

# Chimo



**The Newsjournal of the Canadian Association for  
Commonwealth Literature & Language Studies  
Number 57** **Spring 2009**

**Chimo** (Chee'mo) greetings [inuit]**Editor: Neil ten Kortenaar****Book Reviews Editor: Julia Emberley**

*Chimo* is published twice yearly by the Canadian Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies. 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, M5R 3M8, 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 Susan Spearey, Department of English Language and Literature, Brock University, 500 Glenridge Avenue, St Catharines ON L2S 3A1 or by e-mail at [sspearey@brocku.ca](mailto:sspearey@brocku.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 5<sup>th</sup> 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© 2009 CACLALS

The Canadian Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

From the President.....	3
From the Secretary-Treasurer.....	5
Travel Grants to Presenters at the 2009 CACLALS Conference	6
Financial Report.....	7
Conference Program: Spectres and Speculations.....	8
Member News and Publications.....	15
Book Review: <b>Julia Emberley</b> , <i>Defamiliarizing the Aboriginal: Cultural Practices and Decolonization</i> .....	17
Book Review: <b>Don Randall</b> . <i>David Malouf</i> .....	21
Book Review: <b>Eleanor Ty and Christl Verduyn</b> , eds. <i>Asian Canadian Writing Beyond Autoethnography</i> .....	23
Book Review: <b>McKegney, Sam</b> . <i>Magic Weapons: Aboriginal Writers Remaking Community after Residential School</i>	25
CACLALS Executive Committee.....	28

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

Greetings,

Let me introduce Susan Spearey as the new CACLALS secretary-treasurer, taking over from Maria Casas. Many of you will know Susan who has been a member for many years. She has dived into the work of budgets and reports, and the executive is very grateful for the smoothness with which she made the transition. I would also like to thank Maria Casas for her hard work on behalf of the organization the past four years. Although she quits the executive, I am sure she will continue to be a strong presence at CACLALS conferences and an able voice for sessionals in the organization.

I am looking forward to seeing many of you at the annual CACLALS conference, to be held this year at Carleton University May 23-25, in conjunction with Congress 2009, the gathering of Canadian scholarly societies in the Humanities and Social Sciences. The program is chockfull and very exciting. There will be 16 panels, featuring a total of 53 presenters, as well as two keynote addresses, six book launches, and a reading by two authors. The program is published in this issue (and is available on-line), but let me draw your attention to some highlights.

1. **Tejumola Olaniyan**, professor at the University of Wisconsin at Madison, co-editor of *African Literature: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory* (Blackwell, 2007), and author of *Arrest the Music!: Fela and His Rebel Art and Politics* (Indiana, 2004) and *Scars of Conquest/Masks of Resistance: The Invention of Cultural Identities in African, African American and Caribbean Drama* (Oxford, 1995), will deliver our first keynote address. He will be speaking on “Of Travels, Accents, and Epistemologies: Notes on Postcolonial Meta-theory.” His talk will explore the strong imprint of place and location on the accents of postcolonial theorizing. In particular, he is interested in the division that dominates postcolonial theorizing between scholars writing in the formerly colonized regions and those living in the West. After identifying the features of each formation and noting their discursive and ideological accents, he will speculate on the role context plays in the differences between them. He argues that the link between the postcolonial regions and Euro-America is migration. While, ordinarily, one would expect migration to be a bridging factor, Professor Olaniyan argues that, because migration has been primarily one-way, it has been primarily a force for taming, domesticating, and incorporating. This will be a salutary challenge to all of us working on postcolonial topics in the First World academy.

2. Our second keynote speaker is **Sherene Razack**, 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), and *Looking White People in the Eye: Gender, Race, and Culture in Courtrooms and Classrooms* (1998), promises an equal if different challenge. Her title is “Death Worlds Where Bad Things Happen: Contemporary Settler Violence Against Aboriginal Peoples.” This

year's conference has developed an emphasis on aboriginal issues and themes, entirely appropriate given the urgency these issues currently have.

3. Another highlight will be the tenth Annual CACLALS Aboriginal Roundtable on the theme of "Art, Artist and Reconciliation," organized by **Jonathan Dewar** of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation with the assistance of **Armand Ruffo**. The question asked of participants will be: in this moment of truth and reconciliation, what is the role of the artist? What must happen for indigenous artists' voices to be heard? Must the art become mainstream or simply penetrate in more effective ways? And what is the artist's responsibility to activism, both in the work and on the public stage?

4. Several member-organized events are helping to put aboriginal affairs and issues front and centre at this year's conference. **Susan Gingell** and **Jill Didur** have organized another *Author Meets Critics Panel Session* (I believe it is the third time we have had this event). **Terry Goldie**, **Deanna Reder**, and **Jennifer Andrews** will be discussing **Julia Emberley's** book *Defamiliarizing the Aboriginal: Cultural Practices and Decolonization in Canada* (read **Susan Gingell's** review in this issue of *Chimo*).

5. **Guy Beauregard** has organized a panel discussion on The Indian Residential School Truth and Reconciliation Commission, bringing together six distinguished speakers to discuss the topic of immediate relevance to us all, as scholars but also as Canadians.

6. Saturday there will be a reading by **Armand Ruffo**, the Ojibwe poet and playwright, and **Cyril Dabydeen**, the Guyanese Canadian poet and novelist.

7. **Ashok Mathur** has an art exhibit, "A Little Distillery in Nowgong," installed in Ottawa that runs until May 24, so conference goers, especially if they arrive in Ottawa early, will have a chance to see it. The exhibit is based on Ashok's upcoming novel of the same name, and he promises "it has all sorts of connections to postcolonial literatures, migrant politics, indian diaspora, etc."

8. There is a CACLALS dinner on the Sunday night, May 24 at the Siam Kitchen.

Please note: all who wish to attend the conference, and that includes presenters, must register through the Congress 2009 website: <http://www.fedcan.ca/congress2009>. There is a possibility of subsidies for travel: please see the note from Susan Spearey at the end of the secretary-treasurer's report.

On the last day of the conference, May 25, we will hold the CACLALS AGM. The executive would dearly love to hear your suggestions for how the organization can be improved and made more effective.

There is a lot to look forward to. See you in Ottawa

**Neil ten Kortenaar**, President

## FROM THE SECRETARY-TREASURER

### Greetings from the Secretary-Treasurer,

Having recently taken over this position, I would like first to thank both Neil ten Kortenaar and Maria Caridad Casas for so patiently showing me the ropes, and offering every support and assistance to ensure that the transition has gone smoothly. Many thanks also to Maria for her dedicated service to CACLALS over the years.

