacLaine's "North Shore Park," for instance, the speaker contemplates a frozen seaside vista after a winter storm. Highlighting the seasonal selectivity of touristic perceptions of the island, the speaker underscores the incongruity of a summer-oriented leisure apparatus, as "the seaward-facing benches / look ironic" and "uncomprehending cottages / close their plywood eyes" (212). In what might be seen as a chilly reversal of Charles G. D. Roberts's famous late-nineteenth-century poem "Tantramar Revisited" (in which Roberts's speaker prefers the imagined, remembered version of the landscape spread out before him and sustains the illusion by staying at a distance), MacLaine's speaker considers the truth of the present landscape, in contrast to the perception imposed by "those others …, / dreamy for sleep-inducing surf, / hot for magic castles" who "will reconfigure all this ice / to sand, make an oasis here / beneath the tilting pines" (213). This contrast suggests a distinction between what MacCannell, reworking Erving Goffman's model of social interaction, calls back regions and front regions of tourism, "the putative 'intimate and real'

as against 'show'" (94). As MacCannell also rightly suggests, however, the distinction between back region and front region is difficult to maintain, and one of the paradoxes that both McKay and Overton highlight is the way that host societies are complicit in the perpetration of, and often internalize, touristic constructions of their own cultures. Meethan goes further, arguing that characterizations of tourism as an agent of alienated modernity soiling ostensibly unitary and authentic cultures are both erroneous and patronizing, based on false dichotomies between the authentic and the inauthentic, the traditional and the modern (90–91). In this light, MacLaine might be seen as trying to assert an illusory and potentially essentialist "real" sense of place in response to the tourist's "artificial" one, reflecting how, as Tracy Whalen cautions in considering literary representations of Newfoundland, essentialist constructions of place are "beloved by tourist operations and those whom one might term cultural nationalists" alike (67). However, resisting hegemonic touristic definitions of space is not the same thing as reasserting a geographically essentialist identity. Instead, "North Shore Park" can be read as foregrounding the one-dimensionality of the tourist version of PEI, perpetually frozen in summertime, in the process stressing the problematic transience of the leisure economy, its limited existential investment in a place that has not one season but four.

In this light, MacLaine might be seen as trying to assert an illusory and potentially essentialist "real" sense of place in response to the tourist's "artificial" one.

Perhaps the most significant strategy for confronting tourism in contemporary Atlantic-Canadian literature is a kind of resistant reading that exposes the coercive conditions behind the performance of culture for tourist consumption. Such a strategy is evident, for instance, in Kenneth J. Harvey's *The Town That Forgot How to Breathe*, a magic realist allegory about the loss of purpose and identity in a Newfoundland outport community in the wake of the collapse of the cod fishery. In many magic realist texts, plagues serve as allegorical devices for exploring societies undergoing profound social and cultural changes,[6] and such is the premise underpinning *The Town That Forgot How to Breathe*. Various inhabitants of the community of Bareneed—most previously healthy and all previously employed in the fisheries—find themselves becoming increasingly volatile, lashing out at those around them, and at the same time experiencing a sense of disorientation, a loss of a sense of their own identity. The culmina-

6 Plagues figure prominently, for instance, in Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, and Louis de Bernières's Marquezian trilogy published in the early 1990s, *The War of Don Emmanuel's Nether Parts*, *Senor Vivo and the Coca Lord*, and *The Troublesome Offspring of Cardinal Guzman*.

tion of these strange symptoms is an inability to breathe without making a conscious effort to do so, ultimately leading to death. Through this series of symptoms, Harvey creatively allegorizes the social consequences and the crisis of identity precipitated by the eclipse of a long-standing way of life—underscoring the degree to which people's identity and dignity are bound up with the centuries-long heritage of working in the fisheries. "Forgetting how to breathe" serves as a succinct metaphor both for the fundamental existential crisis Harvey chronicles as well as for the shift from independence to dependence, as the afflicted must be kept on artificial support while the authorities struggle to remedy their condition—a physiological parallel to the province's social and economic plight in the wake of the 1992 moratorium.[7]

