

Chimo



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Chimo (Chee'mo) greetings [inuit]

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CACLALS Annual Membership Fee: Regular \$50.00, Part-time Sessional and Post Docs \$20.00, Student or Unwaged \$20.00. Please address membership correspondence to Maria Caridad Casas, Department of English and Drama, University of Toronto at Mississauga, 3359 Mississauga Rd. North, North Building, Rm. 227, or by email at maria.casas@utoronto.ca

On the cover: *Three Birds*, 2003, ink on paper. Damon Badger-Heit graduated from the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College at the University of Regina in 2003 with a B.A. in English and Indian Art. Since then he has developed as a practising artist with works displayed at Saskatchewan galleries, including the 5th Parallel, Otherside, Exchange, and Wanuskêwin. Damon is also a freelance writer with contracts from a number of organizations, including the First Nations University of Canada, the Regina Leader Post, and the OSAC. In 2003, the Saskatchewan Arts Board recently awarded Damon an Individual Assistance Grant to develop his play *Broken Bones*. Having recently completed an eighteen-month contract as an art instructor at the MacKenzie Art Gallery of Regina, Damon has accepted a position as Project Manager for Common Weal Community Arts Inc., an arts organization dedicated to achieving social justice by connecting artists and their art with the community. Damon Badger-Heit is a member of the Mistawasis First Nation of Saskatchewan.

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The Canadian Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Colleagues

On behalf of the executive, I wish you the best in the new year.

I am pleased to announce that CACLALS is participating in Congress 2007 at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon. The dates of the conference are May 26-28, 2007. The theme of the conference is *Aboriginal Storytelling, Poetry, and Performance Art Bridging Communities*. There are a few roundtables on issues relating to literature, its place, function, and engagement with social issues in aboriginal cultures. Roundtables that have been proposed by members of CACLALS are: holistic function of Aboriginal literature in improving community health, reader response and innovations in the teaching of Aboriginal texts, and emerging voices and critical developments in Aboriginal literatures. The keynote address will be given by Dr. Gerry Turcotte, Professor of English and Dean of Arts & Sciences at the University of Notre Dame, Sydney. Dr. Turcotte is widely published. Some titles of works authored by him are: *Jack Davis: The Maker of History* (Harper Collins), *Neighbourhood of Memory* (Dangaroo), *Canada-Australia: Towards a Second Century of Partnership*, a work co-authored with Kate Burridge and Lois Foster (Carleton University Press). His most recent publication is a co-edited text entitled *Compr(om)ising Post/colonialisms: Challenging Narratives and Practices* (Dangaroo). His new novel, *Flying in Silence*, was published in Canada and Australia and was shortlisted for The Age Book of the Year. Dr. Turcotte has also received awards for excellence in teaching. We are very honoured to have him deliver the keynote address.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the ad hoc committee for putting in many hours of work into designing the call for talks, deciding on the format of the conference, and contacting various writers about speaking at our conference. Please check the CACLALS website for the 2007 conference program.

Please be advised that the report on the annual Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences meeting held in November 2006 was posted on the listserv in December 2006. The Congress 2008 theme, *Thinking Beyond Borders*, with the sub-theme, *Global Ideas: Global Values / Idées mondiales : valeurs mondiales*, was announced at the meeting. The 2008 Congress will be held at the University of British Columbia. The results of a discussion at the annual meeting on the role of the Humanities within large-scale SSHRC research projects are posted in the report and may be of interest to you. The new president of SSHRC, Chad Gaffield, also addressed the group and I cite the report's summary of his address below as it outlines the key concerns of SSHRC at the moment:

New SSHRC President addresses Assembly

New SSHRC President Chad Gaffield spoke to the general message of the meetings: that the humanities and social sciences must "put our best foot forward" and begin to better communicate the benefits of our work to society. Dr. Gaffield revealed his goals for

SSHRC:

- to be recognized internationally as a quality funding council within the next three to four years;
- to move SSHRC "shoulder to shoulder" with the entire research community in Canada;
- to help communicate to politicians and larger society the important role the humanities and social sciences have played in "building Canada as a successful society" and its continued contribution to the country's global competitiveness by investing in education as a public good.