I look forward to what promises to be a dynamic and engaging exchange of ideas this coming May at the “Spectres and Speculations” gathering at Carleton. We have received funding from SSHRC for Aid and Attendance Grants for Scholarly Associations, which does not appear on the financial report because the cheque was deposited on 1 April, 2009, the day after the period covered by the financial report that follows. Presenters at the Congress will be eligible to apply for assistance for travel expenses incurred. As in past years, and in keeping with SSHRC policy, priority will be given to graduate students and members who do not have permanent jobs, and therefore do not have access to professional development and research funds.

We have received the first installment of our Commonwealth Foundation grant, which was wired to us in December 2008, and we are still awaiting the second installment, which will be for a similar amount (subject to fluctuations in exchange rates) to that which appears in the current financial report. At present we have 217 members, nine of whom are honorary members, 107 of whom are permanent employees of a university, and the rest of whom are sessionals, students, postdoctoral fellows, or unwaged. A notice will be sent to you when your renewal date comes up; please renew as promptly as possible. I look forward to seeing many of you in May.

With best wishes,

Susan Spearey

### **Travel Grants to Presenters at the 2009 CACLALS Conference**

As in previous years CACLALS has received \$3480 from SSHRC towards subsidizing the travel costs of presenters. SSHRC has also provided guidelines for the disbursement of funds that make sessionals and graduate students a priority (that is, categories of presenters that are least likely to find adequate source of funding elsewhere). Keeping the guidelines in mind, we have created these categories:

1. Presenters who have full or substantial funding from their university
2. Those who have funding from other professional sources (possibly supplementing #1)
3. Those with partial funding (and looking to make up the difference)
4. Presenters with no funding at all

The categories we will be supporting are #3 and #4. We will contribute as much as possible toward travel costs, depending on the number and needs of applicants.

#### Category 3:

Please submit by June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2009 (1) correspondence indicating how much you will receive from your institution/source of funding toward travel, and (2) the original ticket. Please indicate if you need the latter returned to you and provide a mailing address and invoice if the total fare is not noted on the ticket (or is difficult to read).

#### Category 4:

Please submit the original ticket by June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2009. Provide an invoice if the total fare is not noted on the ticket (or is difficult to read).

**Applications to:** Susan Spearey, Department of English Language and Literature, Brock University, 500 Glenridge Avenue, St Catharines ON L2S 3A1

**FINANCIAL REPORT****October 1, 2008 – March 31, 2009****Balance (September 30, 2008) 9,016****Income****Commonwealth Foundation Grant 2031****CFHSS (Roundtable) 250****Memberships 3280****Bank interest 3****Adjustments 151\*****Total Income 5715****Expenditures****2008 Conference 1058\*\*****Postage/supplies 2006-2008 264****IATS fees 213****Bank fees 10****Total Expenditures 1545****Balance (March 31, 2009) 13,186****\* return of unspent funds advanced for CACLAS party 2008****\*\* reimbursement of travel expenses for one of keynote speakers****Susan Spearey  
Secretary-treasurer, CACLALS**



**“Spectres and Speculations: Capital, Nations, Texts”**

**CACLALS**

**May 23-5, Carleton University, Ottawa**

**Conference Program**

**Saturday, May 23**

**9-10:15am (SA 415) Textual Africa**

**Chair: Alessandra Capperdoni** (Simon Fraser)

**Asha Jeffers** (McMaster) “The Question of Cross-Cultural Women’s Solidarity in Sol T Plaatje’s *Mhudi*”

**Neil ten Kortenaar** (Toronto) “The Nation and the Problem of Succession: Achebe's *Arrow of God* Revisited.”

**Kerry Vincent** (Acadia) “Parallel Lives: Representation and Cosmopolitanism in Helon Habila’s *Measuring Time*”

**10:30-11:45am (SA415) The Indian Residential School Truth and Reconciliation Commission: A Panel Discussion**

**Guy Beauregard** (National Tsing Hua University)

**Jonathan Dewar** (Aboriginal Healing Foundation)

**Jo-Ann Episkenew** (First Nations University)

**Ashok Mathur** (Thompson Rivers)

**Julie McGonegal** (Tasmania)

**Roger Simon** (OISE/Toronto)

**Pauline Wakeham** (Western Ontario)

**12-1 pm CACLALS Executive meeting**

**1:00-2:30pm (LA C164) Keynote Address:**

**Of Travels, Accents, and Epistemologies:  
Notes on Postcolonial Meta-theory**

**Tejumola Olaniyan** (Wisconsin Madison) is the co-editor of *African Literature: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory* (with Ato Quayson; Blackwell 2007), author of *Arrest the*

*Music!: Fela and His Rebel Art and Politics* (Indiana UP 2004); *Scars of Conquest/Masks of Resistance: The Invention of Cultural Identities in African, African American and Caribbean Drama* (Oxford UP 1995); and co-editor of *African Drama and Performance* (Indiana UP 2004).

(CACLALS gratefully acknowledges the generous financial support of the Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences for this event)

## 2:45-4pm (SA415) South Asia

**Chair: Summer Pervez** (Fraser Valley)

**Prasad Bidaye** (Toronto) “Spectres of Monarchy: Revisiting the Queen’s Coronation in Raja Rao’s *The Serpent and the Rope*”

**Paulomi Chakraborty** (Alberta) “Love and Hate in Bollywood: Hindu-Muslim Couple Formations since 1990”

**Hajer Ben Gouider Trabelsi** (Montréal) “Re-writing History, Art and the Re-imagining of Community in Michael Ondaatje’s *Anil’s Ghost*”

## 2:45-4:20pm (SA406) Multicultural Canada

**Chair: David Jefferess** (UBC-Okanagan)

**Heidi Butler** (New Brunswick) “Imagining the Transcultural: Yann Martel’s *Life of Pi*”

**Jennifer Williams** (Kwantlen) and **Susan Holloway** (Windsor) “*Venous Hum: A Satiric Bite on the Colonization of Canadian Immigrants*”

**Jennifer Delisle** (Alberta) “‘Something that Could Anchor Her’: Diaspora and Genealogical Nostalgia”

**Gabrielle Etcheverry** (Carleton) “An Unearthed Text: The Many Resurrections of *La ciudad* by Gonzalo Millán”

## 4:30-6pm (SA415) Reading by Armand Ruffo and Cyril Dabydeen

**Armand Garnet Ruffo** is an Ojibwe poet, playwright, and scholar. He is the author of *Grey Owl: The Mystery of Archie Belaney*, a creative biography, and *At Geronimo’s Grave*. He is currently working on *Norval Morrisseau: Man Changing Into Thunderbird*, a creative biography of the renowned Ojibwe painter.

**Cyril Dabydeen**, originally from Guyana, has written over 17 books of poetry and fiction. His 2005 novel *Drums of My Flesh* won the Guyana Prize for Fiction. His most recent volume of poetry is *Uncharted Heart* (2008).

