

Chimo



The Newsjournal of the Canadian Association for

Commonwealth Literature & Language Studies

Number 62

Fall 2011

Chimo

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Chimo (Chee'mo) greetings [Inuit]

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Chimo is published twice yearly by the Canadian Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies.

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On the cover: *Three Birds*, 2003, ink on paper, by Damon Badger Heit. Badger Heit holds a BA in Indian Art and English from the First Nations University of Canada, is a member of the Mistawasis First Nation, and resides in Regina. His art-making is education-based, and he has worked as an art instructor for youth programs in schools through organizations like the MacKenzie Art Gallery and Common Weal Inc., producing a number of public art works with youth at Regina's Connaught and Thompson Community Schools. Damon currently works as the Coordinator of First Nations and Métis Initiatives at SaskCulture Inc., a non-profit volunteer-driven organization that supports cultural activity throughout the province.

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The Canadian Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I write this time from my sabbatical location at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, and at a time of year when I am extremely conscious of my CACLALS colleagues around whom the tide of term papers rises relentlessly as you also strive to serve other dimensions of your students' instructional needs and as the press of planning for the next academic year and fulfilling administrative duties compete for your energies. And then there's the December 15 deadline for proposals for the CACLALS conference exactly a month away as I write. I wish you strength to stay afloat and intact till term is over and the marking done, and then a well-earned break and a joyful holiday season with family and/or friends.

I am disappointedly reporting that the CFHSS board has unanimously rejected our proposal to have a \$5.00 voluntary registration surcharge to help fund projects in the traditional territory of those Indigenous people on which Congress meets. The email from CFHSS Executive Director Jean-Marc Mangin announcing the decision reported that "The Executive Committee reviewed [our] suggestion and also consulted with First Nations leaders and scholars." It explained, "Although everyone is supportive of the intent behind the suggestion, everyone is also recommending not to go ahead as proposed. The Executive Committee came to the conclusion that such a measure could be perceived as tokenism or inadvertently cause divisions, for example if there was a need to allocate funds to multiple traditional indigenous community organizations in host venues." In order to determine how we might best respond to the email that arrived November 15th, I am consulting with CACLALS executive members and the movers of the motion passed at the Fredericton AGM that directed me to forward to the CFHSS president the proposal for a registration surcharge. The May AGM will be an opportunity for us to revisit this idea.

I also need to report my inability to date to budge the Commonwealth Foundation on their determination that they will only support conference participation by members from developing Commonwealth countries. At present I am trying to at least get them to allow us to

spread over three years their further requirement that 50% of the people so supported must be female, as application of this principle on a year-by-year basis would leave us in the position of effectively never being able to support a male participant because we cannot afford to bring more than person from so far away.

On a happier front, I can report that plans for the 2012 CACLALS conference at Congress on the theme of "Crossroads: Teaching and Scholarship for an Uncertain World" are developing well now. Some of you may have seen the announcement on the CACLALS website that University of Chicago scholar Dr. Leela Gandhi will be our keynote speaker and participant in the Special Roundtable, "Stepping Forward, Looking Back: Post-colonial, Global, Transnational, and Diasporic Studies in the 21st Century," being organized by three of our graduate student members, Libe Garcia Zarranz, L. Camille van der Marel, and Melissa Stephens. Drs. Stephen Slemon and Kit Dobson are additional confirmed panelists. We are also privileged to have as plenary speaker Maori scholar and SPACLALS co-chair Alice Te Punga Somerville. Other conference attractions will include a joint session with ACQL/ALCQ with M. NourbeSe Philip as reader, and perhaps in live interview as well. I'm still pursuing funding to enable the interview part of the programming. The Aboriginal Roundtable, which has become such an important part of our annual conference, will this year focus on the question of Aboriginal languages in Aboriginal literature. Please note that Michèle Lacombe, this year's organizer of the Roundtable, has set a deadline of Jan. 15th for submission of proposals for this year's event. The Graduate Student Presentation Prize panel will round out the part of the programme not populated by member papers, and I am grateful to Chelva Kanaganayakanam for serving as lead judge on the adjudication panel rounded out by Jill Didur and myself.

I close with four urgings: to faculty members to encourage your graduate students to submit proposals for that Prize panel and to get your own proposals in; to graduate student members to submit either for that panel or the regular part of the program; to all members to think about proposing or offering to lead a workshop on pedagogy; and to anyone who has recently published a book or will soon be doing so to get your publisher to send a copy to the *Chimo*

book reviews editor, currently Margery Fee of the UBC Department of English. We can celebrate your book at the annual launch, but if you don't get a copy to us, we can't review it. If there is a book in the field you would buy anyway, why not check with Margery to see about reviewing it and perhaps thereby saving yourself the expense while serving your Association by informing other members about the book?