"We need to get a public commitment to public knowledge," said Dr. Gaffield. According to a recent SSHRC-commissioned poll, government and Canadians recognize the importance of humanities and social sciences (83 percent of Canadians have a "favourable" impression; 81 percent trust us) but many believe that much of what we do is not used to help society, and they are most unfamiliar with the research conducted in our disciplines. Dr. Gaffield notes that the poll results say we have a good chance to move forward, but we need to *specify* our contributions, and generate the statistics and measures that will demonstrate our importance convincingly. [. . .] We must "tell the story of our investment in Canadian brains and our help in making Canada a successful society."

The annual report is also posted on the Federation website.

I would like to remind you that membership renewal may now be done online using a credit card. The website is secure and I would like to encourage you to use this method of payment.

I have sent an email to all of you about filling in the two student representative positions on the executive. One came vacant September 2006 and the other becomes vacant September 2007. We are not having an AGM this year, and the position will have to be filled in the meantime. Please refer to the email for details. The subject line of the email reads "student reps in CACLALS executive" and it was sent on February 25, 2007. Please contact me if you have not received the email.

Finally, as you know, the ACLALS conference is being held in Vancouver at The University of British Columbia from August 17-22, 2007. Dr. Maria Casas will be representing CACLALS at this conference.

Best,

Sukeshi Kamra

FROM THE SECRETARY-TREASURER

Greetings,

Please see the financial statement for a picture of CACLALS finances from April 1, 2006 - September 30, 2006. Since it has been five months since the period the statement covers, here is an informal update: the CACLALS balance today is roughly \$7,600. There are no outstanding bills, and all conference expenses from COSSH 2006 have been paid. We can expect the usual grant income from SSHRC, the Commonwealth Foundation, and CFHSS in the coming months. However, conference expenses will also affect the balance beginning in June 2006.

Expenses for *Chimo* are not listed because funds for the production, publication, and mailing of the newsletter have been drawn from a budget that Carleton University's Dean of Arts Office provided to Sukeshi Kamra for the purpose of running the organization. Since *Chimo* is now exclusively online, this same budget covers costs related to online production. The budget also funds incidental expenses such as those associated with stationery, copying, and printing. In addition, the department of English provides support in the form of a graduate student. David Lafferty maintains the website, produces *Chimo*, assists in the generating of conference brochures and in activities associated with conference planning, and is responsible for the conference report that was published in the last *Chimo*. The Carleton budget also funds Sukeshi Kamra's attendance at the Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences. Finally, since she is based in Ottawa, we have not incurred any costs toward the travel of the President to the annual Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences meeting held in November of each year.

As of today, there are 198 members of CACLALS, of which 82 are students, postdoctoral fellows, sessionals, or unwaged, 96 are regular members, and 12 are honorary members. It is difficult to know whether these numbers reflect a true drop in membership or simply updated membership rolls. After sending appropriate notice, I removed anyone on the membership rolls whose fees were more than a year overdue. In a few cases they were two years overdue.

If you are planning to present a paper at the ACLALS conference in Vancouver this August and are already a member of CACLALS, you do not have to register in ACLALS: membership in the one includes automatic membership in the other.

The IATS online membership renewal facility is working very well. Membership fees are deposited directly into the CACLALS bank account and receipts are issued automatically. This means far less work for the Secretary-Treasurer—no more depositing cheques, updating bankbooks, generating letters, writing receipts, and mailing them. If you can, please use the online option.

Best Wishes,

Maria Caridad Casas

FINANCIAL REPORT

April 1, 2006 – September 30, 2006

Balance (April 1, 2006) 3322

Income:

Memberships	1836
Commonwealth Foundation Grant	2105
SSHRC Travel Grant (Conference 2006)	3480
COSSH 2005 income (CSSHE shared speaker fee)	360
Library subscriptions (<i>Chimo</i>)	19
Bank interest	2

Total Income 7802

Expenditures:

2006 Conference*	3004
Bank fees	20

Total expenditures 3024

Balance (September 30, 2006) 8100

* Speaker fees: \$750; Aboriginal Roundtable: \$120; travel grants to presenters: \$2135. More conference expenses on next semi-annual statement.

