

Chimo



**The Newsjournal of the Canadian Association for
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Chimo (Chee'mo) greetings [inuit]**Editor: Neil ten Kortenaar****Book Reviews Editor: John Ball**

Chimo is published twice yearly by the Canadian Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies. Please address editorial and business correspondence to:

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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, Dept. of English, 208 Stong College, 4700 Keele Street, Toronto, Ontario, M3J 1P3

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.

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The Canadian Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

Greetings

In May CACLALS hosted its annual conference at the University of British Columbia on the theme of *Thinking Beyond Borders*. It was very good to see so many members. CACLALS owes many thanks to Laura Moss, the on-site coordinator, for the success of the event. Emily Johansen has written a report for this issue, covering some of the highlights.

At the AGM I accepted the presidency for another two years and Maria Casas the secretary-treasurer position.

Next year's conference will be held May 23-5 at Carleton University in Ottawa. The theme is a large one: "Spectres and Speculations: Capital Nations Texts." Fittingly, Ian Baucom, author of *Spectres of the Atlantic*, will be one the keynote speakers. *Spectres of the Atlantic* is a magisterial study which moves with ease between the eighteenth-century slave trade and the present, and deals with nothing less than the nature of finance capital. If you have not read it yet, I urge you to do so. It changes the scope of the post-colonial. In order to return us to Canada, Sherene Razack will deliver a keynote entitled "Death Worlds Where Bad Things Happen: Contemporary Settler Violence Against Aboriginal People in Canada." Many of you will know her as the author of *Dark Threats and White Knights*, a critical study of Canada's peacekeeping role, and of *Looking White People in the Eye*. In addition, Jonathan Dewar is organizing the ninth Annual CACLALS Aboriginal Roundtable. And Jill Didur and Susan Gingell are bringing us an "Author Meets Critics" session, where three scholars will look at Julia Emberley's book *Defamiliarizing the Aboriginal: Cultural Practices and Decolonization in Canada*. The conference "Spectres and Speculations" invites us to look backward and forward, outward and inward, to theory and to practice. It will be an exciting event. So be sure to answer the call for papers included in this issue. The deadline in December 15. I hope to see you there.

Neil ten Kortenaar

FROM THE SECRETARY-TREASURER

Greetings from the Secretary-Treasurer,

The 2008 CACLALS conference was a resounding success, with 100 registrants and both keynote and parallel sessions well-attended. Highlights included the Aboriginal Roundtable and Canadian Indian Literary Nationalism panel, one after the other in the same room, in which there was much interest from diverse COSSH attendees; the new book launches

– six in total – introducing books published by our members in 2008; and keynote speeches by Laura Chrisman and Ato Quayson. Laura Moss hosted the CACLALS barbecue at her house, adding a special warmth to this year’s conference.

Of the fourteen member applicants for travel funds who applied on time this year, eight received funding. They were all non-tenured/tenure-track, following SSHRC guidelines for the disbursement of these funds to “graduate students” (we extend this to other members that do not have permanent jobs and therefore access to professional development and research funds). These received 91% of their requested amounts.

As of today, we have roughly 208 members, of which 12 are honorary, 103 are permanent employees of a university, and the rest are sessionals, students, postdoctoral fellows, or unwaged. Please do not forget to pay your renewal fees if they are due, and especially if you are planning to submit a proposal or attend the Spectres and Speculations conference next May in Ottawa.

Best wishes for a good year.

Maria Caridad Casas, PhD

FINANCIAL REPORT**April 1, 2008 – September 30, 2008****Balance** (March 31, 2008) **15,893****Income**

CFHSS Grant –

International Keynote Speakers' Support Fund	1000
Memberships	1115
Bank interest	4

Total Income **2128****Expenditures**

2008 Conference	3531 ¹
Travel Assistance to Conference Presenters	3480
CFHSS membership 10/07-9/08	1527
Overpayments	226 ²
IATS fees	180
Leverus Inc.	53 ³
Bank fees	3

Total Expenditures **9000****Balance** (September 30, 2008) **9011**

Balance of the CACLALS bank account as of September 30,
2008 was \$9,016

Maria Casas
Secretary-treasurer, CACLALS

¹ Ato Quayson \$776; Laura Chrisman \$1030; COSSH catering and a.v. \$472; CACLALS party \$424; Roundtable \$250; programme printing \$220; programme design \$200; conference assistance \$100; poster printing \$59. **Total: \$3,531**

² Corrected in April and November 2008.

³ Maintains online registration form.

MINUTES
of the
CACLALS 2008
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
Monday June 2, 2008

Present: Hajer Ben Gouider Trabelsi, Laura Moss, Stephen Ney, Ranjini Mendis, Wendy Robbins, Jo-Ann Episkenew, Aparna Halpe, Kofi Campbell, Summer Pervez, Emily Johansen, David Chariandy, Victor Singingeagle, Dorothy Lane, Nancy Batty, Susan Gingell, Margery Fee, Kristina Fagan, Guy Beauregard, Maria Casas, Neil ten Kortenaar.

The meeting was called to order at 5:10.

1. Motion to approve the agenda. Carried.
2. Motion by Jo-Ann Episkenew to approve the minutes from the 2007 AGM as circulated at the meeting. Seconded by David Chariandy. Carried.
3. Neil ten Kortenaar presented his President's Report. The CACLALS website has been moved to the University of Toronto server. Googling 'CACLALS' will now bring you there. The CACLALS listserv has also moved to the University of Toronto. It has a few hitches, but on the whole it works and is very useful.
(interruption by the CFHSS representatives to announce, among other things, the dates of next year's CACLALS conference: 23-25 May)
3. (cont) However, there is no way to make registration for CACLALS include registration for the listserv; members must sign on to the listserv separately. This is a slight problem because we need to reach all members through email and the listserv is currently the only easy way. *Chimo 55* was published online and seems to be fine. We are looking for book reviewers.
4. Maria Casas presented the Secretary-Treasurer's report. She read out the Secretary-Treasurer's report published in *Chimo 55* and went over the financial statements, also published in *Chimo*.
5. Elections. Nominations by Kofi Campbell of Neil ten Kortenaar for President and Maria Casas for Secretary-Treasurer, seconded by Nancy Batty. Acclaimed. David Chariandy nominated Laura Moss for BC Representative, Stephen Ney for Student Representative, and the rest of the Executive Committee to stay on for a second three-year term. Seconded by Aparna Halpe. Acclaimed.
6. *Chimo*. Neil asked how to make *Chimo* more attractive, to pull readers in to read it, especially now that it is online. One suggestion was a table of contents linked to articles, though this would necessitate two versions of *Chimo*, one pdf, one html for the links.

