Abstract

“Resistance in Contemporary Newfoundland Fiction”
Jonathan Parsons (PhD candidate), Department of English Language and Literature

Contemporary Newfoundland fiction depicts a culture under pressure. Critical studies of Newfoundland novels locate these pressures within broader economic, political, and social spheres. My work builds on these insights to argue that while contemporary Newfoundland novels highlight the pressures of a globalised capitalist society, these novels also function as a form of protest by demonstrating resistance to various forms of domination. Resistance is signified through actions of characters and events in the narratives, but also in the way the novels are positioned in relation to other texts and to Newfoundland culture. Focusing on the fiction of Lisa Moore, Wayne Johnston, Michael Crummey, and Edward Riche, my project theorizes this resistance as a strain of anarchism in Newfoundland culture. Anarchist tendencies are further rooted in Newfoundland folklore and myth, such as in the legend of the Masterless Men and the mummers tradition. In this way, my project seeks to develop a genealogy of resistance in contemporary Newfoundland fiction, and at the same time asks to what extent the novels enact (or are capable of enacting) authentic resistance to forces they seem to oppose.