Maria C. Casas
Secretary-Treasurer
CACLALS

MEMBER NEWS

Dear Colleagues,

I am including in this issue of *Chimo* a memo I received via email from Prof. Ranjini Mendis. I append a brief statement that addresses the financial assertions contained in the memo.

Regards,

Sukeshi

Clarification for CHIMO

The Secretary Treasurer's report in the Minutes of the 2006 AGM in the Fall 2006 CHIMO states: "She [Maria] commented that the balance has dropped to about \$3000 following a rough pattern established over the last five years in which Expenditures each year were usually higher than Income. The gradually dropping balance was imperceptible to the Secretary-Treasurers during those terms because of a fairly frequent turnover of incumbents."

Wendy Robbins, Former President of CACLALS (1999-2002), Robin Sutherland, former Secretary Treasurer (1999-2002), Ranjini Mendis, Past President (2002-2005) and Rob Fleming, former Secretary Treasurer (2002-2003) and Jennifer Kelly (former Secretary Treasurer 2003-2005) wish to clarify what we feel is a misrepresentation contained in the above statement as it does not accurately reflect the accounts nor the financial reports published in CHIMO, now online at <http://www.carleton.ca/caclals/chimodir/Chimo>. Further, it seems to suggest that there was some inattention on the part of one or more CACLALS executives. Ordinarily we would have preferred to simply have the Minutes amended, but since these have already been published in CHIMO, we do not wish this misconception to remain without being appropriately addressed.

There are two different secretariats involved in this five-year period. The first was based at UNB, Fredericton, 1999-2002, with Wendy Robbins and Robin Sutherland. There was no turn-over of secretary-treasurer during these years, though the position was renamed executive officer. They respond first.

As is required by the CACLALS Constitution, the organization's bank balance is reviewed by CACLALS' executive members and reported every year at the AGM to those attending Congress as well as in print in CHIMO for everyone to see. Any changes are thus far from "imperceptible"; they are drawn to people's attention and published.

The period of transition between secretariats is often a protracted one, while an outgoing executive holds on to a small cash reserve to pay outstanding bills that will be directed to the old address. The first treasurer's report that we produced was published in CHIMO 39 and clearly labeled a "draft report" until we were able to account for some \$2,500 that had not yet been transferred to us. There was no implication of wrong-doing on the part of the previous executive, only of an understandable time lag. We issued a complete report in CHIMO 40 (Spring 2000). In that report, our ending balance was higher than our opening balance of \$13,184, in part because of that late transfer, and in part because we had launched a highly successful membership campaign and doubled our revenues from membership fees, bringing in \$1,800 in six months. That said, there was a "rough pattern" of "dropping balances" overall, in large part because UNB was not able to contribute to CACLALS the way its previous home, WLU had (where Rowland Smith was Vice President), with CHIMO 44 reporting a closing balance for March 2002 (prior to Congress) of \$11,333.

As a mark of our careful management and fiscal prudence, we cancelled the 2000 Commonwealth in Canada conference that we had planned when our SSHRC application for funding was turned down. And we raised our regular membership fees from \$35 to \$45 "a hefty increase" effective 1 January 2001, as announced in CHIMO 41 (Fall 2000) because we were aware that our expenditures were exceeding our revenues, again in part because we had a policy of topping up SSHRC travel grants so that we could assist graduate students as a priority to attend Congress. We also lobbied long and hard with the CFHSS for improved SSHRC funding (Wendy Robbins served as a vice president of the CFHSS for two terms).

CACLALS was praised during our tenure and subsequently during Ranjini Mendis' as one of the best run small associations in the CFHSS.