Julia Emberley, the new Book Reviews editor for *Chimo*, asked all members to contact her if they want to review a book or if they have a book to review.

7. Next conference. It is at Carleton University in Ottawa. Neil asked for suggestions for keynote speakers. Laura Moss suggested she would like to see more writers speaking about their work and integrated into the programme (i.e., not just in the evenings). Neil liked the panel / roundtable format and would like to see more. There was a suggestion to re-instate a graduate concerns panel. Critiques of present conference: less food; parallel sessions should be at the same site.

8. Other business. This conference owes a tremendous amount to Laura Moss and we record our thanks. [Applause.] Stephen Ney asked what we do to liaise with other graduate students in Canada. Ranjini Mendis said CACLALS sent a letter to chairs during her term. Neil will email a similar letter to chairs of English departments. Wendy Robbins suggested sending a pdf poster for members to download and post on their door. Neil said the vetting of conference proposals went well this year, and next year he hopes to go to electronic submission and vetting of papers.

9. Laura Moss moved to adjourn the meeting. Margery Fee seconded the motion. Carried.

Call for Papers: Spectres and Speculations: Capital, Nations, Texts

The Canadian Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies (CACLALS) hosts its annual conference, May 23 to 25, 2009, at Carleton University in Ottawa in conjunction with the annual Congress of the Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences. The theme of this year's conference is "Spectres and Speculations: Capital, Nations, Texts."

We invite papers dealing with postcolonial literary texts and all that lies outside, beneath, or behind them: the past that haunts and the future that looms; the material underpinnings and the immaterial shadows of exchange value, repressions, and possible worlds. Texts have a strangely insubstantial existence: at once concrete objects and conceptual objects that exist outside the world. They thus prove ideal sites for studying how those other "imagined" entities, capital and the nation-state, pass through the world and through each other, leaving marks and altering the world. Areas of interest include but are not limited to:

- the return of the repressed in texts and in the nation-state
- the future that texts point to, whether in warning or in hope
- the republic of letters and the market for literature
- intersections of public policy and artistic production
- symbolic capital and finance capital
- global capital flows and the nation-state
- national literature, literary nations
- cosmopolitanism and nationalism
- globalization, capitalism, and the nation-state
- narrating the nation, the globe, the market
- literary history/ national history/ the history of capital

The conference will feature the participation of two keynote speakers:

Ian Baucom is the chair of the department of English at Duke University and author of *Spectres of the Atlantic: Finance Capital, Slavery, and the Philosophy of History* (2005), *Out of Place: Englishness, Empire and the Locations of Identity* (1999), and co-editor of *Shades of Black: Assembling Black Arts in 1980s Britain* (2005).

Sherene Razack is professor of Sociology and Equity Studies at OISE, the University of Toronto, and author of several books, including *Casting Out: The Eviction of Muslims from Western Law and Politics* (2008), *Dark Threats and White Knights: the Somalia Affair, Peacekeeping, and the New Imperialism* (2004), *Race, Space, and the Law: Unmapping a White Settler Society* (ed. 2002), and *Looking White People in the Eye: Gender, Race, and Culture in Courtrooms and Classrooms* (1998).

Abstracts of approximately 300 words for talks of 20 minutes' duration, engaged at any level with capital, nations, specters and speculations in postcolonial literature are due **December 15, 2008**. They can be either e-mailed, along with a short biographical note and a contact address, to Neil ten Kortenaar at kortenaar@utsc.utoronto.ca, or submitted electronically via a webpage on the CACLALS site (<http://www.chass.utoronto.ca/caclals/>) that will be ready in November. Proposals for panels and special sessions should follow the same procedures. Abstracts will be double blind-vetted. Please note that only proposals from paid members will be considered. Forward membership inquiries to Maria Casas, Secretary-Treasurer, CACLALS, c/o Dept. of English, York University, 208 Stong College, 4700 Keele Street, Toronto M3J 1P3, Canada or mariacasas@sympatico.ca.

Conference Report: 2008 CACLALS

Prepared by: Emily Johansen

This year's CACLALS conference focussed on the topic, "Thinking Beyond Borders".

The first session, entitled "Nations in an Age of Globalization," got the conference off to a wonderful start, raising a number of ideas and questions that resonated throughout the conference. Helene Strauss's goal in the first paper was to think through how the nation has been imagined in post-apartheid and -TRC South Africa. She suggested that South African nationalism has been characterized by notions of South Africa as a closed society and this has prompted a growth in xenophobia and xenophobic violence. She suggested the methodological usefulness of the concept of "intimacy" which, as Diana Brydon notes, is dependent on conversation but, Ann Laura Stoler has also noted, always retains the possibility of violence. Strauss argues that, by keeping in mind these two meanings – community and isolation, "intimacy" offers a useful way of thinking through the simultaneous inclusion and exclusion of nationalist identity. Julia Emberley considered the way Deborah Ellis's *Three Wishes: Palestinian and Israeli Children Speak* posited the figure of the child as a political subject. The text was taken off curriculum lists for Toronto elementary school children after protests from local Jewish groups over a Palestinian girl's desire to be a suicide bomber. Emberley argued that this protest refused the child's position as political subject, reframing the child only as witness, imbued with the power to "reveal truth." This frame requires, Emberley posits, reading the text only as testimonial and misreading its investment in the fantastical. Furthermore, this misreading is uneven: moments of phantasm are recognized in the testimonies of Israeli children, and not Palestinian ones. Thinking through how the child is made and unmade as a political subject raises helpful questions about what constitutes a political subject and how we read testimonials – particularly those by children. David Jefferess took on the question of global citizenship by looking at three paradigmatic figures: Arundhati Roy, Stephen Lewis and "Elizabeth Costello." Jefferess asked what constitutes the borders of global citizenship and suggested that frequently it is made equivalent to global philanthropy – with Bono,

Oprah Winfrey or Bill Gates being the most prominent examples. The global citizen is also frequently depicted as saving the inhuman from the inhuman – a category at work in depictions of Romeo Dallaire, for example. This suggests that the global citizen acts out of ethical responsibility but not necessarily with a corresponding political subjectivity. Jefferess stressed the importance of retaining Edward Said's definition of the role of intellectuals as to prompt discomfort, a role which Jefferess argues is taken up, albeit unevenly, by Roy, Lewis and Costello. Roy, for instance, acts as a bridge between the marginalized and a larger audience. This raises questions about the (potentially problematic) position of the global citizen and the privilege of speaking for others.

