

Chimo



**The Newsjournal of the Canadian Association for
Commonwealth Literature & Language Studies
Number 54** **Fall 2007**

Chimo (Chee'mo) greetings [inuit]

Editor: Neil ten Kortenaar
Book Reviews Editor: John Ball
Production and Editorial Assistance: David Lafferty

Chimo is published twice yearly by the Canadian Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies. It is provided free of charge to members of the Association. Non-members may obtain single issues at \$3.00 per copy. Please address editorial and business correspondence to:

Neil ten Kortenaar, Editor, *Chimo*, CACLALS, Department of English, University of Toronto, 170 St George St, Toronto ON, M5S 3K1, Canada

or by email to:

kortenaar@utsc.utoronto.ca.

The Editors appreciate receiving all extended submissions in electronic form (Microsoft Word, if possible). The Editors reserve the right to amend phrasing and punctuation in items accepted for publication in *Chimo*.

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, University of Toronto, 170 St. George Street, Toronto M5K 3S1, or by email to 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 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.

Copyright© 2007 CACLALS

The Canadian Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies

TABLE OF CONTENTS

From the President(s)..... 3

From the Secretary-Treasurer..... 6

Financial Reports..... 7

AGM Minutes..... 9

Conference Reports: CACLALS 2007 Saskatoon..... 11

Conference Photos..... 16

Conference Reports: ACLALS 2008 Vancouver..... 17

Calls for Papers..... 20

Member News and Publications..... 25

Items of Interest..... 26

Book Reviews..... 27

CACLALS Online..... 34

CACLALS Executive Committee..... 35

FROM THE OUTGOING PRESIDENT

Dear Colleagues,

In the 2006-2007 year, CACLALS published the Fall and Spring issues of *Chimo*. This year, *Chimo* moved to an on-line format and members were sent an email advising them that the newsletter should be accessed via the website.

CACLALS participated in the annual Canadian Federation of Humanities' meeting held in Ottawa in November 2006 and in Congress 2007, which was held in Saskatoon this year. The CACLALS conference theme was "Aboriginal Storytelling, Poetry, and Performance Art Bridging Communities" and the conference dates were May 26-28, 2007. The conference opened with a welcome-ceremony performed by Erika Faith and Joseph Naytowhow. The keynote address was delivered by Gerry Turcotte, the founding director of the Centre for Canadian-Australian Studies and Professor of English and Dean of Arts and Sciences at the University of Notre Dame in Sydney, Australia. His talk was entitled "A 'Playful' Competition in the Spirit World: Building Bridges in the Spectral Nation" and it looked at the ways in which spectrality works in contemporary indigenous cultural texts, including performance art, storytelling, and film. On the third day of the conference, Louise Halfe gave the plenary talk. Her talk, entitled "The Exploration of the Cree Language Underword in Writing, Psychology and Spirituality," was a combination of critical inquiry into the power of language and a powerful performance of some of her poetry. Both sessions were co-sponsored by the Association for Canadian and Quebec Literatures. CACLALS, along with the Canadian Women's Studies Association, the Canadian Association of Schools of Social Work, and Women Walking Together (Iskwewuk E-wichiwitochik), sponsored the screening of *Finding Dawn*, a film about the disap-

peared aboriginal women from Saskatchewan. The rest of the conference featured a number of roundtables and paper sessions. The roundtables focused on a number of issues of concern to teachers, writers, and translators of aboriginal culture(s). These were very well attended and the format encouraged a great deal of discussion. Finally, there were three paper sessions that looked at issues as diverse as recuperating voices, inventing history, reading practices, and negotiating indigenous cultures and texts. The conference was well attended, and the active participation of a number of scholars, including graduate students, made the conference a lively and stimulating one.

CACLALS gratefully acknowledges the financial support provided by the Commonwealth Foundation which enabled us to invite speakers to this conference.

Best,

Sukeshi Kamra

FROM THE INCOMING PRESIDENT

Greetings,

At the CACLALS AGM, which was held at the ACLALS conference in Vancouver in August 2007, I was elected interim president for the remaining duration of Sukeshi's term. CACLALS has now moved wholesale to the University of Toronto, joining Maria Casas, the secretary-treasurer, who was already here. The website and the listserv are now both hosted at the University of Toronto. (For details on how to access these please see the end of this issue of *Chimo*.) The transition has been smooth. I am especially grateful to David Lafferty for facilitating the electronic transfer.

The most exciting event on the CACLALS horizon is the annual conference, to be held in conjunction with Congress at the University of British Columbia May 31-June 2 2008. The theme is "Thinking Beyond Borders" and the keynote speakers will be Laura Chrisman and Ato Quayson. The Call for Papers is included in this issue of *Chimo*. The AGM will be held then, too, and there will be elections for a new executive committee to hold office for the next three years. Nominations are most welcome. Send them to any member of the current executive committee.

Let me welcome Azalea Masa Barriesses from the University of Saskatchewan as a new graduate student representative, beginning a two-year term.

I look forward to seeing you in Vancouver

Neil ten Kortenaar
Interim president

FROM THE SECRETARY-TREASURER

Greetings,

It has been a good year. Highlights: our specialized Aboriginal Storytelling, Poetry, and Performance Art small conference in Saskatoon in May, and the (much larger, truly international) ACLALS conference in Vancouver. The former was a wonderful opportunity for those working on Aboriginal literature and culture to meet and talk --there was a definite sense of community, both immanent and as part of a larger North American community of Aboriginal scholars; the latter, a locus of contacts and conversations that I am sure we are all e-nurturing and that I hope will extend for years.

The resignation of President Sukeshi Kamra in February was a loss, though softened by the generous amount of time she gave to the Association after her announcement, first in wrapping up the organization of the Saskatoon conference, and then in giving the executive committee extra time to find a replacement. Though family matters in India prevented her attendance at the August AGM, the election of Acting President Neil ten Kortenaar went very smoothly.

Representing Sukeshi, I attended the ACLALS Executive Committee meeting and the ACLALS AGM in Vancouver, at both of which I reported our activities in the three years since the last AGM in Hyderabad. The next conference will be in hosted by the European chapter of ACLALS in 2010.

The transition to online distribution for *Chimo* and to online membership registration and renewal went relatively smoothly and satisfactorily, maintaining CACLALS' reputation among Canadian learned societies for sophistication in organizational matters. The Financial Report presented at our AGM in August covered the year April 2006-April 2007. I append to this report the two semi-annual statements since the last statement published in *Chimo* 53. All 2007 conference and *Chimo* expenses have been paid and the balance remains healthy. Membership has risen again to 216 paid-up members, of which roughly half are full-time faculty.

Thanks are due to the each of the executive committee members, who handled the transition between presidents with composure and who have supported the executive officers of the association throughout.

Best wishes for a stimulating and productive year.

Maria Caridad Casas, PhD
Secretary-Treasurer

FINANCIAL REPORT

October 1, 2006 – March 31, 2007

Balance (October 1, 2006) 8115

Income:

Memberships 4185

Commonwealth Foundation Grant 2276

Bank interest 1

Total Income 6462

Expenditures

CFHSS membership dues 1696

2006 Conference ¹ 1719

Leverus² 249

Bank fees 20

Total expenditures 3684

Balance (March 31, 2007) 10,893³

Maria C. Casas
Secretary-Treasurer
CACLALS

¹Catering: \$383; Aboriginal Roundtable: \$50; travel grants to presenters: \$1225; speaker dinner: \$60.

²Online membership renewal: set-up and form design.

³The balance of the CACLALS bank account as of March 30, 2007 was 10,896.

April 1, 2007 – September 30, 2007

Balance (April 1, 2007) **10,893⁴**

Income:

Memberships	2116
SSHRC Travel Grant	3480
COSSH 2007 income	1350
CFHSS Interdisciplinary Outreach Grant	250
Library subscriptions (<i>Chimo</i>)	25
Bank interest	3

Total Income **7,224**

Expenditures:

2007 Conference	6606
CFHSS membership	1527
AGM Vancouver	194
IATS fees ⁵	71
Bank fees	2

Total expenditures **8,400**

Balance (September 30, 2007) **9,717**

Maria C. Casas
Secretary-Treasurer
CACLALS

⁴See note 3, Oct. 2006-March 2007 statement.

⁵Previously these were deducted from member payments; a/o mid-May, a new system deducted fees directly from the CACLALS account instead.