Respectfully submitted

Wendy Robbins (former president) and Robin Sutherland (former executive officer)

To speak to the matter of "a fairly frequent turnover of incumbents," Rob Fleming served as Secretary Treasurer from May 2002 till September 2003, prior to demitting his post due to increased administrative duties at Kwantlen. He was succeeded by Catherine Nelson-McDermott in September 2003, who resigned from the position in November 2003 because of her heavy workload at UBC. Jennifer Kelly took on the position on December 1, 2003, and served as Secretary-Treasurer until 1 September 2005, the time of transition to the new executive based at Carleton University. These were all conscientious, hard-working officers.

In January 2006, Jennifer Kelly and Ranjini Mendis submitted to the current President and Secretary Treasurer (cc.to the Executive), detailed notes on our accounting procedures, including the fact that the semi-annual financial statements do not indicate exact balances at interim points of any reporting period. Jennifer Kelly reported that a consistent balance has been maintained each year, and that during and after conferences the balance necessarily fluctuates until the Commonwealth Foundation grants, conference fees, etc. are re-

ceived and all expenses paid.

As an example of fluctuating balances at an interim point: we initially received around \$5000 from UNB headquarters in 2002, which quickly increased when we received membership dues, a final balance from UNB, and grants. Our transfer to the new CACLALS Executive at Carleton of a reasonably comparable \$3100 would also have been higher had an extremely late amount due from the previous ACLALS headquarters arrived in a timely fashion.

As you can see in CHIMO Archives, the finances of CACLALS during the five years (2000-2005) show, overall, a healthy working balance, despite increasing costs and no accompanying increase in grants from funding councils. And we were able to accomplish what we did, including the extended (four-day) 2005 conference, because we had additional generous support from our host, Kwantlen University College.

Respectfully submitted ,
Ranjini Mendis (CACLALS Past-President), Rob Fleming (former Secretary Treasurer),
and Jennifer Kelly (former Secretary Treasurer)

From Sukeshi:

Our report on the fiscal situation at the beginning of our term (Fall 2005) was made in the context of an absence of floating funds and a perceived need to be fiscally conservative for the 2006 CACLALS conference. The report glanced over the previous five years to establish that there was a rough pattern of dropping balances and was not meant to cast aspersions on previous Executives. I would like to note here that when we, the new Executive, took over in Fall 2005, the transfer of funds from the old executive was in the amount of \$600.

MEMBER NEWS CONT.

Julia Emberley's *Defamiliarizing the Aboriginal: Cultural Practices and Decolonization in Canada* will be published by the University of Toronto Press in Spring 2007.

Uma Parameswaran has five new publications: two critical volumes from Rawat Publications in India and three novellas from Larkuma in Canada. The critical volumes are collections of essays and plenaries from the last thirty years: *Writing the Diaspora: Essays on Identity and Culture* and *Salman Rushdie's Early Fiction*. Copies can be ordered from info@rawatbooks.com. The novellas are *The Forever Banyan Tree*, *Fighter Pilots Never Die*, and a new edition of *The Sweet Smell of Mother's Milk-Wet Bodice*. Copies can be ordered from larkuma2003@yahoo.com after January 15, 2007.

BOOK REVIEWS

Daniel Coleman. *White Civility: The Literary Project of English Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006. 320 pages. \$55.00

Review by Jill Didur, Concordia University

A recent front-page story in *The Globe and Mail* ran under the headline “How Canadian Are You?” The story reports that a study by University of Toronto sociologist Jeffrey Reitz has found that “[v]isible-minority immigrants are slower to integrate into Canadian society than their white, European counterparts, and feel less Canadian, suggesting that multiculturalism doesn't work as well for non-whites.” While Professor Reitz reached his conclusions through the study of statistical data gathered in 2002, Daniel Coleman's *White Civility: The Literary Project of English Canada* suggests that the roots of this sense of exclusion have a long history that is evident through the study of popular literature written and published in Canada between 1850 and 1950. As the title of Coleman's book suggests, he examines how “White normativity” (3) was produced and represented by early Canadian literature, which reflects common cultural conventions associated with colonial and settler culture in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Coleman's study looks at the history of the “construction of White, English Canadian privilege” (3) and asks the questions,