The first keynote address was given by Laura Chrisman on the question of Black worldliness. Chrisman began by discussing the transition in Paul Gilroy's work from the language of counterculture to the language of dissidence. She suggested that previously Gilroy's paradigmatic figures of the Black Atlantic had acted on their own behalf but that now the figures he approved of act on behalf of others – Rachel Corrie, for example. Chrisman argues that Gilroy approves only of a politics of philanthropy while a politics of self-determinism is out of bounds. Chrisman suggests that while Gilroy connects his cosmopolitan project to the work of Fanon, this does not acknowledge – even forgets – Fanon's humanist connection to nationalism. Chrisman went on to consider the intellectual back and forth between W.E.B. DuBois and Walter Sisulu. DuBois did not express solidarity with the African National Congress, and his blindness to South African political agency, she argued, points to the difficulty of a black/ identity-based transnationalism. Chrisman closed her talk by offering a reading of Zakes Mda's recent novel, *Cion*, which offers an intellectual connection between South Africa and the United States that works *from* South Africa *to* the U.S., rather than the other way around. The novel unsettles the vanguardism of Black transnationalism typified by DuBois.

The paper session on "Postcolonial Sexual Identities" continued to raise questions that had been circulating all day about how borders are understood but shifted the focus from national borders to consider the borders erected around sexuality and gender. Kofi Campbell's paper raised a provocative argument about the usefulness of existing terminology from Western queer theory in sites such as the Caribbean where sexual identities are understood in different ways. Campbell argues that Kristeva's need to construct postcolonial women in the image of Western feminism means that the other becomes a mirror in which Kristeva only sees herself. He further argued that the similar move of Western queer theory to apply its own terminology – particularly the binary between heterosexuality and homosexuality – onto cultural/ geographical contexts where they are inadequate replicates this self-mirroring. Don Randall considered the way that David Malouf's recent fiction challenges typical understandings of masculinity. Through a close reading of several scenes depicting the spectacularized male body, Randall argued that Malouf displaces the site of gender spectacle – typically embodied by women – onto men.

At one of the first paper sessions of day two, "Guests and Other Grotesques," Cynthia Sugars discussed Vincent Lam's deployment of the Gothic in *Bloodletting and Mi-*

raculous Cures. Lam attempts to de-gothicize the rhetoric or narrative of medicine and figures the Gothic in the transference between doctor and patient. This, Sugars argues, leads to the breakdown of borders between doctors and patients. Mark Libin raised similar questions about the boundary between the human and the animal through a reading of Marlene van Niekerk's *Triomf*. Libin argued that van Niekerk draws links between domestic and feral dogs – the Benade family are depicted as feral dogs. Further, the actual dogs act as a reminder of the violence done to Sophiatown, a formerly racially diverse town that was razed and rebuilt as the racially white Triomf neighbourhood. Libin suggests that this act of remembering Sophiatown and the narrative focus on a poor Afrikaaner family reveals the limits of postcolonial binaries and boundaries. Eve Preus's paper also took up the question of memory in J.M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians*. Preus suggested that the figures of the "barbarian girl" and Colonel Joll who act as guests and the Magistrate who is both host and guest reveal the limits of the host-guest relationship. All three papers took up relationships that have typically been stabilized and constrained by specific expectations – doctor-patient; human-animal; host-guest—to demonstrate the ways these relationships are both broken down and re-conceptualized in recent fiction.

In the second session of papers, the panel on "New Strategic Identities" took up many similar questions – though focussed on subjectivity. Antje Rauwerda argued that Yann Martel's *The Life of Pi* and Richard Lewis's *The Flame Tree* are examples of "Third Culture" novels: novels about or by people lacking a particular connection to the nation of their births. She suggests that this way of reading these novels challenges how we read international fiction that is neither postcolonial nor cosmopolitan. She posits the category "Third Culture" to allow for the distinction between adults who travel but have a home nation and those who have no clear home nation. Suzanne James argued that Zoe Wicomb's novel *Playing in the Light* interrogated the concept "coloured" as distinct from "black" and "white" in South Africa post-apartheid. James suggests that these categorizations are used in Wicomb's novel to suggest the actual fluidity of race in South Africa. James notes that, for the protagonist of the novel, the category "coloured" is both knowable and unknowable. Anna Guttman examined an Indian graphic novel that examined the figure of the Wandering Jew. Guttman argued that this text raises key questions about what happens when a concept like the Wandering Jew and its attendant relationship with the diaspora get used in new contexts. How does the novel imagine a transnational political community? Categories of national belonging are shown to be insufficient in this instance – a notion which echoed throughout the three papers.

Later on the second day was the Eighth Annual Aboriginal Roundtable centered on the topic "Crossing Boundaries in Aboriginal Literature: Illuminating Interdisciplinarity and Pedagogy." The question of pedagogy and how Aboriginal literature gets taken up in the classroom led to a number of interesting discussions. It was suggested that social workers, educators and healthcare workers delimit the stories that are told about Aboriginal people. The task then is to create new stories and to use them, pedagogically, to change old, negative stories. It is important to remember, however, that just providing

new stories is not enough, but that critical pedagogy demands that we develop a consciousness of how we use these stories. This means not only undoing negative stories told about Aboriginal people but also establishing an environment where students treat Aboriginal literature as carefully as they would literature by any other cultural group – to treat Aboriginal literature *as* literature, then, not as ethnography. Another topic that came up was the difficulty of practicing critical pedagogy in increasingly corporatized educational systems where teachers are underemployed, holding tenuous short-term contracts.