MINUTES OF THE CACLALS 2007 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

August 20, 2007

Present: Maria Casas, Neil ten Kortenaar, John Ball, Laura Moss, Shao-Pin Luo, Linda Rodenburg, Judith Leggatt, Veronica Thompson, David Jefferess, Nancy Batty, John LeBlanc, Wendy Robbins, Don Randall, Guy Beaugard, David Chariandy, Renate Eignbrod

The meeting was called to order at 5:15.

1. Motion by Guy Beaugard to approve the agenda, seconded by Judith Leggatt. Carried
2. Motion by John Ball to approve the minutes from the 2006 AGM as circulated at the meeting, seconded by Maria Casas. Friendly motion by Wendy Robbins to correct the minutes by deleting the last sentence of the second paragraph of the secretary-treasurer's report. Seconded by Maria Casas. Carried.
3. Maria Casas read Sukeshi Kamra's President's Report. Of note: *Chimo* moved to an on-line format, which has been successful. Only two members requested the alternate paper format. CACLALS participated in the Canadian Federation of the Humanities' meeting held in Ottawa in November 2006 and in Congress 2007, held in Saskatoon. The CACLALS conference theme was "Aboriginal Story-Telling, Poetry and Performance Art Bridging Communities," and the dates were May 26-8. Full details of the conference to appear in *Chimo*. Sukeshi is resigning as of August 31, 2007.
4. Maria Casas presented her Secretary-Treasurer's Report. After a purge of outdated memberships, membership stands at 212. Almost all renewed their memberships on-line. There is a balance of \$9,784 in the account. The financial statements have been or will be published in *Chimo*. Maria is moving to the Mississauga campus of U of Toronto. CACLALS covered the travel costs and some accommodation costs of 8 or 9 people who presented papers at the annual conference and who had no alternative funding.
5. Nominations for interim president. John Ball nominated Neil ten Kortenaar. Seconded by Laura Moss. Carried.
6. Appointment of committee to design a Call for Papers for CACLALS 2008, May 31-June 2 in Vancouver. The Congress theme will be "Thinking Beyond Borders: Global Ideas, Global Values." Wendy suggested our own theme might be just "Thinking Beyond Borders," without the subtitle. Wendy and Maria will send out a draft CFP to the membership and then draw up a final CFP.
7. Sukeshi offered to represent CACLALS at the Federation of the Humanities and Social Sciences in Ottawa. There were no objections.

8. John Ball invited members to submit suggestions of books for reviews, as well as their own reviews, including of art, literature, events.

9. Wendy will ask Jesse to review the 2007 ACLALS conference for *Chimo*.

10. Addition to the agenda: Laura Moss asked about the policy with regards to membership and maternity leaves. Laura moved that maternity, paternity, parental, compassionate, and disability leaves be taken into account and, in those cases, memberships not be backdated. Seconded by Judith. Laura suggested that members should notify CACLALS at the beginning of the leave and specify the length of time.

Carried.

11. Maria brought to the meeting a letter from the journal *Wasafiri* asking to rent our list of e-mail addresses, to put inserts in our mailings or electronic newsletters, and to set up an exchange of weblinks. It was agreed/reaffirmed that CACLALS will not rent out mail-lists. Ads have been accepted in *Chimo* in the past and there is no policy against that.

12. Motion to adjourn by Don Randall, seconded by David Chariandy. Carried.

CONFERENCE REPORT: CACLALS 2007

Prepared by Sukeshi Kamra and David Lafferty

This year's CACLALS conference, although limited in size, was a great success. The title of the conference was "Aboriginal Storytelling, Poetry, and Performance Art: Bridging Communities," and featured a variety of paper sessions, roundtables, and talks focusing entirely on indigenous/aboriginal literature and related topics.

As part of the opening ceremonies of the conference, the delegates were welcomed to Saskatoon with a vocal performance by Erika Faith and Joseph Naytowhow.

The first roundtable, entitled "Teaching and Writing with a Difference: Towards Creative and Culturally Sensitive Ways of Responding to Aboriginal Literatures," a joint session with ACCUTE, got the conference off to a good start. It introduced some of the major themes that were to come up repeatedly over the three days: modes of critical engagement with indigenous literatures and cultures, ways of incorporating the latter, as well as indigenous modes of critical thought, into university curricula and the ongoing negotiation between dominant culture and its texts on the one hand and indigenous cultures and their texts on the other. Many in the roundtable discussed their own classroom experiences—both in teaching indigenous texts to a primarily non-indigenous class and to classes where self-identified indigenous students were active participants. Issues that were floated during the discussion ranged from considering the need to interrupt or disrupt the naturalized forms for discussing literary culture in university classrooms, and considering the many ways in which the indigene have ceded "territories of imagination" (as Janice Acoose put it), to discussing the ways in which indigenous students can be encouraged to emerge from a silence (in classrooms) and also ways in which non-indigenous students can be made to engage with seemingly 'other' ways of reading texts and consider them legitimate (along with the established ways of reading one encounters, for instance, in postmodern theory). Much emphasis was placed on encouraging a mode of perception that would have indigenous literatures and issues take their place as issues in general, and not just aboriginal issues. A related concern that was the subject of much discussion was the inter-relatedness of the political and the aesthetic in the writings of indigenous authors and teaching of their texts. Can or should the aesthetic be separated from the political? Another concern identified in the roundtable, and that circulated for the rest of the conference, was that of nomenclature and the monolithic positing of indigeneity. The politics of language, and in particular the naming of community (Indigenous? Aboriginal? First Nations? Native?), came in for much discussion, as did the issue of a collapsing of difference in the sameness implicit in titling peoples 'indigenous.' Many argued for the need both to maintain a sense of connection between indigenous communities and to address the distinctness that makes communities different, with even sub-communities requiring acknowledgment of degrees of separateness. Many also noted that community markers are, in colonial Canada, arbitrary and thus political identity wrenches apart cultural identity in many instances. At the same time, the need to negotiate the very real fact of legal and political terms of identity (such as First Nations) was mentioned by many. Some questions that emerged as central for the group were: how should literary criticism be taught to indigenous students? How should or does indigenous culture get included in the classroom?

Who is (literary) criticism responsible to? How do literary critics go about joining political debates that are already taking place in indigenous academic and non-academic circles? How do indigenous peoples benefit from literary criticism? How should we engage with indigenous texts? To this last question Armand Ruffo offered the following answer: texts indicate or offer signs to the reader about the forms of negotiation they wish to invite.

The first paper session of the conference, entitled “Useful Reading Practices and Negotiating Indigenous Culture and its Texts,” opened with a paper by Armand Ruffo. Armand’s goal was to offer a practice of reading in keeping with some of the concerns raised in the first roundtable. Ruffo suggested that engaging with the text responsibly requires taking note of the cultural milieu of the author. In keeping with Tomson Highway’s Cree heritage, Ruffo proposed looking at Highway’s play, *Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kapuskasing*, by using the Cree medicine wheel as a methodology of literary analysis. Given that the Medicine Wheel provides an insight into personality from a Cree perspective, the analysis opens up the text to another, more culturally situated engagement. This is to say, such a reading encourages more culturally specific readings. For instance, Big Joey, who is almost always read as quintessentially dysfunctional, is arguably not just ‘generically’ dysfunctional but exhibits a kind of personality that is better rationalized through recourse to the medicine wheel—the paradigm by which the Cree examine and understand personality. Allowing the culture within which a text is generated to determine how we read a given text is another step on the way to decolonizing the mind. Aubrey Hanson also focused on offering a reading of a text: Beatrice Culleton’s *In Search of April Raintree*. Hanson argued that the text both requires its readers to reflect on a racialized nationalism in Canada and, at a metatextual level, aims to encourage readers to develop a habit of vigilance such that uncritical reading is itself made impossible. Drawing on formulations developed by Sherene Razack in “Gendered Racial Violence and Spatialized Justice,” Hanson demonstrated that the text encourages the reader to participate in ‘unmapping’ what history has normalized. Hanson emphasized that such decolonizing readings are critical for socially responsible teaching of aboriginal literatures. Kristina Fagan rounded off the session with a paper that undertook to engage with the question of intellectual engagement itself. What might be called the ‘traditional’ view envisions knowledge as the aim of intellectual engagement and research, and in this view aboriginal peoples have found themselves, in general, to be the object of knowledge. In contrast, the new approach has emphasized the need for intellectual engagement to benefit the individual community and for the field to be determined by the community itself. The more specific questions she raised were: how can literary criticism contribute to aboriginal concerns? Should literary criticism have to matter to aboriginal communities? Suggesting that debates between traditional and new approaches have been lively in literary criticism, if less visible than they have been in other disciplines when it comes to the field of Aboriginal Studies, she opened up for discussion some of the problems she finds with the new approach. The two key ones, she argued, are with the definitions of ‘community’ and of ‘benefit.’