How did this normative concept of (English) Canadianness come to be established in the first place? What are its elements? What is its genealogy? And how might an understanding of the process of its establishment enable twenty-first-century Canadians to anticipate and resist its continuous coercive power? (4-5)

Coleman takes on the tricky task of making visible the assumptions associated with ‘Whiteness’ in Canada--assumptions so pervasive that they both determine and at the same time remain transparent mediators of Canadians' sense of national identity. His study tracks the genealogy of ‘Whiteness’ in Canada through popular Canadian fiction, which Coleman argues is one of the best places to examine the complexities of nationalist identity.

Coleman looks at popular literature published in Canada over approximately one hundred years in an attempt to map out where the norm of ‘White civility’ is established and how it is reproduced and contested over time. The choice of focusing on popular rather than official texts allows Coleman to consider writing “produced not only by those who securely hold the reins of power but also by those who are lobbying for power” (35). The analysis in *White Civility* considers how popular literature is used by “educated elites and reform-oriented lobby groups” to create fantasies of national character and “shape popular views *in advance* of the pedagogies of the state” (36, original emphasis).

The White “fictive ethnicity” (Balibar in Coleman 7) that has attached itself to the Canadian national context is largely explained by Coleman's analysis of these texts. In the process of reviewing this slice of Canadian popular culture, Coleman concludes that “White Canadian culture is obsessed, and organized by its obsession, with the problem or

its own civility” (5). Civility in this popular fiction denotes “the temporal concept of progress and the moral-ethical ideal of orderliness...demonstrated by cultivated, polite behaviour (most commonly modelled on the figure of the bourgeois gentleman), which, in turn, made these concepts fundamental to the production and education of the individual citizen” (10). This “isochronous” (12) understanding of temporality privileges European modernity over other forms of governance (considered ‘less advanced’) and places societies and individuals whose outlook or conduct does not conform to this world view as in need of education and ‘improvement.’ Race or ‘Whiteness’ is tethered to notions of civility as part of what Coleman and other scholars have identified as its inherently ambivalent or contradictory structure: “[I]n the very period of the Enlightenment, when concepts of democratic rule, egalitarianism, and individual liberty were emerging as social ideals, there also arose the most nefarious and complex system the world has ever seen for classifying and stratifying humans into a hierarchy of racial types” (13). In the fiction Coleman discusses, “modern civility is [shown to be], paradoxically, a limited or constrained universality that tends to proliferate and striate not only external by also internal differences” (13). Coleman’s readings of early popular Canadian literature make visible a slippage between moral and racial criteria for determining one’s relationship to civility when literary personas fail to assimilate to the norms associated with Whiteness.

‘Canadianization’ for European immigrants is determined by one’s degree of assimilation to the so-called universal ideals represented by White civility. In Ralph Connor’s *The Foreigner*, for example, Coleman examines how the civilization of a young male Ukrainian immigrant is contrasted with the unredeemable characters of “the Cossack zealot, the Jewish slumlord, and the ‘half-breed’” (180). Thus, in Connor’s novel the young, rough-edged Catholic Ukrainian, Kalman, is represented as undergoing a process of masculine maturation when he rejects his father’s Old-World values under the guidance of a Scottish Presbyterian missionary and an English ranch owner. Allegory and pedagogy are key concepts in Coleman’s analysis of the construction of ‘white civility’ in popular Canadian fiction of this era. Coleman limits his study to this early period as he argues that the Canadian literary culture “has not yet undergone the private-public, personal-political split” and “writers tend to figure the individual narrative as representative of national narrative, particularly by means of the growing-up story, whereby the youth’s process of maturation represents young Canada’s emergence onto the international stage of modern nations” (37). Allegory, for Coleman, is understood as “a tense rhetorical form because it compresses powerful and often contentiously political ideologies into a dense bundle in its effort to incorporate unassimilated phenomena into the formulations of the familiar and the known” (40). Its pedagogical implications are also more complicated than first assumed. The allegorical ‘lesson’ that informs Canadian nationalism, according to Coleman, “never matches exactly in a tight, one-to-one correspondence the actions or performances of its tropic figures” (40). It is “the gap” between these two things, between the “pedagogical and the performative elements in national allegory” (40), a gap that has motivated similar studies of postcolonial nationalism in our field (most notably, Bhabha’s *Nation and Narration*), that *White Civility* sets out to map in the early Canadian context.