### Sunday, May 24

#### 9-10:15am (SA515) South Asia

**Chair: Hajer Ben Gouider Trabelsi** (Montréal)

**Caroline Herbert** (Concordia) “Spectrality and the City: Reading Bombay in Vikram Chandra's *Sacred Games*”

**Rose Barker** (Queen's) “World War Two Nostalgia and Amitav Ghosh's *Glass Palace*”

**Adele Wilson** (Toronto) “The Scriptural Economy of Sara Suleri's *Meatless Days*”

#### 9-10:15am (SA403) Images of Africa

**Chair: Margery Fee** (UBC-Vancouver)

**Paul Ugor** (Alberta) “Urban Revitalization and Youth Identity Politics in Nigeria: Social Struggles in Nollywood”

**Madelaine Hron** (Wilfrid Laurier) “Fictions about Rwanda: Or, How to Exorcise the Spectres of Neocolonial Guilt & Shame via Literary Models”

**Cheryl Lousley** (Leeds/Wilfrid Laurier) “Spectres of Hunger, Gestures of Justice: Public Memory, Popular Culture, and the 1984-85 Ethiopian Famine”

#### 10:30-11:45am (SA403) Canadian Aboriginal Literature

**Chair: Jennifer Delisle** (Alberta)

**Robyn Green** (Carleton) “Reconciliatory Pedagogy: Trauma, Reconciliation and Education in Richard Van Camp's *The Lesser Blessed*”

**Azalea Barriese and Susan Gingell** (Saskatchewan) “Listening to Bones that Sing: Orality, Spirituality, Gynocentricity, and Hybridity in Louise Halfe's *Blue Marrow*”

**Sylvie Vranckx** (Free University of Brussels) “Fighting the ‘Terrorism on Native Children’: The ‘Scoop-up’ Phenomenon as Cultural Genocide in Lee Maracle's *Daughters Are*”

*Forever*”

**10:30-11:45am (SA515) Black Atlantics**

**Chair: Terry Goldie** (York)

**Noon Park** (Toronto) “Traacherous Inheritance: Intergenerational Trauma and the Symbolic Resurrection of Slavery in Dionne Brand’s *At the Full and Change of Moon*”

**Paul Barrett** (Queen’s) “‘I’m Running For My Life!’: Tensions of Movement and Mobility in Austin Clarke’s *The Painted Hoe and More*”

**John C. Ball** (New Brunswick) “Oceanic Capital: London, Atlantic Slavery, and the Speculative Text in Two 21st-Century Canadian Historical Novels”

**12 noon – 1pm (SA 403) Book Launch**

Fortieth Anniversary Special Issue of *ARIEL* (Pamela McCallum, editor)

**Julie McGonegal** *Imagining Justice: The Politics of Postcolonial Forgiveness and Reconciliation* (McGill-Queen’s)

**Don Randall** *David Malouf* (Manchester)

Refreshments provided courtesy of *ARIEL*

**1-2:30pm (LA A602) Tenth Annual Aboriginal Roundtable**

Theme: *Art, Artist and Reconciliation*

**Expected Speakers:**

**Jonathan Dewar** (Aboriginal Healing Foundation)

**Janice Acoose** (First Nations University)

**Jesse Archibald-Barber** (First Nations University)

**Jo-Ann Episkenew** (First Nations University)

**Kristina Fagan** (Saskatchewan)

**Heather Macfarlane** (Carleton)

**Sam McKegney** (Queen’s)

**Keavy Martin** (Alberta)

**Deanna Reder** (Simon Fraser)

**Armand Ruffo** (Carleton)

**Bruce Sinclair** (Canada Council)

(CACLALS gratefully acknowledges the generous financial support of the Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences for this event)

**2:45-4pm (SA403) Textual Caribbean**

**Chair: Pamela McCallum** (Calgary)

**Shalini Khan** (Queen's) "Ruin as Metaphor in Lawrence Scott's *Night Calypso*"

**Michelle Peek** (Guelph) "Buried Roots: Self, Land and Home in Michelle Cliff's *Abeng*"

**Veronica Austen** (Wilfrid Laurier) "Enforcing National Borders in Edwidge Danticat's *Brother, I'm Dying*"

**2:45-4:20pm (SA515) Canada in the World**

**Chair: Cynthia Sugars** (Ottawa)

**Laura Moss** (British Columbia-Vancouver) "Why National Literatures Are Not Finished, Yet"

**David Jefferess** (British Columbia-Okanagan) "The World Needs More Canada? Global Citizenship, Civility, and the Role of Race."

**Owen Percy** (Calgary) "Governing the Nation Generally: The GG Awards as Literary History"

**Brenna Gray** (New Brunswick) "The End of Irony: Douglas Coupland's Response to September 11"

**4:30-5:30pm (SA403) Book Launches**

**Madelaine Hron** *Translating Pain: Immigrant Suffering in Literature & Culture*  
(Toronto)

**Jo-Ann Episkenew** *Taking Back Our Spirits: Indigenous Literature, Public Policy, and Healing* (Manitoba)

**Cynthia Sugars and Gerry Turcotte** *Unsettled Remains: Canadian Literature and the Postcolonial Gothic* (Wilfrid Laurier).

**5-7pm President's Reception**

**7:30pm CACLALS dinner**  
Siam Kitchen, 1050 Bank St

**Monday, May 25**

**9-10:15am (SA403) Going Global**

**Chair: Don Randall** (Bilkent)

**Aine McGlynn** (Toronto) “Planet of Slumdog Millionaires”

**Max Haiven** (McMaster) “The Dammed of the Earth: Roy, King and the X-Men”

**Jaime Denike** (Queen’s) “Fall into Oblivion’: Sympathetic Attachment as Self-Dissolution in Coetzee’s *Waiting for the Barbarians*”

**9-10:15am (SA402) Canadian Haunting**

**Chair: Emily Johansen** (Wilfrid Laurier)

**Marlene Goldman** (Toronto) “Dispossession and the Rule of Primogeniture in John Steffler’s *The Afterlife of George Cartwright*”

**Atef Laouyene** (Ottawa) “Hauntropologies: Arab Canadians and the Spectre of Marginality”

**Susan Billingham** (Nottingham) “‘Of being a place and its erasure’: Trish Salah’s *Wanting in Arabic*”

**10:30-11:45am (SA416) Author Meets Critics Panel Session**

**Discussing Julia Emberley’s *Defamiliarizing the Aboriginal: Cultural Practices and Decolonization in Canada***

**Convenors: Jill Didur** (Concordia) and **Susan Gingell** (Saskatchewan)

Speakers:

**Julia Emberley** (Western Ontario)

**Terry Goldie** (York)

**Deanna Reder** (Simon Fraser)

**Jennifer Andrews** (New Brunswick)

**10:30-11:45am (SA402) Asia**

**Chair: John Ball** (New Brunswick)

**Joshua Prescott** (New Brunswick) “Do we always end up where we really belong?: The Burden of Tradition in Vassanji’s *The Assassin’s Song*”