The second day of the conference opened with a keynote address from Gerry Turcotte. In his address, Turcotte looked at the ways in which contemporary Australian and Canadian indigenous cultural expressions draw on what is probably the most dominant trope of colonial cultural history—the spectral—to interrupt and question what he describes

as “traditional expectations of Indigenous self-representation.” He examined the idea of the spectral within colonial narratives in the “refusal of native peoples to disappear” (as in his analysis of the 1700 painting “A Direct North General View of Sydney Shore”) as well as within indigenous narratives in which the spectral emerges as an important zone of discourse. He stressed the importance of dialoguing with the past and the creation by indigenous writers of ghost-narratives that predate and thus challenge colonization. In addition, he criticized the adoption of such spectral narratives in New Age discourses. His multimedia presentation incorporated examples from a variety of aboriginal Australian and Canadian artists, including Thomas King, Archie Roach, and Zita Wallace.

The second roundtable, on “Emerging Voices and Critical Developments in Aboriginal Literature,” approached the issue of aboriginal literatures from various angles. There was some discussion of the typical positions which non-aboriginal teachers of this literature have taken—from a retreat into silence (in the face of a fear of appropriation), to a focusing inward on colonial excesses, to keeping positionality in the foreground at all times (thus limiting the truth-claims of one’s reading). The question that arose often is of strategies for an ethical engagement with aboriginal literatures—what these may be, how these may be located and practiced. The roundtable also focused on how to discuss aboriginal literatures. How are these literatures identified as aboriginal? What makes them aboriginal? Should they be arranged under such a heading? Some of the other issues raised included the following: the value of aboriginal literature’s struggle to be indigenous, its engagement with indigenous intellectual history, its responsibility to an audience that includes native people, and whether it offers new possibilities for indigenous life. Also pointed out was the fact that recent trends in aboriginal literature include the production of texts in popular genres such as the mystery novel, thrillers, and westerns. These arguably have forced the boundaries of our understanding of what constitutes aboriginal literature (s). An important question raised by this roundtable was implicit in the discussion of protocols by which the field can be or should be defined.

The paper session on “Recuperating/Inventing an Indigenous Praxis in the Face of Colonial History” focused on what was a repeated concern in the conference—the issue of authenticity and the delegitimizing of claims to authenticity (or the subject position) in the wake of postmodernism. Niigonwedom J. Sinclair’s paper looked at Marie Annharte Baker’s “blackened red, reddened black” in a contribution to the debate between hybridity theorists and tribal literary ‘nationalists.’ Niigon comments on the disjuncture between theories of hybridity (that privilege the notion of the third space and interstitiality for instance) and the writings of individual indigenous writers which affirm indigenous identity in ways that claim the position of authenticity (not interstitiality), individuality, discreteness, and specificity. The latter group, thus, insistently proclaim sovereignty and self-determination as their aim. Annharte’s text, he argues, domesticates the notion of hybridity as described above and in the process reconciles the disjuncture between the hybridity theorists and the tribal nationalists. Annharte’s ‘hybridity’ is entrenched in the project of affirming indigenous identity (and not in notions of third space) and is thus a marker of authenticity: it insists on a continuation of native tradition and embraces the reality of change while consuming change itself. Coyotisma is Annharte’s model for reinvention. Sheila C. Simonson also engaged with the issue of resistance as it is expressed in First Na-

tions' writings. Differentiating between catastrophic (event) trauma theory and systemic and epistemic trauma theory, Simonson argued for the capacity of the latter to make visible dimensions of the experience of indigenous peoples of Canada. Everyday trauma, such as one finds expressed in colonial history, is often not represented in the first place (because it tends to be invisible as the quotidian tends to be) and is therefore unmemorialized (unlike event trauma) and unrepresented. She argued that everyday trauma is identified in First Nations' writings when they identify language and systemic factors as central places of the trauma of colonization as well as of the perpetuation of the traumatic legacy of the colonial project. Writings by Louise Halfe and Annharte, for instance, insistently speak this legacy and are thus political acts of "representational resistance" and, ultimately, acts of recuperation and discursive reclamation.

The third day of the conference began with Louise Halfe's plenary talk, in which she addressed themes relating to the reclamation of aboriginal identity. Her presentation blended the forms of creative expression named in the conference title—storytelling, poetry, and performance art—reflecting her assertion that all people possess shamanistic abilities. The first part of her presentation revolved around issues such as the importance of examining one's history and genealogy, and of connecting with nature, the body, and the spiritual world. Throughout, she stressed the significance of the simple act of breathing, given its natural connection to the wind. The second half of her talk consisted of a reading of a story involving a woman who takes a snake-lover; the snake emerges as a symbol of healing and the spirit-element of the natural world.

Jo-Ann Episkenew's roundtable (co-sponsored by ABAL) was structured as a forum for sharing stories, in keeping with its focus on the healing power of stories. Christine Welsh, the director of *Finding Dawn*, and Janice Acoose, who is featured in the film, were in attendance. A number of the attendees had been present at the Saskatoon Premiere of *Finding Dawn* at the Broadway Theatre the night before, which one person referred to as a life-changing experience; as a result, much of the discussion addressed issues raised in the film. One-by-one, people introduced themselves and spoke of their research interests, and some shared stories regarding traumatic experiences from their pasts and their efforts to heal. The more general discussions addressed issues relating to the telling of stories, especially those describing violence against indigenous people, and how to respond to them as both indigenous scholars and white scholars. The point was raised that listening to stories is not a substitute for seeking justice, which called into question the political value of storytelling. Although no hard conclusions regarding the function of storytelling were reached, the roundtable provided an intimate environment in which the participants were able to explore such questions as well as propose new avenues for exploration.

The last session of the conference featured three papers that helped bring things to a close. Nora Stovel examined the role of the Métis Tonnerre family in Margaret Laurence's Manawaka cycle, focusing on the portrayal of Piquette Tonnerre in the story "The Loons." A major question that Stovel addressed was whether "The Loons" should be read as a racist or anti-racist story. Stovel argued that it is essentially about family and shouldn't be read out of context, as it is part of a larger "work of mourning" regarding familial relations (*A Bird in the House*), and that its ambiguous last sentence can be interpreted as a comment on death as well as race, with the loon being representative of the prehistoric. As part

of her argument, she also discussed the possibility that Margaret Laurence was of native heritage—a question to which critics have been unable to provide a satisfactory answer. Maria Casas’s paper examined Tomson Highway’s use of numbers (such as 2s, 3s, and 5s) as a structuring principle in *The Rez Sisters*. She provided detailed examples from the text, noting, for example, that the play has a ternary structure consisting of an exposition, development, and recapitulation. The question of Tomson’s connection to the European musical tradition (both classical and avant-garde) emerged as particularly problematic, given the associations this tradition has with discourses of colonialism. Her overriding point, however, was that Highway, a trained classical musician, uses forms derived from music for syncretic purposes, namely to fuse numerical patters associated with both Christian and First Nations cultures, thus creating something approaching a hybrid form on a formal level. Sylvie Vranckx, in her paper on Lee Maracle’s *Will’s Garden*, looked at the process of Will, the protagonist’s, coming-of-age as a Sto:loh man, and the development of his sense of the spirit of community. She argued that Maracle’s novel is ultimately open-ended and “non-Manichean,” offering a pluralistic model of community and a potential model for a new interracial solidarity. Vranckx’s work is part of a larger project, and she stated that one of her goals as a scholar is to make Europeans (like herself) aware of the situation of indigenous North Americans.

The conference ended with a screening of the film *Finding Dawn* by Christine Welsh (part of the University of Saskatchewan-sponsored Aboriginal Film Series and co-sponsored by the Canadian Women’s Studies Association, the Canadian Association of Schools of Social Work, and Women Walking Together). The screening, and the panel that followed, were very well attended and generated some impassioned discussion as well as calls for action from the audience. Welsh’s film looks at the lives of three women—Dawn Crey, Ramona Wilson, and Daleen Kay Bosse—who are among an alarming number of murdered or missing aboriginal women in Canada (many of whom frequented areas along the Yellowhead Highway). Through interviews with the friends and families of the disappeared, and with survivors of the violent Canadian underworld of drug addiction and prostitution, Welsh reveals a crisis that has garnered little national attention, apart from the sensationalistic coverage of the trial of accused mass-murderer Robert Pickton, which has tended to gloss over the stories of his victims. The panel introduced after the film consisted of Christine Welsh, Bev Jacobs (who composed the “Stolen Sisters” report on the problem for Amnesty International) and Janice Acoose. Pauline and Herb Muskego (the parents of Daleen Bosse) were also in attendance. Some of the issues that were raised in the discussion included the difficulty of working with families of the disappeared, the struggle to gain the help and attention of the police, and the need for allies willing to help work towards solutions. Information regarding Amnesty International Canada’s Stolen Sisters campaign (including the original Stolen Sisters report) can be found at: http://www.amnesty.ca/campaigns/sisters_overview.php
Information regarding the film *Finding Dawn* can be found at: <http://www.nfb.ca/findingdawn>

CACLALS AT COSSH 2007



Lunch after Gerry Turcotte's Keynote Address.