The final keynote address was delivered on the last day by Ato Quayson who discussed the history of African literary criticism and theory. Quayson suggested that there were two general trends in approaching literature: a humanist approach and a deconstructive approach. The humanist approach assumes that literature is the repository of all the best ideas and, therefore, universal. The deconstructive approach suggests that literature and the history of ideas are internally contradictory. Quayson went on to summarize the trajectory or chronology of African literature typically assumed by scholars: it is assumed to follow the stages of proto-nationalism; independence or decolonization; postcolonial disillusionment; and post-national experimentation. Africa, according to this chronology, is assumed to be monolithic and to have had the same colonial experience. Quayson suggests, by way of the example of the Swahili coast, the difficulty of defining who is and who is not African – something which African Studies typically has not dealt and which this trajectory does not really allow room for. Quayson argues that a re-orientation of African Studies is required in order to account for these hybridized zones. Quayson went on to suggest other possible frameworks for considering African literature – ways that do not read African literature only in direct reaction to politics and culture. These four “critical orientations towards Africa” were: socio-political; orality-based; formalist; and post-colonialist. Quayson then talked in greater detail about the formalist and post-colonialist orientations. He suggested that the formalist orientation often echoes the Commonwealth literatures model which is New Criticism-based and divides Africa into regions, then nations, and then authors. This model focuses, then, on ethno-cultural “genius.” The formalist orientation also echoes the patterns of Structuralism. The post-colonialist orientation, however, is primarily comparative and cross-continental.

Quayson’s talk brought together, then, many of the questions that had come up throughout the conference: how do we acknowledge cultural difference without over-relying on broad generalizations? What is the role of nations and national identity in an increasingly globalized world? How do we maintain our attentiveness to national/ cultural/ racial/ gender/ sexual difference without re-inforcing (frequently false) boundaries or borders?

Emily Johansen recently defended her dissertation, entitled "Territorialized Cosmopolitanism: Space, Place and Cosmopolitan Identity," in the Department of English and Cultural Studies at McMaster University. In the dissertation, she considers the intersections between cosmopolitan identity and place in contemporary postcolonial fiction. She has just published an article in *Canadian Literature* on Dionne Brand's *What We All Long For* and is currently a sessional instructor in the Centre for Global Studies at Huron College, the University of Western Ontario.

CALLS FOR PAPERS

Call for Papers: Culture and the Canada-US Border

University of Kent, Canterbury, UK

26-28 June, 2009

Keynote Presenters: Kimberly Blaeser (University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee), Wayde Compton (Simon Fraser University), Gordon Henry, Jr. (Michigan State University), Lynette Hunter (University of California—Davis), Gerald Vizenor (University of New Mexico)

Border studies in North America has hitherto focused primarily on the United States' border with Mexico, the point at which, Gloria Anzaldúa has noted, 'the Third World grates against the first and bleeds'. This conference seeks to shift border discussions North to the 49th parallel and its representation in both Canadian and American cultural products and, in so doing, to offer an intervention into familiar border discourses. If the US-Mexico border effects a brutal juxtaposition of national economic prosperity and deprivation, operating alongside a generally perceived linguistic and ethnic divide, what functions do we attribute to the Canada-US border, traditionally celebrated as the longest undefended border in the world? How far North can we take the insights produced by US-Mexico border studies—or do we need different theories altogether for a different border? If the Canada-US border figures prominently in Canadians' sense of their national identity, how does it figure south of the border? And to what extent do subnational groups' relationships to this border diverge from dominant national positions?

We invite papers that examine issues raised by the cultural implications of Canada-US border in Canadian and/or American literature, television, cinema, visual art, music, and other cultural forms. Papers may address, but are not limited to, the following issues:

- Indigeneity and cross-border identifications and dislocations
- Challenges to nation-state borders posed by indigenous self-determination
- Challenges to nation-state borders and the idea of the nation posed by Québec nationalism
- Diasporic communities across the border (e.g. relationships between African-Canadian and African-American culture; between Asian-Canadian and Asian-American culture)
- The border in dominant national(ist) fictions
- Constructions of Canada-US sameness and difference
- Comparisons of Canadian and American impressions of the Canada-US border
- Comparisons of the 49th parallel and the Alaska/Yukon border
- Comparisons of Anglo-Canada's and Québec's relationship to the Canada-US border
- Assessments of the usefulness of US-Mexico border studies, and border theory based on the US-Mexico border, to the Canada-US border
- Hemispheric contextualisation of the Canada-US border.

Papers will be 20 minutes long. Proposals for both individual papers and panels are welcome. Please send a 300-word abstract and short bio-biographical note to both David Stirrup (d.f.stirrup@kent.ac.uk) and Gillian Roberts (gillian.roberts@nottingham.ac.uk) by 5 December 2008.

Migration, Border, and the Nation-State (4/9-4/11/09)
Texas Tech University in Lubbock, Texas, U. S. A.
April 9-11, 2009

2009 Joint Conference of the United States Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies and Texas Tech University Comparative Literature Program. Texas Tech University houses the internationally known Southwest Collections and the Vietnam Archives. Spring in Lubbock is mild and sunny.

Keynote Speakers:

Ramon Saldívar, Departments of English and Comparative Literature, Stanford University

Saskia Sassen, Department of Sociology and the Committee on Global Thought, Columbia University and the London School of Economics

Plenary Speakers:

Alicia Schmidt Camacho, American Studies Program, Yale University

R. Radhakrishnan, Departments of Asian American Studies and Comparative Literature, University of California at Irvine

Xiao-huang Yin, Global Studies Program, Michigan State University

Creative Writer and Visual Artist:

Ana Castillo, author of *So Far From God*, *The Guardians*, and *Massacre of the Dreamers* among other novels, poem and essay collections

David Taylor, Art Department, New Mexico State University at Las Cruces

A Featured Round-Table Session on “the Postcolonial and the Global”

John Hawley, Department of English, Santa Clara University

Revathi Krishnaswamy, Department of English and Comparative Literature, San Jose State University

Proposal Submission Deadline: January 19, 2009

As our age of globalization continues to be defined by endless war and persistent economic crises, migration and border crossing have increasingly become tropes of cultural imagination and sites of critical intervention. Not only has the traditional singular pattern of human migration from the “periphery” to the “core” nation-states been diversified and supplemented by two-way and circular movements of human populations around the planet, but new border economies, hybrid identity formations, growing planetary consciousness, and transnational cultural productions have also flourished in challenge to the

nation-state and the capitalist world-system. How have these defining moments been captured, negotiated, and represented in literary and cultural productions? How have creative writers, visual and performance artists, as well as cultural theorists intervened in the process of globalization and articulated their new cultural visions, artistic sensibilities, and political agencies?