**Summer Pervez** (Fraser Valley) “The Spectre of War and the Growth of Terror in Khaled Hosseini’s *A Thousand Splendid Suns*”

**Don Randall** (Bilkent) “Hosseini’s *A Thousand Splendid Suns*: Writing Toward a New Afghanistan”

**1:00-2:30pm (LA C164) Keynote Address:**

**Death Worlds Where Bad Things Happen:  
Contemporary Settler Violence Against Aboriginal Peoples**

**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).

**2:45-4pm (SA403) Aboriginal Literature**

**Chair: Susan Gingell** (Saskatchewan)

**Jesse Archibald-Barber** (First Nations University) “Gambler Myths in Indigenous Traditions and Popular Culture”

**Rebecca Babcock** (Dalhousie) “Blood and Black Humour: Subversive Strategies in Eden Robinson’s “Queen of the North” and *Monkey Beach*”

**Kate Higginson** (Carleton) “Performing Creative Repatriation: *Truth & Bright Water* and Kainayssini Imanistaisiwa”

**2:45-4pm (SA402) Capital and Labour and Texts**

**Chair: Laura Moss** (UBC-Vancouver)

**Philip Loosemore** (Toronto) “Imaginative Force and the Critique of Capitalism in Janet Frame’s *The Carpathians*”

**Sarah Brouillette** (MIT) “Postindustrial labour and Aravind Adiga’s *White Tiger*”

**Alessandra Capperdoni** (Simon Fraser) ““Black like whom?” Questions of Capital in Black Canadian Literature”

**3-4:30pm (Southam Theatre B) ACCUTE Keynote Address:**

**In the Shadow of War: Translation Across Genres**

**Wai Chee Dimock** (Yale) is author of *Through Other Continents: American Literature Across Deep Time* (2006) and co-editor of *Shades of the Planet: American Literature as World Literature* (2007)

**4: 30pm (SA402) CACLALS AGM**

**MEMBER NEWS AND PUBLICATIONS**

**Helen Hoy** has published “‘No Woman Is Natural’: The (Re)production of Race, Gender, and Sexuality in Suzette Mayr’s *Moon Honey*.” In *Wild Words: Stories from Alberta*. Ed. Donna Coates and George Melnyk. Athabasca UP, 2009.

Following on the heels of the launch of volume 1 at CACLALS in 2008, **Laura Moss** and **Cynthia Sugars** would like to announce the publication of the second volume of *Canadian Literature in English: Texts and Contexts* (Pearson Education/ Penguin Academics 2009). This volume covers poetry, fiction, and non-fictional prose in social and cultural context from 1920-2008. This book differs from other anthologies of Canadian literature in its inclusion of substantial contextual material; its historical emphasis on the production of Canadian literature; its interdisciplinary approach; its emphasis on intertextual dialogue between selections; its inclusion of popular culture texts, such as song lyrics; and its inclusion of a substantial representation of Canadian First Nations writing within a general Canadian Literature anthology.

**Diana Brydon** was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada in Fall 2008. Her co-edited book, *Renegotiating Community: Interdisciplinary Perspectives, Global Contexts* (2008) is now available in paperback from UBC Press. It includes chapters by CACLALS members **Jessica Schagerl** and **Stephen Slemon**. She presented a keynote address, "Globalization and Higher Education: Working toward Cognitive Justice," at an invitational workshop on "The Scope of Interdisciplinarity" sponsored by Athabaska University in November 2008 and a revised version of this talk at the University of Sao Paulo, Brazil in January 2009. Her new research team, "Building Global Democracy," presented on their project at the World Social Forum in Belem, Brazil in January 2009. Information on



this international, interdisciplinary project may be found at [www.buildingglobaldemocracy.org](http://www.buildingglobaldemocracy.org).

**Cynthia Sugars** and **Gerry Turcotte** would like to announce the publication of a new collection of critical essays, *Unsettled Remains: Canadian Literature and the Postcolonial Gothic* (Wilfrid Laurier, 2009). Contributors to the book, in addition to the two editors, include Jennifer Andrews, Andrea Cabajsky, Marlene Goldman, Jennifer Henderson, Brian Johnson, Atef Laouyene, Lindy Ledohowski, Shelley Kulperger, and Herb Wylie.

**Guy Beauregard** (National Tsing Hua University, Taiwan) has helped to co-edit a special issue on the topic of "Asian Canadian Studies" recently published as *Canadian Literature* 199 (Winter 2008); his interview with Roy Miki on the topic "After Redress" will appear in *Canadian Literature* in its forthcoming "TransCanada" special issue, guest edited by Smaro Kamboureli. Starting August 1, he will be working as an associate professor at National Taiwan University in Taipei.

**Neil ten Kortenaar** has been appointed director of the Centre for Comparative Literature at the University of Toronto.

**Craig Tapping** has an almost immediately forthcoming publication: "no longer a pronoun: reading Daphne Marlatt," the introductory essay to Daphne Marlatt's new chapbook "At The River's Mouth: Writing Migrations," to be published in April, 2009. The chapbook is described on its wrapper as "a lecture that blends words with water. Marlatt tells of her multiple migrations, both literal and literary, back to Steveston B.C. Marlatt herself has participated in many collaborative projects, and so much of her lecture focuses on the idea of interconnectivity. She proposes the existence of a creative current that carries us all."

This is part of the Vancouver Island University/Ralph Gustafson Distinguished Poets Lecture Series. The Gustafson Poetry Trust and VIU's Institute for Coastal Research publish a chapbook annually, focussed on Canadian Poetry and Poetics. Others in the series include:

*Songs Without Price* by Tom Wayman (2007)

*A Kind of Perfect Speech* by Dionne Brand (2006)

*Poetry and the Sacred* by Don Domanski (2005)

*Wild Language* by Robert Bringhurst (2003)

All are available from the Institute for Coastal Research, Vancouver Island University through the website: <http://www.viu.ca/icr/>

**BOOK REVIEWS**

Editors: John Ball and Julia Emberley

(Note: With this issue of *Chimo*, Julia Emberley takes over as book review editor. However, the former editor, John Ball, edited the first three of these reviews, including Susan Gingell's review of Julia's book.)