Louise Halfe taking a question during her plenary talk.

CONFERENCE REPORT:
**14th Triennial ACLALS Conference Report-Vancouver, August 16-22,
2007**

Prepared by Jessie Sagawa, University of New Brunswick

The fourteenth triennial ACLALS Conference was held at the University of British Columbia campus in Vancouver from 16th to 22nd August, 2007. The theme of the Conference was "Literature for Our Times." All ACLALS branches were represented: participants came from the South Pacific and Australia, Europe (Great Britain and other countries), the West Indies, India, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, South Africa, the United States, and, of course, Canada. In addition, a new branch of ACLALS, East Africa (EAACLALS), was welcomed into the Association. Representing the new branch were two Kenyan scholars: Professor Chris Wanjala, the Chair, and Mr. Mumia G. Osaji. In addition, there were participants from other countries, namely Brazil and Japan,

The conference opened with a welcome from First Nations Chief Larry Grant and a few words from First Nations writer Jeannette Armstrong, UBC president Stephen Toope, and ACLALS president Ranjini Mendis. The proceedings of the 2004 ACLALS conference in Hyderabad, published in three volumes, were launched by Professor Harish Trivedi. Justice Nicholas Hasluck, the current Chair of the Commonwealth Writers' Prize Committee, addressed the gathering and announced that winners of the 2006 Commonwealth Prize would be reading at the conference. Nobel Laureate Derek Walcott read briefly from his works. Mhirangi, a Maori singer, rounded out the evening with a performance of Maori music.

Keynote Addresses:

The second day opened with a keynote address by Jeannette Armstrong, "Literature of the Land: an Ethos of These Times." Speaking of her mother tongue, Syilx'tsn, the language of the Okanagan people, she demonstrated its tremendous potential for literary expression. For most of this day and the others, papers were delivered in six parallel sessions. The afternoon began with the Anna Rutherford Lecture, delivered by Stephen Slemon. His topic, "Literature in the Age of Descent," re-visited the claim that the first man to successfully ascend Mount Everest was Sir Edmund Hillary, directing attention to the importance of the partnership with his Sherpa (guide), Tensing Norgay. Using the metaphor of ascent and descent, Slemon forecast the demise of the postcolonial, which provoked a lively discussion.

Henry Giroux was the keynote speaker on Sunday, 19th August. His presentation, "The Abandoned Generation: Youth, Education and the Politics of Disposability," was a passionate plea to reinstitute a social contract which views young people as "a social investment" not a "problem." He not only lamented the replacement of the social state with private interests but also the changes in higher education which displace children as the "referent for a democratic future." Giroux stated that youth, democracy and higher education are in crisis and warned that such a situation is detrimental not only to the youth but also to democracy.

Monday's keynote speaker was Sivakami Palanimuthu, a Dalit woman writer who works for the Indian Government. She spoke of the challenges faced by Dalit authors. Ngugi wa Thiong'o was Tuesday's keynote speaker. His presentation, entitled "A Multi-Centred Globe: Translation as the Language of Languages," lamented globalization and the creation of a hierarchical relationship between the languages of the West, especially English, and non-Western languages. He proposed translation as an alternative because it promotes equality rather than hierarchy. Robert J.C. Young spoke on "English and the Languages of Cultural Encounter," reminding us of examples of "encounters" such as the fact that for a couple of hundred years French was the official language of England, or that "The Waste Land" contains seven languages. Whether the ability of English to incorporate words from other languages is a feature which sets it apart or which it shares with other languages (such as Hindi) was, again, the subject of lively discussion.

There were also important sessions with Bill Ashcroft, Helen Tiffin, Diana Brydon, and Cheryl Suzack who spoke about issues in Aboriginal literature and law.

Sessions:

Most of the papers were presented in panels of three speakers, in multiple parallel sessions. To ensure they received feedback, ACLALS temporarily posted on the Internet the papers of presenters who, for one reason or another, were unable to attend the conference. The scope of the conference was wider than some in the past with the inclusion of sessions on Dalit literature, slave and neo-slave narratives, the connections between Aboriginal literature and issues in contemporary law, and, running like a current through it all, an interest in the critical approaches that might be replacing the postmodern and postcolonial. Also rising exponentially was the number of participants. The final numbers have not been tallied but participation topped 450.

Evenings:

Every evening included readings by authors, both world famous and just emerging. Derek Walcott, Nobel Laureate, was the featured reader on the Inaugural night but his reading was brief because he was also fighting a cold. However, he read again on Sunday evening and responded to questions with great passion and insight. At one point he offered a strong condemnation of the "vanity" of much recent criticism. Canadian authors Larissa Lai, Gregory Scofield, Ajmer Rode, who writes in English and Punjabi, and Fred Wah gave readings which demonstrated the extraordinary range of contemporary writing from Canada. The next evening's readings featured winners of the Commonwealth Prize: Ugandan Doreen Baingana, who won the 2006 Prize for Africa, read a story which brilliantly offered a change of "gaze," articulating an African woman's subjectivity in her sexual encounters with a powerful White man. South African Shaun Johnson, the 2007 winner for Africa, and the 2007 Canadian winner, D. Y. Bedard, also read from their works.

On the fourth day of the conference, Ashok Mathur, Roy Miki, Richard Van Camp and Ngugi wa Thiong'o read from their works. There were some anxious moments when participants learned that the Kenyan author was delayed, but almost everybody waited patiently for his reading from his most recent novel, *The Wizard of the Crow*. The evening readings also included several book launches, including a special issue of *Postcolonial*

Text entitled “Nollywood and West African Cinema.”

On Thursday evening ACLALS hosted a banquet for participants in a restaurant on campus with a magnificent view of the mountainous BC coast and the ocean at sunset, while Tandava, a Vancouver musical ensemble, played folk and classical music from India and Bangladesh, and Professor Harish Trivedi offered some irreverent reflections on Canada’s generous spaces and lean cuisine. At the Annual General Meeting, members voted on a number of motions introduced at the Hyderabad Conference. The motion to adopt non-sexist language was passed with one abstention. The proposal for the European branch of ACLALS to form the new secretariat passed unanimously. A review of membership fees to accommodate unwaged members was proposed but in the interests of time the matter was deferred for discussion in the newsletter.

Summary of Highlights:

- The increased role of Aboriginal peoples in ACLALS, including the keynote address by writer Jeannette Armstrong and the plenary with Cheryl Suzack, who focused on the issue of gender bias in law as it affects First Nations people.
- Increasing attention to Dalit literature, including a Plenary by Sivakami Palanimuthu, a Dalit woman writer, speaking on the challenges faced by Dalit writers and by Dalit women who are subjected to multiple forms of violence.
- The keynote by Ngugi wa Thiong’o calling for a network of languages through translation rather than the hierarchy fostered by globalization.
- The keynote by Henry A. Giroux on youth, higher education and democracy
- The keynote by Robert Young on the hybridity of English itself.
- The formation of an East African ACLALS branch.
- Approval for the European branch to form the new ACLALS secretariat.

Vote of thanks:

I would like to thank Ranjini Mendis, outgoing president of ACLALS and organizer of the conference. Meeting the needs of such a large gathering can be stressful and daunting, but Ranjini graciously addressed all concerns. I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the role of the Vice President, Arun Mukherjee, and the ACLALS executive in helping facilitate the conference. What a phenomenal job--we were well served.

CALLS FOR PAPERS

Thinking Beyond Borders / Penser sans frontières

The Canadian Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies (CACLALS) hosts its annual conference, May 31 to June 2, 2008, at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver in conjunction with the annual Congress of the Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences. The theme of this year's conference is "Thinking Beyond Borders."