As Robinson observes, tourism can cultivate cultural conflicts manifested in a range of ways, "from a rather intangible sense of disgruntlement and embarrassment on the part of the host to (in extreme cases) violence against tourists and the component elements of the industry as symbols of external influence and cultural change" (38). A central part of the conflicted response to the calamity in Bareneed is an aggrieved resentment of the role of outsiders in bringing it about, including tourists. As Urry argues, a key consideration in tourism is the "extent to which *tourists can be identified and blamed* for supposedly undesirable economic and social developments" (53). Such an impulse, furthermore, is usually more evident when there are significant economic, cultural, and ethnic differences between tourists and visitors and "when the host population is experiencing rapid economic and social change" (Urry 53), as is the outport Newfoundland of Harvey's novel. Thus the resentment of the residents is directed in part at tourists because they are seen as exploiting the vulnerability of a society in dire circumstances. One of the novel's principal characters, Doug Blackwood, is an inshore fisherman infuriated by the moratorium on fishing for cod, which he sees as an authoritarian intrusion by a "bunch of pasty-faced bureaucrats" (151). With similar spleen, Doug depicts tourism as a kind of cultural prostitution and predation, outsiders picking the bones of a once vital community:

> Put the people of Bareneed on display like they were museum pieces, the last of the fisherfolk done up in period costumes for

7 For detailed discussion of federal and provincial responses to the crisis in the fisheries, see, for instance, Kent Blades's *Net Destruction: The Death of Atlantic Canada's Fishery* (Halifax: Nimbus, 1995) and Nicole Gerarda Power's *What Do They Call a Fisherman? Men, Gender, and Restructuring in the Newfoundland Fishery* (St John's: ISER, 2005).

> some arse-backward re-enactment. Have a good look, ladies and gentlemen. Step right up. See how they wiggle like fish on the ends of a hook, gasping their final breath. Bait for you to nip at. See how their boats are rotting and their children don't have a clue what a codfish even looks like. (149)

Here Harvey, like Ian McKay, stresses the irony of performing a seafaring way of life that has been eradicated, so that tourism becomes a kind of cultural necrophilia—getting off on the corpse of the departed, as it were. Harvey's novel dramatically underscores how trafficking in such anti-modern cultural essentialism, as McKay argues, "is ethically troubling because it exemplifies the transformation of living people (and their customs and beliefs) into articles of exchange" (41).

Such a view of tourism as a kind of imposed, coercive cultural minstrel show is particularly evident in the work of Edward Riche, though Riche approaches it with a much more satirically subversive tone. In *Rare Birds*, for instance, Riche scathingly highlights the performance of culture, in which, as Chafe nicely puts it, "the culture marketed to tourists is more act than actual" (184). As his anti-hero Dave contemplates tourism as literally the last resort for a desperate province, Riche underscores how Newfoundland culture is reduced to a humiliating pantomime: "Tourism. It was the last hope for Newfoundland, to become some kind of vast park, its people zoo pieces, playing either famished yokels or bit parts in a costume drama, a nation of amateur actors dressed up like murderous Elizabethan explorers, thrilling to the touch of their tights and tunics as they danced for spare change" (148). In his latest novel, *The Nine Planets*, Riche subversively reframes Folk stereotypes of Newfoundland's cultural heritage—built around romantic images of the hardy, independent petty producer of the outport—in a diatribe by George Hayden, an opportunistic developer frustrated by environmental opposition to his plan to build a gated community on ostensibly unspoiled downs outside St John's. The real heritage of Newfoundland, Hayden rails, "is commerce. They didn't cross the pond in leaky boats for a theatre festival or to watch whales, they came to this place to make money, to kill whales and sell their fat. North America is about capitalism, and it got its start here, right here. Money means vitality, money means movement. That's our lost tradition …, not running the fucking goat" (141).

While Riche's satire in both *The Nine Planets* and *Rare Birds* spoofs the simplistic and anti-modern stereotypes that permeate touristic attitudes toward Atlantic Canada, however, that satire is underpinned by a more sobering awareness of the economic conditions that make tourism

the last resort that it is, as well as of the social and cultural implications of that state of affairs. At the end of his cynically expedient free-market diatribe, Hayden underscores the problems with Newfoundland's increasing dependence on a service economy: "Men have been doing business in Newfoundland for five hundred years. We've traded with Lisbon and London and Havana and Genoa from the get-go, and there are those that would have us all gamekeepers and actors. Build, baby, or wait tables" (141). The point here, essentially, is that tourism expands to fill a vacuum—that is, the economic void left by the collapse of the fisheries that Riche, for all his wicked satire of tourism, recognizes as the source of a profound crisis of identity for Newfoundland. As Riche observes, Hayden, unsavoury as he may be, is nonetheless giving voice to a crucial imperative for Newfoundland: the need to redefine itself culturally and economically rather than continuing to retail a culture that has expired ("Equal-Opportunity" 218). Indeed, in *Rare Birds*, Dave mournfully contemplates the legacy of remote and abandoned roads, soccer pitches and softball diamonds, the relics of Sisyphean efforts to develop Newfoundland, and likens them to "the wooden planes built by the cargo cults, ghostly activity undertaken to attract somebody with a real purpose, industrial decoys" (87). This palpable evidence of failure then prompts him to consider Newfoundland reverting to its pre-contact state: "The Norse had failed. The Basques had failed. And now the British Empire and its Canadian water boys were failing. The island belonged to the black bears and caribou and lynx and crows. And they would soon have it back" (87). Despite the satiric hyperbole of Dave's lugubrious meditations, the underlying message is an earnest one: "[I]f we don't change, that is our future. We can hand the keys to the crows" (Riche, "Equal-Opportunity" 218).