The joint conference looks for presentations that investigate new meanings, assumptions, and implications of migration, border crossing, and nation building as well as papers that explore the representations of emigration, borderlands, and nation-states in different cultural forms, literary genres, and technological media. We welcome both proposals that examine the interrelations among migration, border, and the nation-state in political and historical terms and projects that offer innovative interpretations of cultural productions that foreground the new dynamics in relation to our everyday life, social practice, and planetary awareness.

Please send your one-page proposal and one-page C.V. by January 19, 2009:

Dr. Yuan Shu
 Department of English
 P.O. Box 43091
 Texas Tech University
 Lubbock, TX 79409-3091

Proposed Essay Collection

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

Papers are invited for a two-volume collection of essays on the interface and audiences of the oral, the written, and other verbal media. The University of Toronto Press, McGill-Queen's UP, and Wilfrid Laurier UP have all expressed interest in publishing the collection, although a final decision would be taken once the completed collection is in the publishers' hands. We may also consider trying to publish some of the essays in a refereed, on-line, open-access journal such as *Oral Tradition*.

In keeping with the plenitude of modes and forms of oral and textual discourse, the organizers welcome papers on international, interdisciplinary, cross-cultural, and trans-historical topics. Possible topics include:

- indigenous treaty narratives from decolonizing parts of the world
- legal contracts in medieval Europe as they move from the oral to the written
- the transmutation of oral stories into fiction, drama, printed poetry, or visual media
- reconstructing the oral delivery of sermons or epics on the basis of their printed forms
- working with Elders on the transcription of oral narratives
- the practice of oral storytelling/keeping or dub or spoken word poetry
- strategies for textualizing the oral

- oral occasions, contexts, circumstances and modes of public address as represented in writing
- the oral and the written in visual arts
- recording oral narratives for community histories or school curricula
- contesting writing's empire
- sacred narratives, proverbs, jokes, ballads, sagas, legends, folklore, sermons, oratory, and disputations
- aesthetics, ethics, and politics at the interface of the oral and the written
- the body and/or gender at the interface of the oral and the written
- memory and commemoration at the interface of the oral and the written

Please aim to make your essay about 20 double-spaced pages (6,000 words), although papers up to a maximum length of 25 double-spaced pages (7,500 words, including notes and works cited list), will be considered. In preparing your paper, please follow MLA style, outlined in the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* (Sixth Edition). You may send the essay in paper or electronic form; electronic submissions should be in Microsoft Word or Rich Text Format and may be sent either as an e-mail attachment or on a CD.

Forward completed papers by 31 December 2008, to:
Professor Susan Gingell
Department of English
University of Saskatchewan
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Rowland Smith (1938-2008)

Rowland Smith, former president of CACLALS, passed away unexpectedly of a heart attack October 20, 2008.

Rowland was born in South Africa in 1938. A former Rhodes scholar, he came to Canada as a visiting fellow at Dalhousie University in 1965. He returned to Dalhousie as an assistant professor in 1967 and remained there—in a variety of roles—until 1994. In 1994, he moved to Wilfrid Laurier as vice-president academic. In 2004 he took up the role of Dean of Humanities at the University of Calgary.

President of CACLALS from 1995-9, he organized the very successful triennial conference "Postcolonizing the Commonwealth" at Wilfrid Laurier University in November 1997. He is the author of a monograph on Roy Campbell and edited two books of critical essays, one on Nadine Gordimer and one on African and Caribbean Literature.



Laura Moss recalls:

I was the CACLALS grad student representative when Rowland Smith was President of CACLALS and I attended the wonderful "Postcolonizing the Commonwealth" Conference that Rowland and Gary Boire organized. I was worried about presenting a paper at such an important conference and, in the middle of organizing the whole event, Rowland took the time to calm me with his characteristic humour. The thing I remember most about working with Rowland on CACLALS is how graceful he was. With grace, he led the CACLALS executive as though each of our voices counted in the discussion. This meant a great deal to me as a grad student. Rowland modelled the best parts of postcolonial thinking in his actions. For Rowland, action and order needed to be accompanied by respect, generosity, and kindness at all times if anything was to be accomplished. He will be missed.

John Ball recalls:

Although I had met his son Russell through mutual friends in Toronto, I first encountered Rowland Smith at the 1992 ACLALS conference in Kingston, Jamaica, at which I was a keen PhD student just getting my bearings in the dizzying (and then burgeoning) field of Commonwealth/postcolonial literary studies. Rowland gave what I recall as a fine paper on Nadine Gordimer and was an affable presence, genuinely interested in young col-

leagues and their ideas in ways his somewhat patrician demeanour might not have always made apparent. A couple of years later he became a very effective president of CACLALS for what turned out to be a four-year stint, chairing many excellent conferences at which he seemed to attend every session and participated actively and wittily in the question periods. The association flowered under his and Gary Boire's dedicated and pro-active leadership in those years.

Much more recently, I was delighted to sign him up to write a long entry on Gordimer for *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Twentieth-Century World Fiction*, which I'm editing. As the writing proceeded, he sent me several entertaining emails full of stories of his latest travels, opera he recommended seeing in London, or his response to a recent Gordimer biography, which was so "nasty" it caused him "aches and pains." The entry itself arrived just three weeks before he passed away, and I regret that I hadn't gotten far enough down the editing pile by then to read it and tell him how much I enjoyed it. It's an unusual feeling to have custody of what may well be a colleague's last academic publication, but I'm hugely grateful that, despite the heavy demands on his time as Dean of Humanities at Calgary, he made the time to have one final say on a writer whose work he knew so well, and to meet my deadline at a time when neither of us could know that another, rather less flexible one was sadly coming up so soon. I feel privileged to have known him and worked with him.

MEMBER NEWS AND PUBLICATIONS

William New (UBC) has just published his fourth book for children. Called *The Year I Was Grounded* (Tradewind Books), the book combines journal entries, poems, and word puzzles, and deals both with the stresses of personal discovery and with ecological issues in the world at large.