**Julia Emberley, *Defamiliarizing the Aboriginal: Cultural Practices and Decolonization*.**

**Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2007. 319 pp. \$65.00 Can.**

**Review by Susan Gingell, University of Saskatchewan**

When I began drafting this review of Julia Emberley's *Defamiliarizing the Aboriginal: Cultural Practices and Decolonization in Canada*, my sense of the book's importance was tied principally to its unearthing of the roots of violence against Aboriginal women and children. In the front of my mind were the kinds of brutality horrifically exemplified by the serial butchery that Robert "Willie" Pickton engaged in on his Vancouver-area pig farm, the multiple murders John Martin Crawford committed at various sites in Alberta and Saskatchewan, and the devastation of Aboriginal families across generations that was wrought by the agents of Church and State responsible for the residential school experience in Canada. As I wrote, however, a number of related stories that were circulating in Aboriginal and women's activist circles in Saskatchewan and in local and national news media made starkly clear that in no sense is such violence relegated to the past by the convictions of Pickton and Martin, the apology to residential school survivors, and the increasingly troubled attempts to launch Canada's own Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

The first story reached me late the afternoon of 8 January 2009, in an email to members of iskwewuk e-wichiwitochik/Women Walking Together, a Saskatoon- and now internet-based activist group with a dual mandate: to support the families and friends of those Aboriginal women in Saskatchewan who are among the more than five hundred Indigenous women who have (been) disappeared or been murdered in the last thirty years or so; and to engage in public education activities around the issue. The email bore a depressingly familiar message: yet another Aboriginal woman had gone missing in Saskatchewan, this time in the Choiceland area. A second email arrived later that day from another member of iskwewuk, whose own aunt had disappeared in 2007 and, despite a determined search, remained unfound. This message reported that the body of the woman publicly reported missing earlier that day had been discovered. The cause of death was yet to be determined. Then on 17 January the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix* headlined the murder trial in the case of Victoria Jane Nashacappo, 21, and reported a few pages later on police seeking

tips in the 1973 disappearance of 53-year-old Caroline Burns, a woman of Aboriginal descent.

On 26 February, the Saskatoon paper headline read “Kids in Crisis,” reporting that the Saskatchewan Children’s Advocate, Marvin Bernstein, had sent to the Saskatchewan legislature his report entitled “Breach of Trust: An Investigation into Foster Home Overcrowding in the Saskatoon Service Centre” (see [www.thestarphoenix.com/pdf/FHOC\\_Report\\_022509.pdf](http://www.thestarphoenix.com/pdf/FHOC_Report_022509.pdf)). Bernstein’s document is prefaced by a warning: “This report contains strong language and explicit content. It is not suitable for children.” Multiple accounts of gut-wrenching child-on-child and foster parent-on-child violence contained in this report underlie some Ministry of Social Services case workers’ reported fears that they are “removing children from unsafe homes, only to place them in unsafe overcrowded foster homes” (33). Of course, not all the children in foster care are maltreated and not all in Saskatoon are of Aboriginal descent, but many are, as is suggested by the Chief of the Saskatoon Tribal Council’s response to the report. The *StarPhoenix* quotes Felix Thomas as saying, “These report findings confirm the suspicions that our children are not better served, but in fact are in greater jeopardy, when placed into the care of the minister” (A7).

I have tried to recreate something of the context of living in this persistent storm of events to make clear one of the reasons for making Emberley’s book the subject of the upcoming Author Meets Critic Forum at the CACLALS 2009 conference. My intent is also to explain both the sense of urgency about the situation that *Defamiliarizing the Aboriginal* addresses and my conviction that its main findings need to be made available in a more broadly accessible form than the scholarly book. Emberley’s is in the main an elaborated Foucauldian genealogical project that examines both (a) the writing of European men’s putative origins in the always illusory Primordial Father of Freudian theory, and (b) the colonial state’s installing of the European bourgeois family as the ideal form of social governance in the allegedly private sphere.

The major contributions of *Defamiliarizing the Aboriginal* are two. The first is to demonstrate in rich and engaging detail how, to the gross and too frequently fatal detriment of Aboriginal women and children, ideologies of race, class, and gender operated in the micrological political arena of the family in concert with the instituting and maintenance of racist, patriarchal political governance in the macrological public sphere. The second is to demonstrate how Aboriginal artists are intervening in the Canadian imaginary by abrogating and appropriating the semiotic apparatuses through which colonialism produced the figure of the Aboriginal that has proved so lethal to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples.

The grounding of Emberley’s work in European philosophy, sociology, and political and literary theory, while producing a sophisticated account of her subject for academics—and I do not for a minute wish to depreciate the value of this achievement—inevitably leads her to use a vocabulary and a writing style that would surely be alienating

to the majority of those women whose lives are addressed in the book. Even the unfolding of Emberley's argument is in at least one key dimension problematically structured. Readers uninitiated into psychoanalytic theory will in all likelihood remain puzzled after reading chapter one, "An Origin Story of No Origins: Biopolitics and Race in the Geographies of the Maternal Body," about the reference in this chapter's main title. Such readers have to wait for an explanation until they encounter chapter two's discussion of secular European Enlightenment stories initiating the concept of the virtuous savage as the infantile but noble roots of European masculinity, a process that resulted in the dehistoricizing of the figure of the Aboriginal, "rendering the myth of Europe's infancy rootless . . . and [leaving] the European imaginary with an origin story of no origins" (77). Moreover, as Emberley makes clear, the myth of the vanishing savage races engendered a heightened anxiety for Europeans who understood their origins to be in Aboriginal Man.

Taking a materialist approach to the body and embodied power, Emberley uses a performative method of analysis that she identifies as an "analytics of dis/memberment" (3). In the context of bringing together examples from various media of the ways in which the discourses of the family have been written on and through the bodies of Aboriginal people in Canada, Emberley makes visible a number of concealed connections. Among them are those between the allegedly separate public and private spheres and the coincident work of both coercive and ideological state apparatuses and of cultural production to advance settler interests and destroy Indigenous kinship relations, along with the social formations those relations worked to constitute. Her method of arriving at what Gerald Vizenor would call a post-Indian state equally entails the unmaking or disassembling of the allegedly fixed and immutable truths of the two figures key to her analysis: Aboriginal Man and Bourgeois Woman. The performative quality of her analysis takes its most creative and overtly feminist form in what Emberley calls the "biotextual reassemblage" of chapter three. Arguing that the wounded, dismembered, and disabled body requires different representational practices than those employed by medicine, law, industrial capitalism, and education to discipline the Aboriginal body, she devises a transactional strategy that brings various materials into contact with one another so as to "disrupt their apparent regimes of knowing and seeing" (93). She confronts the spectre of the Primordial Father in one of its most potent foundational texts, Freud's *Totem and Taboo*, by dismembering it in order to patch strategically selected passages, reproduced in italics rather than cited with page numbers according to academic protocol, into her rebellious daughter's deconstruction of the family romance.