The theme can be interpreted in many ways. To **think beyond borders** is to think globally, internationally, multiculturally, or diasporically. We welcome any submissions that consider how literature represents people, ideas, texts, or words crossing a border or crossing several or how literature itself moves through space. To **think beyond borders** is also to think comparatively, dialogically, or transgressively, moving across language borders, generic borders, national borders, and species borders. We welcome submissions that consider literature that crosses borders either to communicate or to transgress, whether the crossings are subtle and involve mimicry or passing or whether they are transgressive and challenge the borders themselves. We also welcome submissions that themselves cross borders, especially disciplinary borders. Finally, to **think beyond borders** is to put the very existence of borders into question by transcending them. What would it even mean to think *beyond* borders? Can borders only be erased when other, further borders are instated? What is gained and what is at risk when we dissolve borders?

The conference will feature the participation of two keynote speakers: Laura Chrisman, the author of *Postcolonial Contraventions: Cultural Readings of Race, Imperialism and Transnationalism*, and Ato Quayson, director for the Centre for Diaspora and Transnational Studies at the University of Toronto and author of *Postcolonialism: Theory, Practice or Process?* and *Aesthetic Nervousness: Disability and the Crisis of Representation*.

Abstracts of approximately 300 words for talks of 20 minutes' duration, engaged at any level with borders and crossings, should be e-mailed, along with a short biographical note and a contact address, to Neil ten Kortenaar at kortenaar@utsc.utoronto.ca. Proposals for panels and special sessions should be sent to the same address. Deadline for proposals is **December 1, 2007**. Abstracts will be blind-vetted by a subcommittee of the executive. Please indicate "CACLALS Conference Abstract" in the subject title of the e-mail. Please note that only proposals from paid members will be considered. Forward membership inquiries to Maria Casas, Secretary-Treasurer, CACLALS, Department of English, University of Toronto, 170 St George St, Toronto M5S 3K1, or mariacasas@sympatico.ca.

As has become a tradition at CACLALS, a central element of the conference will be an Aboriginal Roundtable. A Call for Participants will be circulated to members soon.

Corridor Culture Conference

Red Deer, Alberta
June 19-22, 2008

The term “Corridor Culture” has been applied to passageways that have developed along economic, geographical, artistic, and cultural lines throughout the world. It refers to connections—either physical or virtual—that are forged out of common interest, rather than those imposed by civic, provincial, national, or international boundaries. The Paris-London and Ottawa-Montreal corridors come immediately to mind. A more recent example is the fast-growing and economically vibrant Edmonton-Calgary corridor, with Red Deer as its centre.

The organizers of the Corridor Culture Conference at Red Deer College invite submissions from scholars, students, visual and performing artists and others who work and/or research in this area. Submissions may include academic papers, workshops, panels, readings, installations, performances, or alternative formats.

Submissions might address, though are not limited to, topics such as the role of arts and culture in linking geographical corridors; the role that highways, rivers, and mountains play in shaping aboriginal and settler cultures; indoor corridor cultures, such as hallways and plus-fifteens; literary or visual portrayals of corridor culture; etc.

Please send by email a 200-word abstract and a 50-word biography by **October 30, 2007**, to: wciac@rdc.ab.ca

**The Oral, The Written and Other Verbal Media: Interfaces and Audiences and the eVOCative Festival**

19-21 June 2008, University of Saskatchewan

Keynote Speaker: Kimberly Blaeser, University of Wisconsin, Minnesota Plenary
Speaker: Mark Amodio, Vassar College. Panels of literary and performing artists will feature Maria Campbell, Joseph Naytowhow, Steven Ross Smith, tl cowan, Neal McLeod, and eekwol, and may include ahdri zhina mandiola, d'bi young, Kateri Akiwenzie-Damm, bill bissett, adeena karasick, Paul Dutton, Catherine Kidd, Heather Haley, sbot 'n wo, and others (Canada Council funding-dependent).

The Department of English at the University of Saskatchewan will play host to the first international, interdisciplinary, cross-cultural, and trans-historical conference and festival focusing on the interface of the oral and the written June 19-21, 2008. In keeping with the

plenitude of modes and forms of oral and textual discourse, the organizers have welcomed diverse modes of presentation, including, but not limited to, oral performances, academic talks and panels, workshops, and projects-in-progress sessions. Our goal is to generate conversations among performers, audiences, and scholars, including graduate students, from a wide range of academic disciplines, cultures, and historical periods, and to foster opportunities for collaboration among those interested in speech and other voicings on the page. Because Saskatoon is located in a territory highly populated with Indigenous peoples whose oral traditions are still vital and developing, the festival will highlight Aboriginal performers in a Crow Hop Café featuring storytelling, Indigenous Hip Hop, music, and other oral performances, but the eVOCative performance cabaret will also present a rich showcase of some of Canada's finest talents in dub and spoken word, while the eVOCative Sound Event will bring to the stage the best of Canada's living sound poets and sound art performers. For more information, contact Susan Gingell (susan.gingell@usask.ca).



Social Justice in South Asian Cultural Practices

8th Annual Conference of the South Asian Literary Association
December 26-27, 2007, Chicago, IL

South Asian cultural production, especially in the Diaspora, tends to privilege the paradigm of identity politics. While it has its uses, the politics of identity, in its analysis of both colonialism and of postcolonial realities, marginalizes issues of systemic social and economic exploitation. In this context, we believe it is important to redirect our attention to questions of social justice. How have the literatures of South Asia dealt with various issues of social justice that political activists and social reformers (both during and after the period of colonial rule) have been known to engage with? How do South Asian aesthetic practices engage with questions of the just, and the morally justifiable, whether it be in terms of affirming or contesting existing regimes of truth and reason? As a region of historically altering hegemonies and various kinds of coexisting pluralities (linguistic, religious, ethnic, etc.) how have South Asians sought to bring the just and the beautiful in accord? What sorts of ideologies of progress and change, or of anxious return to indigenous tradition, have fostered what kinds of narratives of affect in literature primarily but also in cinema, theatre and other popular forms?

Possible areas and issues for exploration:

- The rich corpus of literature engaging with struggles against both colonialism and indigenous forms of injustices during the colonial period: Apart from analysis of anti-colonial texts, this may also include inquiries into the relationship of literary discourses with various kinds of reform initiated by leaders of particular religious communities (Arya Samaj, Brahmo Samaj, the Barelvi and the Deobandi movements, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan,

and other modernizers in various communities) and their combined effects on new articulations of social justice.

- The Progressive Writers' movement and the Indian Peoples' Theatre Association (IPTA)—their reading of the anti-colonial movement, its blind spots and the socio-economic challenges of the nascent nation. To the extent that this powerful tradition highlights class conflict, in what ways do contemporary cultural practices reflect its influence?

- One of the most exciting developments in the contemporary Indian literary scene is the emergence of a vibrant body of Dalit literature. A possible area of enquiry could be the “ideology vs. aestheticism” debate regarding this literature.

- The politics of religious identity: artistic representations of movements against communalism across South Asia.

- How do the several movements for gender justice play out in literature and the arts?

- Ethnicity has been a vexing issue in postcolonial South Asia: it's a crucial aspect of the various insurgencies in Sri Lanka and within India, in the North-East, in Kashmir and Punjab. How has literature emerging from and about these regions engaged with the issue?

Sexuality: The possibilities and dead-ends within this emerging field; are there certain ways in which both struggles against discrimination based on sexuality and their representations are following different trajectories compared to their western counterparts?

- How do we theorize social justice in regional, national and global terms? What problems of translation (not just linguistic ones but those of cultural translation in an uneven world) do we run into when literary representations of social justice (or the search thereof) get carried over from a local (or regional) domain to a national and transnational one?

- Social justice in post-liberalization literature and cinema: have questions of social justice been occluded in recent literature and cinema?

- South Asian cosmopolitanisms and questions of social justice: are recent cosmopolitan writers more sensitive to questions of social justice than some writers of the preceding generations (whether writing in English or in South Asian languages)? How are questions of social justice being articulated in the present age of almost instant awareness of global wrongs? Are there new dilemmas of local and global justice being articulated?

For more information, please contact the Conference Co-Chairs:

Nivedita Majumdar, Department of English, John Jay College/CUNY, 1258 North Hall, 445 West 59th. Street, New York, NY 10019, U.S.A. Email: nmajumdar@jjay.cuny.edu

Karni Pal Bhati, English Department, Furman University, Greenville, SC 29613, U.S.A. Email: Karni.Bhati@furman.edu

The SALA conference will be held on December 26 and 27 in Chicago, IL, in conjunction with the MLA convention.

SALA also publishes the refereed journal, South Asian Review (SAR). All abstracts accepted for the conference will be published in the special conference number of the SAR. Inquiries about SAR should be directed to Kamal Verma at kverma+@pitt.edu.