This apocalyptic tone, muted in Riche's work, is much more pronounced in Barry's *Wreckhouse*, a particularly mordant satire of tourism. In an economically exhausted, allegorical landscape (the setting is an abandoned mine site), a band of Newfoundlanders conspire to lure and tranquilize outsiders, who are then literally consumed in ritualistic fashion. Though the central action is framed as a hallucinatory, cautionary nightmare—"'A Midsummer Night's Dream' meets 'Deliverance,'" to borrow an apt phrase from the play (95)—Barry's satire is nonetheless pointed and trenchant. The premise of the play is that competition between communities for tourists to feed off, as it were, has (as with the cod fishery) exhausted the stocks, or the "gawpfish" as one character describes them (79). In a clever, parodic reversal of tourism as a performance of culture, in which locals have to transform themselves in order to meet tourists'

expectations, Barry's locals have "got to the point where we got to get people down and train *them* to be tourists instead of training *us* to be *we*. So that we can keep up our culture, see bye's. We got a taste for tourist and it's like a heroin addiction in the blood" (79). In a hyperreal turn that Baudrillard and McKay would appreciate, attracting tourists itself becomes the folk tradition.

Barry situates such desperation in the larger context of Newfoundland's infantilizing, subordinate relationships with England and Canada. Larky, one of the locals whose job it is to recruit fresh tourists, describes the province as being "[s]tunted," "[p]assed from one withered milkless tit to another nursemaid younger but even more austere" (69). In a scathing indictment of the condescension with which they are viewed by the rest of the country, Newfoundlanders are likened to "[a]ged children sent to the basement without any supper whenever they act up. A basement they'll never be allowed to leave" (69). This colonial debasement is then linked to tourist promotion, as these "aged children" consequently must "strive so hard to please. Dressed up in little costumes to dance little dances and sing little songs" (69). The literal predation on tourists, Larky contends, is thus a response to a crisis of identity: "Because *we* have become *unreal*. That's what it *is*. Having to force *them* to acknowledge that *we* are real so that we can *become* real again" (70). As Larky goes on to underscore, in a passage highly reminiscent of McKay's deconstruction of Folk ideology, essentialist Folk conceptions of culture—coercive caricatures of people's sense of cultural identity—cultivate not only a loathing of the tourists such images are designed to attract and satisfy but also a self-loathing on the part of the host society:

> Don't those TV ads depicting the bright-eyed lassies and their Menschfolk dancing in circles beneath the perfect sky to the music of *accordions* give off a faint whiff of Bavarian Uberjoy. Just add some lederhosen and steins of Lowenbrau and you got a perfect picture of Aryan Folk Himmel. And all this self promotion can only stem from one thing. A grimacing mask of hospitality covering a cringing clock of desperation. Besides, everybody hates tourists. It's natural. They create so much envy. They're always on holiday. They turn everyone into servants. Excuse me. Service industry workers. (70–71)

The view of tourism as a species of neocolonialism is deftly allegorized in the ritual of consumption that provides the climax to *Wreckhouse*. Fiercely satirizing heritage culture as a kind of commodified nativism and touristic behaviour as a kind of dance of automatons, Barry presents the consump-

tion of tourists as a parody of the Newfoundland tradition of the "boil-up," a ritual communal feast, simultaneously playing on colonial caricatures of native savagery. The "tourists" "*are dressed in beige khaki safari outfits with shorts, white socks with hiking boots, and Tilley hats*," while locals Sydney and Larky are "*dressed in full oilskins and Cape Anns battened down*" (73). In synchronized fashion, the tourists, with cameras strung around their necks, ritualistically shuffle along, stopping while one points out an attraction to the others, who "*nod their heads in unison. Then in unison they all smile at each other, take each other's picture, sigh and return to their places and proceed with the 'tour'*" (74). The tourists are then beaten with oars, verbally berated, and thrown into a pot, with lobster claws attached to their arms. As this parodic barbarism reaches its crescendo, with the victims turning on each other, the action seems to return—as in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*—to where it began, with one of the "tourists," Dr Thomas O'Steinway, seeking help to fix a flat tire. However, the ambiguous status of the ending (which raises doubts about whether or not it all has been just a dream) reinforces the cautionary effect of the nightmarish vision at the core of the play, which grimly (if hilariously) points to the strains caused by the fundamentally neocolonial relations underpinning tourism as a consumption of culture.