Renee Hulan and Renate Eigenbrod (Winnipeg) have edited *Aboriginal Oral Traditions: Theory. Practice. Ethics*. (Halifax & Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing, 2008) with the Gorsebrook Research Institute.

Hugh Hodges (Trent University) has published *Soon Come: Jamaican Spirituality/ Jamaican Poetics* with the University of Virginia Press. It has a great picture of Bob Marley on the cover.

Anupama Mohan (PhD candidate, Toronto) has published her debut book of poetry entitled *Twenty Odd Love Poems* with The Writer's Workshop, Kolkata.

Leilei Chen (PhD candidate Alberta) has an article called "Enlightened Ambivalence: Arrival and Departure in Peter Hessler's River Town: Two Years on the Yangtze" forthcoming in *Genre* in 2008.

Don Randall (Bilkent) conceived, and served as chief organizer for, the international conference "Anglophone Literatures in International Contexts," which was hosted by the Department of English Language and Literature at Bilkent University (Ankara, Turkey) on October 16 and 17, 2008.

Maureen Moynagh (St Francis Xavier) has published *Political Tourism and its Texts* (UTP, 2008).

Shelley Stigter (Lethbridge; PhD candidate Leiden) has published *Two World Views: Double-Voice and Double-Consciousness in Native American Literature* with VDM Verlag Dr. Muller Aktiengesellschaft & Co. KG, in Saarbrücken, Germany

Nora Stovel (Alberta) published *Divining Margaret Laurence: A Study of Her Complete Writings*, with McGill-Queen's UP in September.

ITEMS OF INTEREST

Postcolonial Text, the fully online open-access journal co-founded and co-managed by Ranjini Mendis and John Willinsky in 2004, warmly welcomed Heike Harting (Université de Montréal) as its Editor in Chief this summer. The journal has been accepted for indexing in the MLA International Bibliography and MLA Directory of Periodicals, and, most recently, it was invited to join the major new humanities publishing initiative, Open Humanities Press (OHP), along with two other prestigious journals: Image [&] Narrative and Fast Capitalism. The OHP's Board of Directors includes, among others, Jonathan Culler, Stephen Greenblatt, J. Hillis Miller, Antonio Negri, Gayatri Spivak, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, and John Willinsky. *Postcolonial Text* welcomes submissions on an on-going basis (<http://postcolonial.org>)

ARIEL 39.1-2 (2008): Special double issue on Life Writing in International Contexts

Guest editors: Marlene Kadar, Humanities and Women's Studies, York University
 Jeanne Perreault, English, University of Calgary
 Linda Warley, English, University of Waterloo

In the last twenty-five years or so, academic attention has been gripped by the extraordinary capacity of life writing to engage with the most pressing issues of human communities. The focus on an autobiographical "I" articulating an intimate sense of self in the trajectory of life as lived has exploded into the recognition that many kinds of texts, documents, records can be read as "life writing." These can offer scholars insights into the broad sweeps of history, politics, and philosophy, and can track movements of communities and consciousness. Contemporary life writing theory and criticism illustrate the range and flexibility of life writing. This special double issue of *ARIEL* examines a variety of

auto/biographical texts across transcultural, cross-cultural and postcolonial environments, into domestic life and across war zones. Essays probe various intensities of memory, identity and place in the auto/biographical and its trace, from translating indigenous oral narratives to video life narrating, and from witnessing trauma to queer subjectivity to Iranian scar literature.

Articles include:

Rosalia Baena on colonial childhood memoirs
Margo Gewurtz on cultural revolution narrative
Janice Hladki on a Canadian video autobiography
Michael Jacklin on Writing Indigenous oral life narratives
Laura Levitt on Alice Kaplan's (overdetermined) French lessons
Gillian Whitlock on Iranian women's memoirs

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BOOK REVIEWS

Editor: John Ball

Sarah Brouillette. *Postcolonial Writers in the Global Literary Marketplace*. Houndsmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. 206 pages. \$69.95 (U.S.)

Review by John Clement Ball, University of New Brunswick

If the ascent of postcolonialism is one of the biggest academic stories of the past two decades, the rise of the postcolonial literary author (particularly the novelist) in the publishing, bookselling, and prize-bestowing marketplace has been a parallel story and, as Sarah Brouillette convincingly argues, a not unrelated one. More literary authors than ever are becoming globally famous – sometimes infamous – celebrities, and fiction by writers with postcolonial or diasporic credentials became in those decades a highly saleable commodity marketed by transnational media corporations, championed by awards juries, and celebrated by *Time* and Oprah. But do such developments affect what authors write, and if so, how?

Postcolonial Writers in the Global Literary Marketplace is a fascinating study of a topic we (surprisingly) don't often talk about despite our supposedly insatiable curiosity about the lives of the rich and famous: how high-profile postcolonial writers self-consciously inscribe and reflect their experiences of authorship, and their anxieties about their commercialized, internationally disseminated, and publicly debated authorial identities (including their imposed or self-appointed roles as national spokespeople), within the pages of their literary texts. Brouillette brings a central disciplinary tenet of book history – that a text's materiality and “the institutions of literary production, dissemination, and reception” that surround it are crucial aspects of its meaning (2) – into a happy marriage with postcolonialism's interests in representation, alterity, and political affiliation. “Just as the proliferating ways in which authorial identities are marketed involves the construction of biographical fictions that audiences are asked to understand and respond to,” she writes, “recuperation of the careers of author-figures makes potentially fruitful material for literary interpretation” (12). This dual focus results in a remarkable combination of wider-than-usual contextualizing (of such celebrated but controversial careers as those of Derek Walcott, Salman Rushdie, J.M. Coetzee, and Zulfikar Ghose) and original close readings of texts that have been carefully chosen as exemplary literary representations of the very authorial problematics that most notably define each man's career. Not only are rumours of the author's death greatly exaggerated; Brouillette shows us that he leads a complex of interrelated and contradictory lives in marketers' and readers' imaginations that are then refracted through the lives lived by characters in his novels or (in Walcott's case) speakers in his poems.