The four allegorical figures that organize the analysis in *White Civility* and that appear repeatedly in the popular texts Coleman is concerned with include the Loyalist

brother, the enterprising Scottish orphan, the muscular Christian, and the maturing colonial son. Each of these allegories represents a repetition of a specific aspect of the “official symbolic history of Canada” that obscures its supplement--what Coleman, following Slavoj Žižek, suggests is its “‘spectral,’ fantasmatic history” (28). This “undead” history includes, among other things, “[t]he denial of Indigenous presence in these lands, the disregard of pre-contact history, and the continuing suppression of First Peoples’ claims to land and sovereignty” (29). “For Canadians” Coleman argues, “the performance of civility is a way to manage our traumatic history” (29). The four allegories are discussed in detail in the four main chapters of the book, each of which offers revealing insights into the underside of Canadian notions of ‘civility’ or what Gauri Viswanathan has called ‘masks of conquest.’ For example, chapter 2 offers a convincing analysis of how the spectre of fratricide between British colonials and selfish economic motives (i.e., the desire for property) are contained by an allegory of fraternity that rationalizes “brotherly brutality” (47). In these narratives, the civility of Loyalist characters is “demonstrated by their aligning themselves with vulnerable non-Whites” (47) such as black and First Nations characters. Building on his previous work on masculinity (*Masculine Migrations*, 1998), Coleman goes on to explain that the “backward-looking” quality of this homosocial allegory (i.e. a “bachelor society cannot reproduce itself”) is redeemed in the conclusion of most texts by the sudden recruitment of women and the substitution for the fraternal of a matrimonial allegorical twist (47-48).

In chapter 3 Coleman discusses the allegory of ‘the enterprising Scottish orphan’ whose story is reiterated in books such as Connor’s *The Man From Glengarry* and the more familiar *Barometer Rising* by Hugh MacLennan. Coleman’s analysis of his allegory offers insight into the invention of Canadian/British ethnicity, which is primarily an assimilation of Scottish ethnicity as constructed in the post Unionist period in Britain and rerouted through early Canadian settler culture. The Canadian version of this story involves that ubiquitous narrative of the Scottish orphan who settles in Canada, adheres to a strict code of “moral and domestic improvement” (111) and eventually displaces both the indigenous figure as well as the elite English settler. This story of selflessness coupled with upwardly mobility comes to stand in for the idealized profile of the ‘English Canadian’ citizen.

Perhaps the most important theoretical move Coleman makes in the book is to suggest that an attitude of “wry civility” (41) be substituted for the White civility that has inflected the production and reception of the popular literature and culture discussed in his book. As he provocatively asks, “What distinguishes a twenty-first-century project of civility such as mine from nineteenth- or early twentieth-century forms of civility such as the ones I examine and critique?” (41). An attitude of ‘wry civility’ is Coleman’s answer to the tendency of readers, critics, or citizens who identify with the concept of (white) civility to assume their values and culture represent a kind of universal or neutral conduct. Wry civility, for Coleman, involves the performance of “our self-consciousness that we are implicated in the history of racism” and a call for critics of White civility to remain “ironically aware of the pretentiousness of the civility that we nonetheless aspire to, and also the pretentiousness in trying to be self-aware” (43). It is this productively paradoxical, deconstructive practice that informs much of the analysis and commentary in *White*

Civility. The book's conclusion encourages readers to think beyond the edges of Coleman's study and examine the limits of some contemporary postcolonial and postmodern approaches to Canadian multicultural fiction that fail to acknowledge the critic's own implication in the interested production of knowledge. Rather than abandon the project of civility, Coleman calls on critics to acknowledge its "contaminated, compromised history" even while they affirm "that its basic elements as formulated in Canada—peace, order and good government—are worth having and maintaining" (239).