What pervades not only *Wreckhouse* but indeed almost all of these representations of tourism is a profound sense of loss.

What pervades not only *Wreckhouse* but indeed almost all of these representations of tourism is a profound sense of loss—loss of resources, loss of a traditional way of life, loss of dignity—but that loss is articulated in various ways, from the elegiac to the angry to the satirically defiant. One of the reasons that tourism seems to be an increasing preoccupation of Atlantic-Canadian writers is that tourism is a palpable symbol of and agent of larger and more amorphous political and economic forces —both at the national and the global level. As most of these works suggest, tourism is a force to be contended with, because what is on the line in catering to tourists is not just economic survival but also dignity, cultural integrity, and a sense of identity. Writers in Atlantic Canada, as Danielle Fuller contends, have long had to contend with the "risk of reinforcing sentimental, nostalgic, or romantic notions of particular places, thereby masking regional inequalities and /or having your work dismissed as unsophisticated" ("Strange Terrain" 25). In this light, the critical response to tourism in the literature of contemporary Atlantic Canada can be seen as a form of counter-colonial resistance, as these writers defuse and deconstruct the power of tourism by dramatizing the constructed identity and subordinate position that the tourist paradigm characteristically imposes on host societies.

Such innovative and critical responses to tourism are a significant part of the current boom in creative writing on the east coast, which arguably is at least partly a reaction to the substantial economic and social struggles of the region, of which tourism is both ostensible remedy and visible symptom. Though the vibrancy and popularity of contemporary Atlantic-Canadian literature vis-à-vis the otherwise dire economic and social circumstances of the region might suggest that its economy's loss is its culture's gain, however, that might well prove to be a temporary consolation. The popularity of realistic fiction about Atlantic Canada in the 1990s, argues Fuller, "suggests the attraction of cultural difference, particularly that apparently offered by geo-politically marginalized communities, to those inhabiting urban sites in northern industrialised countries that increasingly look the same" ("Crest" 53). That is, while Atlantic-Canadian literature is currently enjoying a good deal of attention, it may well prove to be a passing fad, subject to the same "inexorably capitalist logic" that Huggan sees in tourism: "[O]nce tourism has made the other accessible, other others must emerge to take its place" (178). Indeed, the present popularity of the literature of Atlantic Canada is very much bound up with tourist constructions of the region and substantially infused by the discourse of exoticism that Huggan describes.

But if readerly taste is capricious and transient, so are the forces of capital, particularly in an increasingly mobile global regime, and in an economy built on perpetual novelty it is difficult to predict what regions might be subject in the future to the kinds of economic deprivation that force the Atlantic provinces effectively to prostitute their culture for tourist dollars. In that sense, the fate of Atlantic Canada, as dramatized in the literature of the region, may well provide a useful cautionary tale to the rest of the country, particularly those provincial and federal politicians who fiddle while Fort McMurray burns, so to speak, ignoring the social, economic, and ecological consequences of Alberta's booming oil economy. Atlantic Canada was once one of the most prosperous regions of the country, and its fortunes precipitously declined as a result of, among other things, the political and economic readjustments that Confederation entailed, as well as shifts in trade patterns and resource availability. As sociologist Michael Clow argues, given the increasing light-footedness of capital and the political and economic readjustments entailed by such international agreements as NAFTA, it is not unreasonable to speculate that it may be the ultimate fate of the rest of Canada to be "Maritimized." Given the tradeoff of political autonomy for trade harmonization, Clow argues, "The Canadian state will be substantially hamstrung to ameliorate

the devastation of the population under de-industrialization as long as we remain part of these unions predicated on neo-liberalism" (45). Clow's prediction arguably is being borne out in the current de-industrialization of Ontario, and one can without too much effort envision a similar scenario in the more prosperous west. Just as the Atlantic provinces built their wealth on the bounty of an ocean that proved to have its limits, so the present economic boom in the west has been fueled by natural resources whose finitude few seem bothered to stop to contemplate. Who knows, perhaps in a hundred years' time we will see Albertans "performing" the epic history of the oil sands in a depopulated, desertified west. In that sense, Atlantic-Canadian literature may prove to be speculative fiction for the rest of the country, giving an advance glimpse of what life is like when the main thing you have left to sell is your past.

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