Brouillette begins her theoretical explorations with the correspondences between

readerly and touristic exoticism articulated in Graham Huggan's *The Postcolonial Exotic*, arguing that by distinguishing between a privileged academic reader and an inferior "market reader" (24), Huggan works like an ethnographer to describe a notional, constructed, exoticizing reader-type who remains strangely elusive and hypothetical, beyond empirical reach – like the crass tourist that all other tourists disavow. Later Brouillette unpacks Pierre Bourdieu's musings on autonomy and his division of authors and literary texts into "elite" vs. "mass," "experimental" vs. "commercial" types (62-63), adding considerable value to his own skepticism about the validity of such oppositions. Anxieties about dichotomies such as these and many others Brouillette then sees reflected in her chosen authors' works – in Walcott between the Caribbean South as site of representation and the Euro-American North as site of reception; in Coetzee between South African and international readerships' wildly divergent views of his aesthetic and political obligations and achievements; in Rushdie between expressed authorial intention and appropriative, hostile (mis)interpretation; and in Ghose between his place of origin and its conspicuous absence in his fiction. Brouillette draws on the work of Jerome McGann, R. Jackson Wilson, and others to recuperate authors not as intentional beings "in full control of their own meanings," but rather as "resolutely, purposely *figural*, based in a set of significations that mediate between the writer in the world and the world of the work, so much so that interpretation often identifies aspects of an author's posturing that the writer in question would most likely discredit" (44-45). In her provocative readings of Walcott's "The Fortunate Traveller," Rushdie's *Fury*, Coetzee's *Disgrace* and *Elizabeth Costello*, and Ghose's *The Triple Mirror of the Self*, she sees these texts' meanings as inseparable from the circumstances of their authors' lives (including the places where they've lived them), from the prior reception of their work, and from their awareness of their own branding by both scholarly and "market" readers. I worried going in that such readings might seem strained, but I found them nuanced and well supported.

Having worked on the marketing side of literary publishing before I became an academic – including hundreds of radio interviews with authors using their personas to flog their books – I was perhaps uncommonly receptive to Brouillette's yoking of literary analysis to contexts we academics normally bracket off from our interpretive field. Wary of the intentional fallacy, told that even living and breathing authors are theoretically dead (and have been for years), subscribing to a kind of scholarly purism by which some contexts are more equal than others, we tend to favour what a postcolonial Polonius might call the sociological-cultural and politico-historical over the biographical-promotional or the economic-institutional. Brouillette not only gives us implicit permission to slum in the commodifying marketplace but provides some solidly theorized, intellectually supple models for how to do it without losing sight of the text in the process or generating reductive and overdetermined readings of it.

One measure of scholarly work's value is its ability to serve as a foundation for further scholarship, and Brouillette's book certainly deserves to meet its goal "to encourage more analyses of the relationships between literature, politics, and economics" (176). Indeed if, in her words, "All the works I have discussed here are exercises in self-

authorization, designed to register the writer's awareness of the political uses or appropriations of his works, appropriations that are intimately related to the market function of postcolonial literatures" (177), her reading strategies prompted this reader to wonder which other writing careers might be productively illuminated in this way – V.S. Naipaul, Michael Ondaatje, Margaret Atwood, Janet Frame, and Zadie Smith come immediately to mind. Moreover, since the last three are women and none of the authors Brouillette examines are, I wondered if female postcolonial writers might need and some day receive a different study that would complement this one – ideally by Brouillette herself. The maleness of the authors she chooses to discuss here goes surprisingly unmentioned – and indeed gender as a category is wholly absent, though given the book's origins in a doctoral dissertation it's hard to imagine the subject didn't come up or that there wasn't some pressure at either dissertation or book stage to expand its scope in this way. Yet while a brief rationale acknowledging and explaining the choice might have been advisable, one is also inclined to admire the confidence and panache that enables this young scholar to eschew what once would have been obligatory gestures. Instead, she gets on with the business of demonstrating exciting new ways to read contemporary texts and author careers in tandem, and in relation to the arguably more relevant contexts of globalized publishing, consumer capitalism, transnational cosmopolitanism, and postcolonial theory.

Kofi Omoniyi Sylvanus Campbell, *Literature and Culture in the Black Atlantic: From Pre- to Postcolonial*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006. 200 pages. \$68.95 (U.S.)

Review by Siobhain Bly Calkin, Carleton University

Kofi Campbell's book undertakes a challenging task as it traces connections between medieval English understandings of Africa and Africans, and contemporary Caribbean texts. His goal is "to extend the historical dimension of Paul Gilroy's original conception of the black Atlantic" (1), and he argues that scholars need to rethink the identification of the black Atlantic as a cultural formation rooted solely in "the originary and traumatic moment of the Middle Passage" (160). Instead, Campbell states, "we must read past that moment of trauma and recognize it for what it was: the culmination of one part of a long historical process, and a change in the relations among different parts of the world which nevertheless already enjoyed an association" (160). Campbell's provocative thesis indicates that his book is directed primarily at scholars of black Atlantic literatures and cultures. As a medievalist I am not the best person to judge his book's success in addressing that audience, but I wholeheartedly applaud Campbell's efforts to break down disciplinary period boundaries and to point out the ways in which early English representations of Africa and Africans feed into later colonial and postcolonial developments in the Caribbean.

The book falls into three parts. The first, an introduction, outlines Campbell's thesis and situates his work in relation to scholarship engaging the black Atlantic. He then, in a

separate section, justifies his linking of postcolonial and medieval studies. The introduction claims two main arguments for the book. The first is that the “precolonial” period of 1300-1600 marks the beginning of the Caribbean’s relationship with England. During these centuries “Middle English representations of Africans and blacks constructed them in a manner that laid the groundwork for the future colonialist project, by portraying them in ways that would make it easier to justify and accept their eventual enslavement and displacement, and by portraying their lands as highly desirable” (5). Campbell’s second argument “is that these precolonial constructions of Africa and blacks continue to affect Caribbean literature, Caribbean identities, and the black Atlantic, in the postcolonial era” (6). These two claims structure Parts I and II: Part I discusses medieval English representations of Africa and Africans, while Part II discusses the work of contemporary Caribbean writers such as Wilson Harris, Derek Walcott, Paul Keens-Douglas, and David Dabydeen.