*Defamiliarizing the Aboriginal* provides a compelling account of the link between the imposition of the European bourgeois family on Indigenous people in Canada and violence against Aboriginal women and children. Emberley makes the link by duly attending to the Indian Act and its amendments and other institutional means, most notably the residential school system and forced conversion to Christianity that in their overlapping ways sought to destroy and replace indigenous kinship relations. However, as a work of cultural criticism, her book focuses most extensively on representational practices. Mindful of not adding the epistemological violence of a mono-disciplinary approach to the various forms

of physical, spiritual, psychological, and cultural violence that Aboriginal women and children experienced in colonial times and continue to endure in the neo-colonial Canadian state, Emberley draws on a broad range of visual and print textual materials, including the murals of the British Columbia legislative building's lower rotunda; family portraits and their inscriptions from the digital archive of British Columbia's Royal Museum and the Mary T.S. Schäffer collection in Banff's Whyte Museum; film such as Robert Flaherty's *Nanook of the North*, an advertisement (following Anne McClintock) for Pears' soap, and fiction such as Pat Barker's *Regeneration* trilogy. Over against such colonizing representations, Emberley sets life writing such as Yvonne Johnson and Rudy Wiebe's *Stolen Life: The Journey of a Cree Woman*, Jane Ash Poitras's mixed media work *Transparent Parents Singing Hearts*, Nadia Myre's beading over of the Indian Act, and Tomson Highway's *Kiss of the Fur Queen*. The latter is also counterdiscursively positioned in relation to a television melodrama, *Where the Spirit Lives*, scripted by Keith Ross Leckie, which Emberley maintains reveals the impact of residential school violence in the 1930s in part by also demonizing the lesbian teacher in the movie.

The book's rich account of colonizing and decolonizing cultural practices is inherently political, but an overtly activist vision informs Emberley's urging that affiliative political kinships be forged to participate in the kind of transnational "domestic politics" to which M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty in *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures* have called their fellow feminists. Emberley's own concern is specifically to counter not just the already existing results of what she calls "colonial domicile," but also "some of the more dangerous and virulent revivals of 'the family' in fundamentalist contexts, including, of course, Canada and the United States" (237). The "family" that fundamentalists seek to revivify Emberley understands as "nothing short of a myth used to naturalize heterosexual reproductive relations" (47) and as the site of what she points out is a mode of colonization rarely attended to in postcolonial studies.

Hope that the dire situation that Emberley's book speaks to can in fact be ameliorated lies not only in the politically fired artistry of Aboriginal cultural workers that *Defamiliarizing the Aboriginal* documents, but also in the kind of elective political kinship groups that Emberley envisions as desirably supplanting the European bourgeois family and sees as requisite for transnational political work. Exemplars of such groups are the Saskatoon-based iskwewuk e-wichiwitochik; the organizing committee of the 2008 Regina conference that took as its focus the missing sisters of Canada, Ciudad Juarez, and other parts of Mexico; and the Congress Committee to End Indifference to the Disappearance of Aboriginal Women Now (CCEI-DAWN). The latter group was founded at the instigation of Queen's University professor Jacqueline Davies and OISE graduate student June Starkey after the partly CACLALS-sponsored showing, at the 2007 Congress of the Social Sciences and Humanities, of *Finding Dawn*, Christine Welsh's film about the disappearances and murders of over five hundred Aboriginal women in Canada in the previous thirty years. Furthermore, in addressing Emberley's book in its Author Meets Critic forum at the upcoming 2009 Congress, CACLALS continues its tradition of paying sus-

tained attention to the decolonizing work so necessary to the instituting of just relations between Aboriginal peoples and the newcomers in Canada.

**Don Randall. *David Malouf. Contemporary World Writers. Manchester University Press, 2007. 222 pages. \$26.95.***

### **Review by John Eustace, Acadia University**

Over the years, I've found books from the Contemporary World Writers series useful in both my research and my teaching. They tend to offer what series editor John Thieme describes as "authoritative introductions" to contemporary writers, introductions more often than not informed by current approaches and debates in postcolonial studies. But they also go beyond their introductory imperatives, making original contributions to the contemporary scholarship on the authors they consider. Don Randall's contribution to the series, *David Malouf*, is no exception in this regard. While providing comprehensive treatments of Malouf's significant works, Randall navigates his own course through the works of the sometimes controversial Australian writer to reveal an evolving "ethics of subjectivity" (29) at its core.

After an introductory chapter that situates Malouf and his evolving ethics of subjectivity within a continuum of literary influences – Kipling, White, and Coetzee – Randall begins to show how Malouf's poetry prefigures his later and more complex negotiations of subjectivity in prose. To this purpose, he traces the author's "image repertoire" (14) through a good number of poems, focusing on his concerns with edges and margins, place, body, transformations, genealogy, Aboriginality, and the erotic. And the subsequent chapters dealing with Malouf's fiction do indeed rediscover this repertoire in various forms as they trace the author's evolving sense of the subject.

Despite its importance to the rest of the book in laying this groundwork, however, this is also the book's weakest chapter. Randall is clearly capable of handling the poetry well, as his most thorough and satisfying reading of the erotic in "The Crab Feast" near the chapter's end attests. So I would attribute the weakness in this instance to a combination of factors: in part, to the seemingly impossible task of treating several volumes of poetic work in the space of 17 pages (a problem he contends with again when treating several volumes of short stories in the penultimate, and second weakest chapter); in part, to the introductory project of cataloguing the repertoire of images; and in part, to the preliminary nature of the images themselves.

Randall's best and most original work lies in his treatment of Malouf's novels. He begins with a chapter on Malouf's early, first-person narratives, "The Narratives of the 'I'", treating them chronologically before breaking with chronology to read his final first-person narrative, the 1986 autobiography *12 Edmondstone Street*. The chronological

breach makes sense because the autobiography speaks to the unifying principle behind the early novels, the “quest for authorship” and the negotiation of self through writing and language (32). In the first novel, *Johnno* (1975), Randall identifies the beginnings of this negotiation, asserting that, “for Malouf, the ‘I’ confirms itself by writing itself into being; it is inseparable from acts of writing” (31). His subsequent reading of *An Imaginary Life* (1978) extends this consideration of the subject and writing by considering Ovid’s encounter with and transformation by the other in the person of the wild boy of Tomis on the margins of empire. If the writer’s encounter with otherness is a necessity to situating self in the world in *An Imaginary Life*, that situation of self is necessarily troubled by the limits of language’s symbolic exchange. And it is troubled further, according to Randall, in the postmodern narrative *Child’s Play* (1981), in which “Malouf strains the ordering power of the ‘I’ to the breaking point” (69) through the figure of the terrorist. The shift away from the first-person narrative that follows in the chronology of Malouf’s fiction – flagged by a new chapter, here – is a shift to subjects negotiating selfhood in the more complex and heterogeneous systems of exchange that Randall characterizes as “multiple worlds” (83). He examines *Fly Away Peter* (1982) and *Harland’s Half Acre* (1984) as texts that inaugurate this more complex notion of the subject as a product of movement and exchange in particularly postcolonial contexts.