The stakes of Coleman's project are clearly and eloquently outlined throughout the book. What the Globe story mentioned above suggests is that despite the rhetoric of multiculturalism that informs popular and official representations of Canadian society, "whiteness still occupies the positions of normalcy and privilege in Canada, and anti-racist activity remains hamstrung until we begin to carry out the historical work that traces its genealogy" (7-8). Daniel Coleman's *White Civility* represents a pivotal contribution to this larger project.

*Daniel Coleman's *White Civility: The Literary Project of English Canada* will be the subject of an 'Author Meets Critics' panel at the upcoming ACLALS Triennial in Vancouver BC, August 17-22.

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Michael L. Ross. *Race Riots: Comedy and Ethnicity in Modern British Fiction*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's UP, 2006. 309 pages. \$75.00

Review by John Clement Ball, University of New Brunswick

It's surprising how little serious scholarship gets done on the links between humour and the discourses of othering that supported European colonialism and still wreak havoc in the world today. Racial stereotyping is a staple of stand-up comedy, and ethnic caricatures proliferate in a range of narrative media from sitcoms to literary novels. Laughter can include or exclude, as in the familiar distinction between a communal experience of laughing *with* and a divisive one of laughing *at*. Comic forms of representation can reinforce the status quo or challenge it, normalize biases or make them look ridiculous. George Orwell once wrote, "Every joke is a tiny revolution [that] upsets the moral order," but Michael L. Ross, who quotes Orwell on the first page of this welcome and useful study (3), takes a more cautious and balanced view. "Just as humour at times tends to reinforce social hegemony and at other times to subvert it," he writes, "so there is no sweeping principle that can define all humour as either multiaccentual or monologic" (22). His book is a careful parsing of the comic mode's enormously varied racial implications and political effects in dozens of modern British novels and a few short stories.

Drawing on mostly well-known theories of humour, laughter, and comedy from Bergson, Bakhtin, and many others, as well as on postcolonial theorists such as Said, Bhabha, and JanMohamed, Ross traces a fascinating genealogy of British racial humour that begins with *The Tempest* and ends in 2004 with Andrea Levy's award-winning novel *Small Island*. Shakespeare's small-islander, Caliban, is actually one of two key points of origin for Ross's considerations of comic alterity; cartoons published in that bastion of mainstream British taste, *Punch*, are the other, particularly those that, in the 1920s and 30s, made sport of African or Indian people's perceived backwardness vis-à-vis their imperial masters. Patronizing, infantilizing images of dark-skinned others published in *Punch* shored up a sense of national and racial superiority at a time when Britannia's rule was becoming less secure; as Ross writes, "After 1918, casting these subalterns in comic roles could help assuage British anxieties by keeping them, at least psychologically, in their customary abased stations" (50). He reproduces the more outrageous of these drawings and convincingly reads them as indexes of a collective xenophobia – collective because otherwise the British "we" would presumably not have been amused.

The shared ethnocentrism *Punch* assumes and nurtures informs two novels of the same period set in Africa, Evelyn Waugh's *Black Mischief* and Joyce Cary's *Mister Johnson*. Ross devotes a chapter to each, showing how, whatever the authors' stated intentions or views of Africans, both show their colonial protagonists as infatuated with Englishness and falling humorously, even grotesquely, short of its precepts. As he does throughout, Ross negotiates his own assured, nuanced readings of these novels, in all their contradictions and ambivalences, in relation to a widely representative sampling of prior critics' views, which are frequently quoted at length. Indeed, the mix of respectful acknowledgment with strongly independent interpretations gives Ross, a professor emeritus at McMaster University, an unusual voice that combines the graduate student's show-your-

research obeisance with a senior scholar's forthrightness and career-long breadth of reading. One might wish he would pare down the quotes just a bit in order to let his elegant, often witty, and remarkably jargon-free arguments come more to the fore, or to replace secondary critics on novels with theorists of some key concepts that remain sketchily defined here (e.g. satire, and even "race" and ethnicity); nonetheless, one admires his overall commitment to covering his research bases.