The first chapter examines three Middle English texts that translate earlier Latin works: John Trevisa’s translation of Bartolomeus Anglicus’s *De Proprietatibus Rerum*, the *Three Kings of Cologne*, and the *Secretum Secretorum*. These texts offer descriptions of Africa and Africans that draw on medieval science and geography, and Campbell argues that they represent African lands so as to emphasize their wealth and potential for exploitation, while they represent Africans in ways that “would later make it easier to justify enslaving them” (52). Here Campbell communicates some of the complexity of medieval ideas about blackness and whiteness, and about northern vs. southern characteristics. He also tries to show how discourses of difference evolve over time in the texts he studies. His emphasis on images that will later be used in colonialist discourse leads him to conclude that these texts offer “fairly one-sided portraits of the African others they portray” (52).

Campbell’s second chapter rectifies this rather stereotypical vision of medieval writings on Africa by discussing texts that offer a more complex and multifaceted engagement of the continent: the romance of *The Sowdone of Babylone* and *The Book of John Mandeville*. Campbell thoughtfully considers these texts’ various versions and the differences in the visions of Africa the variants present. He indicates that in some Middle English texts Africans were depicted as strong warriors and might even be explicitly likened to their English readers. Campbell here offers readers unfamiliar with medieval English literature a sense of the complexity of its portraits of African alterity. Campbell concludes, however, that these medieval portraits ultimately work, like those discussed in Chapter 1, to articulate colonialist desire and facilitate colonialism: “their constructions work toward the same conclusion, that blacks are inferior and in need of containment and the influence of the English” (83). I do not entirely agree with Campbell’s conclusions, but I think his discussion conveys valuable information about medieval texts to scholars working on later periods, information that certainly provides a fuller sense of the historical context underlying English colonialism in Africa and the Caribbean.

Campbell ends this section and opens Part II with a brief consideration of the ways in which the medieval “precolonial” discourse he identifies was translated to the New

World. He argues that colonialist explorers shaped their ideas of what they would find through reading texts like the ones he studies, which were compiled in the medieval period but circulated well into the Early Modern period and beyond. Campbell then turns his attention to postcolonial Caribbean writers.

Chapter Three, after touching briefly on Raleigh's *Discoverie of the Large, Rich and Bewtiful Empyre of Guiana*, analyzes Wilson Harris's *Guyana Quartet*. Campbell argues that the *Quartet*, like some other postcolonial Caribbean works, explores the notion of a "temporally synchronous hybridity" (97). Campbell uses this phrase to describe the fusion of precolonial and postcolonial discourses he perceives in some contemporary Caribbean writers' works as, "in the interrelations and interstices between precolonial past and post-colonial present, they discover possibilities for a positive Caribbean future" (5). Campbell then argues that the *Quartet* not only represents but also formally embodies a "temporally synchronous hybridity" as Harris works to suggest "that the Caribbean has a history that, while it was fundamentally and profoundly influenced by the Middle Passage, nevertheless exceeds that moment of trauma" and engages precolonial discourses and contexts as well (122).

Campbell's final chapter discusses texts by Derek Walcott, Paul Keens-Douglas, and David Dabydeen. Here, he argues that being aware of the precolonial medieval English discourse about Africa and blacks enables us to see that the idea of "the relative inferiority and primitivism of England's others, which was used to justify the domination of those others," predates nineteenth-century Social Darwinism; ideas about the internalization of colonialist discourses by postcolonial subjects will therefore benefit from an engagement with the precolonial discourse Campbell elaborates in Chapters 1 and 2 (123-24). He applies such thinking to Walcott's *Dream on Monkey Mountain*, and then argues that the cultural discourse of heat and cold engaged in Keens-Douglas's "Ent Dat Nice?" constitutes a similar moment in which a discourse elaborated in the Middle Ages and promulgated during colonization continues to be engaged in postcolonial articulations of Caribbean identity and culture. Finally, Campbell discusses the work of David Dabydeen, an author who has explicitly acknowledged the "influence of precolonial English literature on his work" (145), and argues that Dabydeen's novel *Disappearance* enacts a complex and multi-faceted engagement with black Atlantic history, including its precolonial English components. Campbell then provides a brief conclusion in which he articulates the ways he hopes his book can help scholars understand and historicize concepts of the black Atlantic and hybridity.

Campbell's book constitutes a brave effort to challenge periodicity and to put the discourses of medieval and postcolonial studies into dialogue in productive ways, and for this it is worthy of admiration. It should be read by postcolonial scholars interested in conceptions of the black Atlantic because it makes some thoughtful points about the history and dating of this concept, and presents for consideration textual evidence not usually discussed in relation to it. That said, the book could be stronger in some ways. The continuity between its medieval and contemporary parts is not always as strong and specific as a

reader might like, and the division of the book into two temporally disjunct parts undermines somewhat the author's claims for precolonial and postcolonial continuity. Sometimes, too, the medieval discourse of Africa and Africans is presented as solely precolonial. In other words, only those elements picked up and re-used in later colonialist ideas are accorded importance; while this is a necessary consequence of the book's focus, it means that some of the complexities of medieval ideas about Africa and race are not fully communicated. For example, Campbell acknowledges but does not fully explore the ways in which Africa and Islam were connected in medieval English conceptions and experiences. Disentangling Africa from Islam as he does in Chapter 2 means that Campbell does not fully consider the complicated intertwining of race and religion in medieval English discourse. It also means that he passes rather too quickly over the fact that north Africans conquered and controlled parts of medieval Spain for seven centuries, an African Muslim presence that contributed much to the intellectual and technological development of late medieval Europe, including England. Focusing solely on depictions of Africa that loaned themselves to later colonialist ideas means that Campbell runs the risk of suggesting that the Middle Ages only associated Africa with inferiority rather than communicating that, while at many times inferiority was stressed, as Campbell notes, at other times the civilization translated from Africa to Europe through Spain was felt to be culturally and martially superior. Campbell's discussion of vernacularity and the precolonial might also have considered more fully the role of Anglo-Norman French as a medieval English vernacular, and the complications this might raise for some of his claims about precolonial English ideas.

To desire more discussion from an author, however, is a testament to the interest he or she has elicited, and can be considered as much a compliment as a critique. Campbell presents a thought-provoking literary portrait of the black Atlantic and some of its origins, and his claims deserve consideration from scholars of both the Middle Ages and the black Atlantic.

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