International and Multidisciplinary Conference
Groningen, The Netherlands
November 26-28, 2008

RE-EXPLORING CANADIAN SPACE / REDÉCOUVRIR L'ESPACE CANADIEN

The Canadian Studies Centre at the University of Groningen and the Association for Canadian Studies in the Netherlands are pleased to announce that on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Canadian Studies Centre an international and multidisciplinary conference will be held in Groningen.

The conference seeks to examine and explore the various issues surrounding the idea of space in the Canadian studies context. The study of space has been one of the central themes around which the Centre has developed its activities. Among other areas, its members have published extensively on identity and space, frontiers and space, gender and space, colonial history and space, Arctic space and social change and space.

The purpose of the conference is to explore questions that will extend current knowledge and foster new ideas in particularly in the realm of contemporary debates and developments. How is Canadian space affected by global climate change, and vice versa? How is Canada's space protected, and influenced by security issues? How are the redistribution of land and new perspectives on space related? How do the nation's multiple voices, for example those with ethnic or indigenous backgrounds, share Canada's space? How are cultural activities, filmic and literary connotations on space embraced in Canada?

We aim to reconnect our former discoveries with fresh perspectives in order to develop new angles on Canadian space by welcoming papers on, but not limited to, the following areas:

- Canadian History, Society, Economy
- Trade and Foreign Relations
- Geography and Arctic Studies
- Foreign Policy and Security Issues
- Political Science
- Culture, Cinema and Literature
- Ethnicities and Languages

The Greek philosopher Democritus has been quoted to say: "Nothing exists except atoms and empty space; everything else is opinion". For this conference we hope you will join us in our plan to fill the empty space by sending a proposal (maximum 300 words) for a 20 minute paper in English or French and a short CV by 1 November 2007.

If a proposal is accepted a full draft paper should be submitted by 2 September 2008. Accepted papers are intended to be published.

Proposals should be sent to the Canadian Studies Centre, University of Groningen, Oude Kijk in 't Jatstraat 26, 9712 EK Groningen, The Netherlands, E-mail: canstudy@rug.nl, tel. + 31 (0)50 3635891, fax. + 31 (0)50 3635821

Organizing committee: *Jeanette den Toonder, Doeko Bosscher* (Canadian Studies Centre), *Conny Steenman-Marcusse, Fred Toppen* (Association for Canadian Studies in the Netherlands) or at www.rug.nl/let/canada

MEMBER NEWS AND PUBLICATIONS

Sarah Phillips Casteel's *Second Arrivals: Landscape and Belonging in Contemporary Writing of the Americas* was published in September 2007 by the University of Virginia Press in their New World Studies series.

Nora Stovel's *Divining Margaret Laurence: A Study of her Writings* is being published in 2008 by McGill-Queen's UP.

Cynthia Sugars and **Laura Moss** are editing a new two-volume anthology of Canadian Literature with Pearson Education Canada entitled *Canadian Literature in English: Texts and Contexts*. The anthology gathers English-Canadian poetry, short fiction, pamphlets, nonfiction, and essays, ranging from the sixteenth century to the present. It includes contextual materials to accompany the wide range of literary texts, including materials that might be used in classroom teaching, such as political speeches, government documents, maps, photographs, paintings, newspaper articles, cartoons, autobiographical statements, songs, and popular culture texts. Volume I will be published in January 2008; Volume II is scheduled for June 2008.

Guy Beauregard (National Tsing Hua University, Taiwan) has recently co-edited a special issue of *Amerasia Journal* entitled "Pacific Canada" (2007). This issue brings together groundbreaking essays and interviews and reviews on Asian Canadian history, activism, pedagogy, visual art, literature, and the politics of the knowledge produced around "Asian Canadian" subjects. This issue also features strong new creative contributions by Ashok Mathur, Hiromi Goto, Rita Wong, and Glenn Deer. Order information is available from UCLA's Asian American Center website located at: www.aasc.ucla.edu/. Guy is also happy to announce that in 2007 he was promoted to Associate Professor; he has received a university-level teaching award for his work inside and outside the classroom.

Wendy Robbins, a Past President of CACLALS, is the recipient of a Governor General's Award (2007) in Commemoration of the Persons Case. Wendy has been an advocate for women's rights through such activities as PAR-L, the annual Ivory Towers: Feminist and Equity Audits, and terms as Vice-President of the Canadian Federation of Humanities and Social Sciences and Chair of the Women's Committee of the Canadian Association of University Teachers. Most recently she and seven other academic women negotiated a settlement to a human rights complaint against the federal government to increase access to the Canada Research Chairs program for women, racialized minorities, Aboriginal people, and people with disabilities.

Susan Gingell was invited to be part of the "(dis)Regarding the Oral/Scribal Divide" panel along with Mervyn Morris, Hyacinth Simpson, and Dr. Gary Barwin, Nov. 9th at the International Dub Poetry Festival in Hamilton, Ontario. Her public lecture on Nov. 18th "'Sculpted over a shoulder of pain': Canadian Poets Writing Slavery" is part of a series at the John G. Diefenbaker Centre as a complement to its exhibit on the Underground

Railway. She is currently working with colleagues at three universities and members of the prairies artistic community to organize "The Oral, the Written, and Other Verbal Media: Interfaces and Audiences" conference to be held June 19-21, 2008 in Saskatoon, SK, and the eVOCative Festival of literary performance arts running 18-21 June, 2008.

Summer Pervez defended her PhD in July (at the University of Ottawa) and accepted a full-time job at the Department of English at the University College of the Fraser Valley. Her area is World Literatures in English, with an emphasis on South Asian literature.

ITEMS OF INTEREST

ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature 38.1 is a special issue on "Anglo-Caribbean Slavery" to mark the bicentenary of the British abolition of the slave trade. The issue contains articles by Hilary McD. Beckles, Brycchan Carey, Candace Ward, John Gilmore, Sara Salih, and an interview with Guyanese writer Mark McWatt about his book, *Suspended Sentences*. The issue will be available in early December, 2007. To order, or for further information, contact: ariel@ucalgary.ca

BOOK REVIEWS

Editor: John Ball

Cheryl Stobie. *Somewhere in the Double Rainbow: Representations of Bisexuality in Post-Apartheid Novels*. Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2007. 307 pages. R 190 (= approx. \$27.50)

Review by Neil ten Kortenaar, University of Toronto at Scarborough

Bisexuality, Cheryl Stobie reminds us, is not an image, like women or whiteness, whose literary representations can be simply traced by the critic. Bisexuality does not appear in every narrative text the way that gender and race do, and when it does appear it is often not identified as such. Bisexuality often demands a special sympathetic lens to be recognized at all, even by (perhaps especially by) gay-friendly readers. Stobie calls this lens “biopia,” a word that rhymes with “myopia” but means the opposite: the ability to recognize a wide set of behaviour that contravenes binaristic notions of sexual identity.

Before reading this book I had thought of bisexuality as part of a larger conjunction called queer and had thought that the radical component of bisexuality was its homosexuality. Stobie makes a convincing case that bisexuality deserves to be treated as a theme on its own, distinct from gayness. Gayness can, after all, be recuperated as an identity and used to reconfirm familiar binaries. Sure, homosexuality complicates the male-female binary, but it often tends to confirm another, that between heterosexuality and homosexuality, and thereby to elide other, messier possibilities. Bisexuality, by contrast, cannot be thought of as an identity, at least not a single one. It has not been and perhaps could not be the basis for a community or for political solidarity. But for that reason its challenge is also potentially more far-reaching, dissolving all firm ground and reminding us all that there are possibilities in the world and in ourselves that resist our understanding. It is because bisexuality disrupts binaries in favour of a continuum that it has come to prominence in South Africa since 1994. “Nowhere is sexuality more on the move,” says Stobie, “than in South Africa” (18). The new South African constitution, which explicitly delegitimizes discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, is one of the most progressive in the world. Stobie’s title refers to the space created by a physical double rainbow in the sky. In symbolic terms, the primary rainbow has to do with sexual diversity (the rainbow of Gay Pride) and the secondary one with the racial diversity of the rainbow nation (Jesse Jackson’s term borrowed by Desmond Tutu).

Stobie herself offers an admirable set of biopic readings. I learned a lot from her examination of bisexual literary lives in South Africa before 1994: those of Beatrice Hastings, Leontine Sagan, Roy and Mary Campbell, and Lola Watter. Another chapter examines the moving example of the autobiography and autobiographical fiction of Tatamkhulu Afrika, the Egyptian-born poet and ANC fighter who changed his name, his racial classification, and his community several times over the course of his long life. Stobie is as good at weighing silences here as she is at bringing the bisexual to the fore.