E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India* is a novel for which "humorous" and "comic" aren't the first epithets to come to mind, a view Ross recognizes before performing an ingenious reading of the ways amusement and drollery contribute to its themes of inter-racial (non-)connection. Although not immune to the orthodox condescension of Waugh and Cary, Forster is much more likely to focalize his narrative, and the implied perspectives of its laughter-causing moments, through native subordinates. Ross writes, "Sniggering, Arbuthnotian laughter abounds in *A Passage*, normally serving to confirm the British laughter's hegemonic dominance of a subaltern racial group. Equally important, however, is a countervailing type of laughter resembling the egalitarian myth of carnival celebrated by Bakhtin. One might call this type fraternal, since it establishes a sense of fellowship among people, whether members of the same racial group or not" (120). By multiplying comic perspectives in these ways, Forster, Ross concludes, "revolutionize[d] the comedy of colonialism" and paved the way for similarly progressive uses of racial humour by Muriel Spark, Barbara Pym, and Elizabeth Taylor, each of whom receives an extended discussion.

Of special interest to critics of postcolonial literature are Ross's insightful readings of Sam Selvon's *Moses* trilogy, Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*, and Hanif Kureishi's early novels. Anyone who, like me, has taught and written about these books – and who has groaned, as Caliban did with his "burden of wood," under loads of prior critics' and students' interpretations – may feel less than exuberant at this prospect. But Ross's attentiveness to the subtle instabilities of comic moments and the shifting registers of language, tone, and power that generate them make each of these chapters a welcome addition to the critic's burden of acid-free wood product. Particularly impressive is his supple, judicious handling of the multiple ironies generated by all three authors' use of racist stereotypes: unflattering (and controversial) renderings of the very immigrant groups whose subordination their novels seem otherwise to challenge. He demonstrates interesting—if occasionally strained—similarities among the three writers' work, and conveys the essence of each text's major characters without reducing them to comic types inhabiting schematic relationships.

Race Riots ends with an examination of Matthew Kneale's "anti-*Tempest*" novel *English Passengers* (which translates Shakespeare's paradigmatic figures to nineteenth-century Tasmania) and a quick concluding glance at three twenty-first-century novels by the mixed-race writers Zadie Smith (*White Teeth*), Hari Kunzru (*The Impressionist*), and Andrea Levy (*Small Island*). As he rounds out his overarching thesis that "racially oriented British comedy undergoes a decisive change in direction during the course of the twentieth century" toward a Bakhtinian polyphonic and "egalitarian carnivalesque" (5), Ross shows these young writers to have replaced "'English giggles' at the expense of the not entirely English" with "a cosmopolitan amusement better suited to the new England's

unexampled cultural diversity.” Instead of “the stock assumptions that underlay older types of racial humour, whether Waugh’s or Cary’s or *Punch*’s, these writers rely on ironies of situation and paradoxical clashes of individual perspective” (279).

Humour often involves incongruous, surprising combinations of elements from radically different realms – as colonial contact zones and multicultural metropolises do. What tickles our funny bone may do so by creating an amusing sense of superiority (perhaps qualified with an alarming self-recognition) as it reduces people to mechanical automatons or grotesque bodies driven by animal instincts – just like colonialist and racist discourses commonly do. Michael Ross brings welcome attention and expertise to the many symbioses between the comic and the colonial, the snickering *rieur* and the scornful racist, the inclusive, topsy-turvy carnivalesque and the incipient, transnational communities of our young century. Comic fiction invites our complicity with the worldview(s) through which it is focalized, so we need to know how to read it if we are to understand what kind of world we’re assenting to for the duration of our readerly journey. *Race Riots* gives us a wealth of tools to understand why we chuckle at racial comedy, what our mirth might mean, and which British novels are most deserving of our laughter.

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