The three subsequent chapters – individual treatments of Malouf’s last three novels, *The Great World* (1990), *Remembering Babylon* (1993), and *The Conversations at Curlow Creek* (1996) – pursue this course further, giving one the sense by their conclusion that Malouf has articulated a fully formed ethics of subjectivity. In *The Great World*, Randall explores the exchange between individual and community that come about as a function of Australia’s traumatic experience of the Second World War. Acknowledging the critical controversy surrounding *Remembering Babylon* and its problematic hybrid Gemmy Fairley, he discovers the intense genealogical concerns and ethics of memory animating identity formation (and, perhaps, criticism of Malouf’s representations) in the exchanges between individual and nation. And in *The Conversations at Curlow Creek*, he articulates Malouf’s tacit acceptance of the contingencies and contradictions necessarily inhering in all such exchanges. A quotation from the concluding chapter aptly sums up what Randall sees as Malouf’s endpoint on subjectivity:

The category of subject must be posited, as a useful fiction, in any given moment of experience, but the subject only sustains its relationship with living being through encounter, connection, and exchange with instances of the other, the not-I, and through the transformations thereby provoked. If I am to live, I must change; if I am to change, it must be through you, repeatedly through you, always through you – this briefly summarises Malouf’s ethics of subjectivity. (192)

Overall, Randall’s work fulfils the promise of the Contemporary World Writers series, providing an authoritative, if at times stylistically dense and opaque, introduction. If there is a weakness in Randall’s book, it is one inherent in the critical rubric of the series

itself. The basic framework of all the texts in the Contemporary World Writers series – wherein the body consists of one chapter called “Contexts and Intertexts,” followed by several chapters of original criticism on an author’s works, and ending with a chapter called “Critical Overview and Conclusion” – goes against common sense (or, at least, a common practice that I find more sensible). The survey of the criticism or “Critical Overview” belongs with the “Contexts and Intertexts,” which is, in essence, the introduction to the author and her or his influences. Pairing the introduction to the author with an introduction to the critical reception of the works would create a more meaningful context for the critical interventions at the heart of the text. Placed at the end of the text, the “Critical Overview” comes off as mostly redundant. That Randall and, indeed, all other contributors to the series have followed that misguided rubric, while regrettable, is not surprising. Nor, in the end, does it significantly diminish what is otherwise some fine work in this book and others in the series.

**Eleanor Ty and Christl Verduyn, eds. *Asian Canadian Writing Beyond Autoethnography*.**

**Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2008. 338 pages. \$38.95.**

**Review by Lily Cho, University of Western Ontario**

In the opening essay of this collection, Smaro Kamboureli suggests that the preposition *beyond* “is marked by optimism – perhaps even faith, given the function of *beyond* as a noun – that there is a (better?) space we can reach and inhabit as critics” (32). She proposes that “the adverb *how* is more modest; it doesn’t assume that there is a beyond” (32). Kamboureli’s use of this adverb as a way of responding to the exhortation to move beyond autoethnography captures much of the work of the essays in this volume. Together, they grapple with the problem of how critics and writers can engage critically with autoethnography while sustaining a sense of optimism for the possibilities of a critical space beyond. In that sense, the editors of this volume, Eleanor Ty and Christl Verduyn, offer an important and thoughtful way of looking at Asian Canadian writing through a critical discussion of minority writing, autobiography, and ethnography. Ty and Verduyn’s careful introduction to this volume not only clarifies the question of autoethnography for contemporary literary critical practice, but also offers a thorough mapping of the field of Asian Canadian writing itself.

The essays in this volume are divided into four parts covering issues of theory and praxis, genre, body politics, and global affiliations. They include contributions from Canadian critics such as Kristina Keyser, Eva C. Karpinski, Christine Kim, Larissa Lai, Miriam Pirbhai, and Joanne Saul. The contributions from critics writing from institutional locations outside of Canada, such as those from Pilar Cuder-Dominguez, Paul Lai, and Christine Lorre, offer a useful perspective on Asian Canadian writing beyond the nation. Finally, contributions from Ming Tiampo and Tara Lee consider texts that move beyond



Asian Canadian writing and into the realms of visual culture.

According to Ty and Verduyn, “Going ‘beyond’ autoethnography or critical ethnography means moving away from questions of ‘authenticity,’ essentialist identity politics, and a view of a cultural group that is static, rather than evolving” (4-5). Each of the essays in this volume takes up this challenge of considering the restless dynamism of Asian Canadian writing. Examining the paradoxical ways in which Asian Canadian identities can be multiply fractured and yet still cogent and whole, these essays admirably demonstrate how, as Paul Lai observes with reference to Fred Wah’s concept of “faking it,” much of the Asian Canadian writing considered in this volume “is meant to make up meaning, to remake meanings about the things we think we know” (67). It is precisely the risk of not knowing in advance what constitutes “Asian Canadian” that makes the critical essays in this volume so exciting. Lorre’s essay on Ying Chen illuminates how Chen’s writing grafts together Chinese philosophy and European modernism, which constantly challenges received notions of Chineseness. Pirbhai considers the possibility of an ethnos beyond the nation by uncovering a global citizenship in Shani Mootoo’s *Cereus Blooms at Night*. Cuder-Dominguez and Lee both move the discussion of ethnicity into the realm of the cyborg in order to show how writers such as Hiromi Goto, Larissa Lai, and Laiwan push notions of ethnic subjectivity beyond notions of the human.

Out of these challenges, the question of representation, and particularly representation within global capital, remains. Both Larissa Lai’s and Christine Kim’s contributions to this volume engage with the problem of autoethnography that has been put under pressure by the imperatives of literary marketing. In her reading of Evelyn Lau’s *Runaway* and Wayson Choy’s *Jade Peony*, Lai argues that Lau’s text risks being subject to “oppressive consumption” because of its persistent desire to name trauma (94). On the other hand, she suggests that Choy’s text allows for trauma to remain unarticulated, concluding, “Insofar as Canada presents itself as a market, an exporter, and a favorable cultural site of overseas Asian investment, it is important that its cultural workers continue to attend to both the articulable and the inarticulable that roil beneath” the “seeming comfort of [the nation’s] seamless surface” (110). Similarly, Kim examines the differential reception of Lai’s *Salt Fish Girl* and Mootoo’s *Cereus Blooms at Night*, suggesting that the latter has been more easily incorporated into literary institutional structures because it does not produce a fractured representation of race within the nation. She proposes that the “larger struggle in the reading practices articulated in relation to texts like Mootoo’s and Lai’s, then, is not just to create a space within a cultural field, but to try to revise the colonial logic that structures it” (171-72). Focusing upon the work of small presses in relation to these processes, Kim suggests, allows for an understanding of how to resist that colonial logic. The essays by Lai and Kim both point to another horizon beyond autoethnography that this volume gestures towards but does not explicitly name: the space of global capital. The construction of idealized ethnic subjects for “oppressive consumption,” which these two essays track, highlights the urgency of thinking through the intersection of ethnicity and materiality. In their discussions of psychic trauma, voice, and representation, both essays work to identify the perniciousness of global capital’s remaking of Asianness.

