Scholarly analyses of film and television in Canada have tended to privilege a national framework, often addressing regional particularities in a somewhat superficial way to shore up claims to Canada's cultural sovereignty. As such, Varga's edited collection, *Rain/Drizzle/Fog*, the first academic study of film and television in Atlantic Canada, is an important contribution to a growing literature that labours “to understand identity not as a national imaginary, but as something produced in the lived experience of place” (p. xii). The collection forms the second volume in the Cinemas Off Centre series out of the University of Calgary Press, edited and inaugurated by Malek Khouri (2007) with his book *Filming Politics: Communism and the Portrayal of the Working Class at the National Film Board of Canada, 1939-46*. As the current Canada Research Chair in Contemporary Film and Media Studies at NSCAD University in Halifax, Varga is especially well positioned to edit a book such as this, and the collected essays are very successful in conveying the importance of place in the history of productions coming out of the Atlantic provinces, as well as shedding light on some of the prevailing stereotypes that continue to shape public perception of them.

Aside from addressing the general neglect and paucity of research on the subject of Atlantic film and television production, the standpoint of the collection is explicit in its aim as a corrective to popular representations of the Atlantic provinces as homogeneously folksy, steeped in tradition, and thus somehow outside of history. In this, the book shares many productive links with Ian McKay's influential study *The Quest of the Folk* (1994), which argued that the popular conception of Nova Scotians as pure and simple folk was a myth propagated by the tourism and cultural industries. Expanding this description to the Atlantic provinces as a whole, the essays contained in *Rain/Drizzle/Fog* also display the way in which these stereotypical representations of the Maritimes and Newfoundland have historically been used as a way to shore up a flagging sense of national identity in the face of U.S. cultural imperialism and Québécois sovereignty claims by embracing a vision of the Atlantic provinces as an unthreateningly distinct part of Canadian culture. Representations of the Maritimes and Newfoundland as antimodernist and unchanging also serve to characterize the territory as a sort of living memory from which those in the rest of Canada can draw upon at their leisure, simultaneously reinforcing their own sense of cosmopolitanism and technological advancement.

The book's strategic inclusion of the normally segregated studies of film and television, whose overlapping presence in the context of production in this country makes their separation more difficult than in wider markets such as the United States, effectively demonstrates the mutually reinforcing nature of these often state-funded media apparatuses, and the ways in which particular representations come to be privileged at different points in history.

Ballasted by the overarching framework of place, the essays in this collection,
which vary widely in their objects of study, methodologies, and locations, are not explicitly arranged in any order, though overarching themes—such as the history of film and television in the regions, representations of labour as it relates to place, and the relation of the margins to the centre in terms of funding structures—begin to emerge. While many of the chapters highlight issues of representation and foreground in-depth analysis of specific works, some of the strongest essays in the collection are those that analyze the role of media and the reception of particular productions. Jen Vanderburgh’s interpretation of the audience outcry at the cancellation of Don Messer’s weekly variety show by the CBC in the 1960s, which represented a certain nostalgic vision of the nation in conflict with Trudeau-era multiculturalism, and Malek Khouri’s textual analysis of the 1986 Gordon Pinsent film John and the Missus, which convincingly shows the way in which traditionalism and individual choice have been commodified as a response to the trauma of postindustrial capitalism, are among some of the highlights. Other essays, such as John McCullough’s analysis of the television programs Gullage’s and Trailer Park Boys, and Howell and Twohig’s analysis of the NFB’s documentary output before and after 1990, flesh out the changing ways in which the needs of the universal and the regional have been variously negotiated. Tracy Y. Zhang illustrates the paradoxical relationship of “independent” filmmakers when funded primarily by state agencies, and Gregory Canning provides a thoughtful rereading of cinema culture outside of the metropolitan centres normally privileged in film scholarship. Jerry White’s analysis of Colin White’s Fogo Island films is a timely and provocative look at a facet of the NFB’s short-lived but incredibly influential Challenge for Change program, which has been generating a considerable amount of resuscitative scholarship of late, and he successfully illustrates the way in which their previously utilitarian understanding as process films has obscured a more meaningful engagement with the more lyrical and poetic aesthetics of the films, as well as their unexplored importance as reactions to Quebec’s growing nationalist movement.

Though the collection in no way purports to be exhaustive, there are some imbalances reflected in the essays that deserve attention, especially when considering the role of representation in and of the region. While there are many chapters dealing with Newfoundland, Labrador is hardly mentioned. Most likely this is due to the relative lack of productions coming out of this part of the country, and a concomitant lack of scholarship; however, the lack of attention given to the massive northern territory perpetuates an understanding of it as “bleak and barren” (p. 4), and points to a larger lacuna in the collection. The problem of whitewashing Atlantic Canada’s history in terms of its Black Canadian population is given attention in several of the essays, especially Sylvia D. Hamilton’s personal account of making a film about the life of Portia White, a little-known Black Nova Scotian singer who achieved international fame; but there is little to no acknowledgement of the role of the Atlantic provinces’ diverse Aboriginal populations or filmmakers, despite the fact that some of the films discussed, such as Cottonlands, represent these communities in varying contexts. In terms of redressing common misconceptions of the east coast as homogeneous in its demographic and ethnic makeup, as well as the violence implicit in an understanding of its pre-colonial territory as a type of terra nullius, an acknowledgment of its diverse aboriginal popu-
lation and its relative scarcity on screen would have been welcome in this collection, with its stated emphasis on place as a determining framework. At the very least, it suggests avenues for future study.

Taken together, the essays in Rain/Drizzle/Fog provide a compelling overview of what is surely an understudied area of film scholarship in this country, and the book will be a welcome addition to Canadian film and media studies. In its emphasis on Atlantic Canada in particular and the shifting demands of regionalism more broadly, the collection addresses the continued importance of an experiential grounding of place, despite (and increasingly because of) growing networks of global and virtual interconnectivity.

References

Morgan Charles, McGill University