Because it arouses such deep anxieties, bisexuality is easily and dangerously associ-

ated with hypocrisy, corruption, and evil — as it is, for instance, in Sheila Kohler's *Cracks* and Mark Behr's *The Smell of Apples*, two novels that rely on the familiar white South African equation of the end of childhood with a fall from innocence into a corrupt world of sexism and racism. Stobie critiques Kohler but defends Behr against the charge that, by associating bisexuality with pederasty and rape, he purveys the same sensationalism that had fed the Puritan apartheid regime even as he uses that visceral power for political critique. (The problem is not unlike that of judging the rape scene in Timothy Findley's *The Wars*.) I was not fully convinced by Stobie's defence here. *Embrace*, Behr's later *Bildungsroman*, is a much finer book because it is without the heavy symbolism of sin and fall from Eden, and the characters do not function as allegorical comment on South African history. My preference for the novel that deals with homosexuality over the one that deals with bisexuality may illustrate just how difficult it is for an author to meet readers on this ground.

Stobie shows the many forms that bisexuality takes in post-apartheid South African literature. In Nadine Gordimer's *The House Gun*, the acceptance of bisexuality as part of the panoply of human behaviour and as evidence of the human capacity for adaptation does not render it safe: all sexuality engages our deepest selves and arouses powerful excessive drives beyond our understanding and control. K. Sello Duiker's *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* expands the repertoire of images available to black men even as it problematically confirms patriarchy and misogyny. Stobie finds the celebration of queer in Ashraf Jamal's *Love Themes for the Wilderness* wonderfully camp and playful but is concerned that his willingness to find queerness everywhere, including in heterosexuality, risks blunting the political edge of the term.

Stobie reads with compassion and writes with care. She does not reject any notion of sexuality as pathological. But, for that same reason, she also does not turn away from any manifestation of human sexuality and is not afraid of judging both the primary works and their critical reception for what they offer to readers seeking images of a freer and more just world. She writes, as South African critics must, always with one eye to the future: she sees it as her role as critic to discern what is progressive and belongs in the world that South Africans want, and to warn against visions that perpetuate oppressive epistemological structures. Again as all South African critics must be, she is optimistic, celebrating the new possibilities for being that South African literature offers.

Outside South Africa, critics may feel these questions somewhat differently. I am suspicious of reading bisexuality in terms of racial (and even ethnic) mixing, as Stobie sometimes does, and would prefer to hold the concepts of sexuality and race separate. It is, after all, possible to hope for a world beyond race, whereas we cannot want a world beyond sexuality. I also cannot admire Shamin Sarif's *The World Unseen* as Stobie does, even if the novel's politics are impeccable. Stobie eschews psychological readings, which would, I agree, blunt the politics of her study, but which might also bring out the complexities and the limits of what it is possible to think. These reservations, however, represent how much I found this book challenging and useful for thinking with. I recommend it to anyone thinking through similar questions, not just in a South African context.

Lawrence Hill. *The Book of Negroes*. Toronto: Harper Collins, 2007. 504 pages. \$34.95 (hc); \$24.95 (pb)

Review by Jessie Sagawa, University of New Brunswick

This year marks the bicentenary of the passing of the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act by the British parliament in 1807. How serendipitous, then, that a novel exploring slavery from the perspective of the enslaved should be published this year by Canadian writer Lawrence Hill, a descendant of slaves on his father's side. As Hill wrote in *Walrus Magazine* two years ago, "Stories had filtered down through the generations about my great-great-grandfather purchasing freedom for his wife, his children, and himself in Maryland in 1860." Now, his novel *The Book of Negroes* engages with some of that history.

The author is the son of Donna and Daniel G. Hill, Americans who met in the American South, got married in 1953, and immigrated to Toronto soon after. His father, a sociologist, is a descendant of Black ordained ministers, while his mother is a human-rights activist born in a white Republican family in Oak Park, Illinois. Married with five children, Hill's works include *Any Known Blood*, a novel about identity; *Black Berry, Sweet Juice: On Being Black and White in Canada*, a memoir; and *The Deserter's Tale: the Story of an Ordinary Soldier Who Walked Away from the War in Iraq*, a non-fictional work.

The Book of Negroes centres on Aminata Diallo, who is born in Bayo, Sierra Leone, enslaved at the tender age of eleven, transported across the Middle Passage, and sold in South Carolina. She is purchased by her first owner, Appleby, who sexually assaults her. Georgia, an elderly slave, not only inoculates her against smallpox but also provides an abortifacient after the sexual assault. Aminata's mother trained her in midwifery and she serves as a midwife on the slave ship; Georgia extends this training and turns her into a healer. Aminata marries Chekura who, until he was betrayed and enslaved, worked for her captors on the journey to the coast. Their marriage, not recognized by their owners but celebrated slave fashion, produces two children: Mamadu and May.

Aminata is again purchased by Solomon Lindo who educates her for his economic gain. After accompanying him to New York on business, she escapes and hides in the forest until she is recruited by the British to register Black Loyalists in a ledger entitled "The Book of Negroes." She is boarding the ship for Nova Scotia with her husband when her previous owner, Appleby, claims her. She disembarks and, with the assistance of a remorseful Solomon Lindo, successfully contests his ownership before she leaves for Canada and freedom.

However, freedom in Nova Scotia for Aminata and the Black Loyalists proves illusory. The British do not free every slave, and the Black Loyalists arrive to a hostile reception from poor Nova Scotians who feel economically threatened. After riots in which some Black Loyalists are killed and her daughter is abducted, Aminata joins a Back-to-Africa campaign. The campaign partially succeeds and the group leaves for Sierra Leone.

Here, too, Aminata and the Black Loyalists are disappointed to find that although Freetown is free of the slave trade, the practice continues in the countryside. Her return to Bayo fails when she overhears her guides plotting to enslave her. Finally, she is invited to

go to England, the imperial centre, to assist the abolitionist campaign to end the slave trade. Aminata meets the king and queen and testifies before parliament. The story ends with her reunion with her daughter May and her decision to publish her story.

The title of the novel is taken from a historical document of the same name. It is an appropriate choice since Aminata's story is emblematic of the unwritten story of many slaves. In her own "Book of Negroes," she tries to bring their humanity to light through print so that they may be recorded for posterity. Although she is told simply to list names, she adds brief summaries of their stories, thereby writing them into existence.

The story spans the years 1745 to 1803 and is set in several places: Sierra Leone, the Middle Passage, South Carolina, New York, Nova Scotia and London, England. Through the use of multiple locations, Hill's rendering conforms to historical events in that slaves were transported from one place to another. It also reinforces the fact that oppression does not recognize geographical boundaries. In all these locations, slaves are subjected to atrocities of one form or another.

Hill acknowledges his debt to sources other than "The Book of Negroes." Interestingly, one of those sources is *The Classic Slave Narratives* edited by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (475). Not surprisingly, the narrative structure of *The Book of Negroes* is that of a neo-classical slave narrative. Like its precursor, Aminata's narrative includes graphic descriptions of the slave body in punishment or at auction. By so doing Hill reaffirms the importance of his forebears in shaping his craft.

The plot structure is circular. It begins with the elderly Aminata, now known as Meena Dee, visiting schools in England to tell her story. The narrative then flashes back to her birth and childhood in Bayo and proceeds to her experiences in America and Canada, her return to Africa and her departure for England. The narrative weaves back and forth between the past and the present and ends with her reunion with her daughter and her decision to publish her story. The plot structure is linked to memory and shows how the past impacts on and shapes the present.

Several important themes are covered in *The Book of Negroes*. By making an African woman the principal character in the novel, Hill ushers in gender as an overarching theme. Connected to it are issues of literacy: because she is a woman, Aminata is initially barred from education and has to cajole her father into teaching her. The issue of polygamy appears briefly when the chief's third wife, Fanta, reveals that her resentment of Aminata stemmed from the knowledge that the young girl was destined to be her co-wife. Also appearing is the theme of women's health as expressed through references to pregnancy, abortion, childbirth, infanticide, and mothering. Female bonding, represented in the matrilineage that sustains Aminata even after her mother's murder, is another recurring theme. On many occasions, mother figures come to Aminata's rescue when she is in crisis: they include Fanta, the various unnamed women who show her kindness as she is being transported, and Georgia, the elderly slave. Female genital mutilation is raised but remains minor.