All of the essays in this volume, in their diverse and accomplished ways, admirably demonstrate the potential power of moving beyond autoethnography and towards the uncertain futures of what Kamboureli calls “the provisionality of our critical acts” (49).

**McKegney, Sam. *Magic Weapons: Aboriginal Writers Remaking Community after Residential School*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2007. 241 pages. \$28.95.**

**Review by Jo-Ann Episkenew, First Nations University of Canada.**

I recently listened to a documentary on the life of legendary bluesman B.B. King. When King first appeared before a white audience in the 1960s, he received a standing ovation before even singing a note. Never believing that he would see a day when white people would appreciate his story as told through his music, King was overcome with emotion. Given the context of the times, I was not surprised at King’s response. Indeed, I know many Aboriginal people of King’s generation who today feel the same way about Canadians’ recent interest in residential school stories. Yet because of historical trauma, shame, and de-education, few residential school survivors will ever write their stories, and those who do are painfully aware that they speak not only for themselves but also for those who struggle to find their voice. Like those young white people who stood and applauded B.B. King in the late 1960s, Sam McKegney, a young white scholar, deems the literary survival narratives of residential schools worthy of critical attention. In *Magic Weapons*, he fearlessly sets out to theorize those narratives, positioning himself as “an ally” who “acknowledges the limits of her or his knowledge, but doesn’t cower beneath those limits or use them as a crutch” (45).

McKegney challenges non-Aboriginal readers to think of residential schools not as an Aboriginal problem, but as a Canadian problem. To that end, he contextualizes residential schools as but one component of the duly elected Government of Canada’s genocidal “Indian” policies that have continued since Confederation, albeit in different guises and always framed in the rhetoric of progress. Drawing on the work of Roland Chrisjohn and Sherri Young, McKegney directs us to shift our focus from the schools and the abuses that individual “monsters” perpetrated in them to the monstrous policies of Canada, thereby exposing the complicity of all Canadians. Although thorough and insightful, *Magic Weapons* is not a dispassionate analysis of Canada’s policies, the kind of analysis that government bureaucrats and policy analysts too often privilege. Given the atrocities that Canada’s “Indian” policies made possible, a dispassionate analysis of literary survival narratives would, in itself, constitute another monstrous act.

McKegney argues that Aboriginal literature is a “neglected resource” (180) that has the potential to aid Canadians to rethink and re-imagine Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal power re-

lationships. When the characters in Ursula LeGuin's "The Ones Who Walk Away From Omelas" learn that their prosperity was built on another's suffering, they are left with only two choices: denial or departure. Like the citizens of Omelas, Canadians inevitably experience pain upon learning that "Canada the Good," and by extension their happiness and prosperity, was built on Aboriginal peoples' suffering. McKegney, however, rejects LeGuin's binary and suggests that there are other options for engaging with this knowledge, other "strategies for ethical engagement" (41).

McKegney criticizes earlier scholars' approaches developed to avoid positioning white critics as authority figures and labels these approaches "strategies for ethical disengagement" (39). Although well-meaning, these strategies, McKegney argues, are ineffective. I agree with his strategies for ethical engagement but suggest that he might consider that the confidence he displays when advancing them might very well have come from the privilege that he possesses as a young, educated white male. Having said that, I am thankful for *Magic Weapons* and McKegney's confident arguments. When non-Aboriginal students suggest that the residential school survival narratives I teach either exaggerate or misrepresent reality, I can refer them to *Magic Weapons* and appropriate McKegney's authority and privilege. Students who doubt me—an Aboriginal woman and, accordingly, less knowledgeable than my white colleagues—will believe him. Clearly, we have a way to go in race relations.

McKegney applies his theories to works by Anthony Apakark Thrasher, Rita Joe, and Tomson Highway. His theories shed light on the healing aspects of literary survival narratives, arguing that they "promote a rethinking of residential schooling that refuses to be bound in the deterministic victimhood predicted by oppressive history" (177). By writing literary survival narratives and claiming "authorial agency," Aboriginal people are empowered through art.

Basil Johnston contributes an incredibly powerful and moving preface to *Magic Weapons* that illustrates how empowerment through art functions. Readers familiar with Johnston's memoir *Indian School Days* might respond to his preface in the same way that his loving wife Lucie did to his revelations: "Now, that explains a lot of things" (xv). Although a widely known and acclaimed public figure, Johnston suffered the lasting sense of shame, and subsequent isolation, that many residential school survivors experience:

I didn't realize until I read *Magic Weapons* that what Thrasher, Highway, Joe, and I had written about our confinement to an institution had a much wider and longer lasting influence in the country than we could have anticipated when we set down to write of our experiences. For bringing this out, *Magic Weapons* needs to be read. (xv)

Johnston's words reveal the need for the larger community to bear witness to these literary survival narratives.

In the same way that the stories that are the focus of his scholarship refuse to remain within the confines of literary texts, McKegney's work has implications for the material world. Although his focus is the literary survival narratives of former residential school students, McKegney acknowledges that the policies that created the schools continue to affect Aboriginal people, including those who did not attend the schools. Yet how many Canadians have completed their education—even so far as attaining such heights as doctoral degrees—without ever reading a piece of literature written by an Aboriginal person? With the Residential School Settlement Agreement and the stories of survivors regularly highlighted in the news, Canadians are finally moving out of denial and complacency and becoming interested in these stories. I recommend that they read *Magic Weapons*. It will help them understand.

#### Work Cited

LeGuin, Ursula K. "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas." *The Wind's Twelve Quarters: Short Stories*. New York: Harper Rowe, 1975.

## CACLALS EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2008-2009

### President

Neil ten Kortenaar  
Department of English  
University of Toronto  
170 St George St  
Toronto ON M5R 3M8

### Prairies Representative

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

### Secretary-Treasurer

Susan Spearey  
Dept of English Language and Literature  
Brock University  
500 Glenridge Avenue  
St Catharines ON L2S 3A1

### Atlantic Representative

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 Representative

Laura Moss  
Department of English  
University of British Columbia  
397-1873 East Mall  
Vancouver BC V6R 1Z1

### Graduate Student Representatives

Azalea Masa Barriees (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

Stephen Ney (2008-2010)  
Department of English  
University of British Columbia  
397-1873 East Mall  
Vancouver BC V6R 1Z1

### Colleges Representative

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