

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Great Plains Quarterly

Great Plains Studies, Center for

Summer 2000

Review of *A Sense of Place: Re-Evaluating Regionalism in Canadian and American Writing* Edited by Christian Riegel and Herb Wyle

Heidi L. Jacobs
East Carolina University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly>



Part of the [Other International and Area Studies Commons](#)

Jacobs, Heidi L., "Review of *A Sense of Place: Re-Evaluating Regionalism in Canadian and American Writing* Edited by Christian Riegel and Herb Wyle" (2000). *Great Plains Quarterly*. 2144.
<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly/2144>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Great Plains Studies, Center for at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Great Plains Quarterly by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

A Sense of Place: Re-Evaluating Regionalism in Canadian and American Writing. Edited by Christian Riegel and Herb Wyile. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1997. Bibliography, index. xiv + 133 pp. \$24.95 paper.

In their introduction to *A Sense of Place: Re-Evaluating Regionalism in Canadian and American Writing*, the editors assert that for most North Americans, identity is "a complex mix of a feeling of community, a shared cultural, ethnic and social background, and an attachment to place—a mix that is much more localized than the feeling of being Canadian or being American." Great Plains studies relies upon regionalism and the assumption that national, provincial, and state boundaries can be transcended through a shared geographical region. As the editors write, "current global trends are investing the term [regionalism] with new significance, necessitating a new look at the way the term has been and can be used to examine social, cultural and political relationships." Increasingly, the editors note, "critics are viewing region and regionalism as constructs rather than as natural formations and recognizing the processes of negotiation, contestation and conflict in forming their definition."

Many of the essays in this collection argue for questioning the assumptions behind regionalism. In "Reassessing Prairie Realism," Alison Calder examines the impact of regionalism upon the teaching of prairie literature: what, she asks, are the implications of the prairies continually "being reportrayed in the classroom as hostile, life-denying, and imaginatively sterile?" Further, "What does it mean that we usually read and teach only a literature that places the prairies solely in the context of the past?" Calder concludes by saying that academics need to examine "our pre-suppositions, our underlying definitions of regionalism and region." Examining regionalism more broadly, Frank Davey's "Towards the Ends of Regionalism" argues that criticism "would be well advised to treat regionalism with the same skepticism it directs toward

other ideologies" since "successful Canadian regionalisms—presenting themselves as inherently natural—have become new dominants, serving particular class, race, and gender interests, and constraining social/textual dissent and change." Similarly, in "Writing Out of the Gap: Regionalism, Resistance, and Relational Reading," Marjorie Pryse argues that "only when we collectively begin to understand regionalism in the context of other theories of social analysis . . . will we find ways to fully converse about texts that we may not share in common."

Although *A Sense of Place* is not specifically about Great Plains literature, its greatest contribution to the field is its inquiry into questions regarding regionalism that underpin disciplines like Great Plains studies.

HEIDI L. M. JACOBS
Department of English
East Carolina University