A central and recurring theme is identity, both individual and collective. From the time of her capture, Aminata insists on asserting herself as a subject. She is happy when the others refer to her as "daughter of Sira and Mamadu" or as "Aminata of Bayo." She is quick to resist any other names and labels. She resists the ship's doctor's attempts to re-

name her Mary, and when she is told that she is an African and a white man's property, her denial is quick and impassioned: "I belong to nobody, and I am not an African. I am a Bamana. And a Fula. I am from Bayo near Segou. I am not what you say" (122). Despite her denials, collective identity is as important to Aminata as it is to her companions. Like them, she recognizes that as a slave she is bonded with the others and that they are responsible for each other's safety and sanity. To this end she composes a song that includes the name and village of each slave. Their willingness to dance to the song proves that the slaves realize that she is chronicling and affirming their existence. Later, she will do the same as she records the names of the Black Loyalists and slaves in "The Book of Negroes." Her greatest achievement, however, will be in telling her story, which is also the story of slavery, to the Abolitionists and the free world.

From time to time, characters trust those in authority only to end up betrayed. Aminata and the Black Loyalists believe British promises that they will be allocated land in Nova Scotia and that all slaves will be freed — promises that are not kept. On a personal level, she is betrayed first by her masters and later by her employers. Although she is unaware of it, her seemingly kind master, Lindo, conspires with the cruel Appleby to sell her only son. Later, in Nova Scotia, she entrusts the care of her daughter to her employers, the Witherspoons, only to have them abduct the child and spirit her out of Canada to England.

Religion and its role in fostering slavery also surfaces as a central focus. The novel depicts seemingly devout Christians and Muslims participating in the slave trade and engaging in immoral activities. Hill shows the dehumanizing effects of racism on both slave and enslaved. As a group, the slaves are subject to degrading and inhuman treatment including — for lack of a better term — spectacular punishments for minor infractions. At the same time Hill shows that their captors, as seen from the perspective of Aminata and the slaves, are gradually eroded of their humanity. Equally central to the book are the theme of resistance and survival. From the time of their capture, the slaves in *The Book of Negroes* use different strategies to resist and survive their fate. The strategies include organizing a mutiny on the ship, acts of infanticide, murder and suicide, abortion, as well as the sheer will to survive and the Back-to-Africa campaign.

In the process Hill also re-examines and debunks some themes. Because of the Underground Railway, Canada is generally viewed as having been a haven for slaves. In *The Book of Negroes*, Hill shows that for some of the newcomers, slavery continues after they arrived in Canada. In Nova Scotia, the Black Loyalists are treated as second-class citizens at best or killed in race riots at worst. Also, using the theme of sexual violence, particularly rape, Hill discredits the myth of Black women's promiscuity. During the trans-Atlantic journey several women are depicted as engaging in forced sex with their captors. Although she successfully resists being physically raped by the ship's doctor, Aminata does not escape unscathed. Her loss of innocence as she witnesses the rape of the other women amounts to psychic rape. Later, as an adult, she is raped by her master. Through these actions, Hill also hints at the rape of Africa and its people.

The author also addresses an issue that simmers but is rarely debated between Africans born on the Continent and those born in the diaspora: African complicity in the slave trade. Hill is not an apologist for Africans: he concedes that a few were willing participants but, through the story of Aminata's husband Chekura, he shows that, for some, col-

laboration with slave traders was a matter of survival. When Aminata condemns the collaborators, Chekura cautions, "We do not know their stories" (38).

Hill attempts to capture the local idiom by having Aminata translate various concepts from her languages, Bamankan and Fulfulde, into English. For instance, a gun is a "firestick" while the ship's doctor is a "medicine man." Maybe, used sparingly, this would add to the linguistic flavour of the narration. However, his generous use of this kind of idiomatic language does, in some instances, slow down the book's flow.

Another area that detracts from the overall effectiveness of the novel is the ending, which feels somewhat contrived. Presumably aiming for closure, Hill reunites Aminata with her daughter, May. However, there is little preparation and foreshadowing for the reunion. One understands the desire to end on a positive note, but, given the fact that many slaves who were separated from their children never heard from them again, the reunion takes away the poignancy of the loss that pervades the novel and does not contribute much to the story.

Another limitation concerns Aminata's decision to relocate permanently to London. From the time of her capture and enslavement, she obsesses about returning home. She tells Chekura that she will return to her country some day and, as the slave ship departs from her country she vows to return. It is a pledge that she never wavers from during her stay in America. Although Sam, a New York pub owner, tells her that no slaves have been able to return to their homelands, she is not daunted. In Nova Scotia, the same determination is behind her participation in the Back-to-Africa movement. Thus far her actions indicate a desire to move away from rather than towards the imperial centre. In light of this, her decision to make her home in London becomes problematic because it appears to valorize the centre of empire at the expense of the margins.

This is not to take away from the book's achievements, which are numerous. Although some readers may be daunted by the size of the novel, they will not want to put it aside after they start reading. Hill is skilled in the use of imagery to suggest meaning. Slavery is an institution that dehumanizes both the slaver and the enslaved, so it is not surprising that the book abounds in animal imagery and metaphors. The most poignant image is the lion-shaped mountain symbolizing Sierra Leone that Aminata sees as she begins her journey across the Middle Passage. Equally striking is the image of the ship as a giant crocodile. Also, several metonymic juxtapositions exist between certain characters and animals. For example, Fomba is metonymically linked to the crazy goat he euthanizes in that, like the goat, he will ultimately be insane. Similarly, an association can be made between the ship's doctor's parrot, which witnesses everything that happens in his room, and Aminata, who is forced to witness the doctor's sexual assaults on women slaves.

Aminata Diallo, the central character, is a happy, innocent, child who is forced to mature overnight; she emerges as courageous, dignified, fair, firm, honest, kind, rebellious, and resilient. The choice of her name is interesting: is it a derivative of Amina, a name which, for many Muslims, denotes honesty? If so, it is aptly chosen for one whose role is to be a witness to history. Or, was it chosen to invoke a powerful symbol of African womanhood: Amina, the famous sixteenth century African warrior queen? Both readings are possible.

In centring his story on Aminata, Hill shows his craft as a storyteller. As the central

character, she is rendered realistically as a young girl, a young woman, and finally an old woman, which in itself is a significant feat. Entering these perspectives and presenting her emotions and thoughts consistently is no small achievement — especially when the context of the story is so far removed. Despite this challenge, Hill successfully brings her to life for readers. By narrating the story from her point of view and in her voice, he brings her agency and subjectivity to bear on the story, making it truly hers. Since many slave women were illiterate and could not record their stories for posterity, he provides a glimpse, albeit fictional, into what life was like for many women slaves. *The Book of Negroes* is an excellent read.

CACLALS ONLINE

Website: www.chass.utoronto.ca/caclals

Listserv: Instructions for subscribing to the listserv can be found at <http://www.chass.utoronto.ca/caclals/subscr.html>

If you have any questions regarding the website or listserv, please email Neil ten Kortenaar at caclals-l-request@listserv.utoronto.ca

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN REVIEWING FOR
Chimo?
DO YOU HAVE SUGGESTIONS FOR MATERIALS
FOR REVIEW?

CONTACT John Ball
jball@unb.ca

CACLALS EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2007-2008

President

Neil ten Kortenaar
Department of English
University of Toronto at Scarborough
170 St George St
Toronto ON M5S 3K1

Prairies

Jo-Ann Episkenew
Indigenous Peoples' Health Research
Centre
CK115, University of Regina Campus
Regina, SK
S4S 0A2

Secretary-Treasurer

Maria Caridad Casas
Department of English and Drama
University of Toronto at Mississauga
3359 Mississauga Road North
North Building, Room 227
Mississauga, ON
L5L 1C6

Atlantic

John C. Ball
Department of English
University of New Brunswick
P.O. Box 4400
Fredericton, NB
E3B 5A3

Past President

Sukeshi Kamra
Department of English
Carleton University

B.C. and Northern Territories

David Chariandy
Department of English
Simon Fraser University
8888 University Drive
Burnaby, BC
V5A 1S6

Graduate Student Representatives

Victoria Kuttainen (2006-2008)
School of English, Media Studies, and Art History
University of Queensland

Azalea Masa Barriesses (2007-2009)
Department of English
University of Saskatchewan
320 Arts Tower
9 Campus Drive
Saskatoon, SK
S7N 5A5.

Quebec Representative

Heike Härting
Département d'études anglaises
Université de Montréal
CP 6128, Station Centre-ville
Montréal, QB
H3C3J7

Colleges Representative

Dorothy Lane
Department of English
Luther College
University of Regina
Regina, SK
S4S 0A2