Susan Gingell

SECRETARY-TREASURER'S REPORT

Kristina Fagan sends word that there are currently 61 members on our automated membership system, and she provides the following accounting for the past year:

CACLALS Income and Expenditures related to Activities July 1, 2010 - June 30, 2011

Major Sources of Income:

Commonwealth Foundation Grant	2,742.82
Membership Registration Fees	2,025.00
Conference Registration Fees	2,670.00
SSHRC funding for graduate student travel	3,480.00
CFHSS International Speaker's Fund	1,000.00
CFHSS funding for Aboriginal Roundtable	250.00
Co-sponsorship of speaker with ACQL	457.77
Co-sponsorship of speaker with ACCUTE	300.00
Co-sponsorship of speaker with Random House	200.00
U of T Press, UBC Press, Studies in Can Lit, and UNB English support for book launch	400.00
Total Incomes:	13,525.59

Major Expenses:

CFHSS membership fees	1,643.21
Travel Funds for Graduate Students	3,480.00
Conference Food and Equipment	2,592.91
<u>Conference Speakers' Travel, Hotel, Meals, and Honorariums:</u>	
Michael Crummey Meals and Airfare	853.35
El Jones Honorarium	500.00
Ian Baucom flight and honorarium	1,339.77
Victor Li Honorarium	500.00
Ian Baucom meal	57.60
Victor Li travel and meals	875.26
Fee for transfer of Armand Ruffo film for conference	100.00
<u>Costs of website, registration system and office supplies:</u>	
Courier during mail strike	42.97
Payment for website	159.35
Website domain name	9.99
Membership system renewal fee	150.00
Total Expenses:	12,304.41

CONFERENCE REPORT: CACLALS 2011

Joshua Douglas Prescott

This year's CACLALS conference, held 28-30 May 2011 at the University of New Brunswick in Fredericton, engaged the topic "Coastlines and Continents: Exploring People and Places." The conference had sixty-five registrants who were invited to attend eight feature sessions, including keynote addresses from Ian Baucom and Victor Li, and thirty-four paper presentations from CACLALS members.

One of the conference's opening panels focused on past and present incarnations of slavery. Angelika Maeser Lemieux considered the question of a "transnational hybrid identity" in Roger Buckley's *Congo Jack*, a novel about the 1802 revolt of an all-black British regiment in Dominica. Lemieux argued that the novel narrates Jack's eventual recognition that the rhetoric of identity and nation is misleading and that what is needed is a moral revolution free from the national imaginary. Peter Walmsley explored the inherent racism in Hans Sloane's representations of eighteenth-century Jamaica, arguing that Sloane, like so many physicians of the day, was unable to recognize his patients' illnesses as the results of their subjection to slavery in the West Indies. Rachael Wyatt's paper explored Bernadine Evaristo's *Blonde Roots*, a novel that reverses the historical slave dialectic by delivering a narrative in which the "Aphrikans" enslave "Europa" and export them to "Amarika." The novel's effectiveness, Wyatt argued, relies on its ability to withhold reader catharsis in favour of parody: through "pastiche," the novel criticizes the historical slave trade as well as modern consumer culture, asking that readers be attuned to the ways in which instances of modern slavery shape contemporary economic markets.

A second morning session entitled "Regions and Continents" examined representations of geographic regions in relation to both local and more global signifiers. Michele Lacombe considered Antonine Maillet's play *La Sagouine* and what she named the text's "double-voiced discourse." The play, Lacombe posits, is well intentioned but ultimately lacks a stronger statement of social responsibility, particularly concerning issues of language and the ethical

usage of land. Camille van der Marel's presentation explored the intricacies of colonization in the Canadian North, arguing that the North is most often invoked in moments of nationalist concern. The paper employed Al Purdy's commissioned work *North of Summer* and his invocation of "right of first discovery" as an example of Canada's attempt to colonize the North and assimilate "this" land into the national imaginary. Finally, Brenna Clarke Gray considered the interesting and rather tenuous position that Douglas Coupland occupies as a North American author. While Gray noted a distinct shift in Coupland's work after 9/11, her paper drew critical attention to both the benefits and limitations of the tension in his writing between a North American voice and what Gray termed "a voice from nowhere."

The two morning sessions were followed by an engaging, critically challenging keynote address by renowned Duke University scholar Ian Baucom entitled "The Human Shore: Postcolonial Studies in the Age of Natural Science." After offering a detailed critical reading of Dipesh Chakrabarty's thoughts on the relationship between climate change, energy, and freedom, Baucom proposed a shift in postcolonial studies to focus on species thinking. In a time of global climate crisis, we must adopt new thoughts on freedom, indeed a new mode of universalism, characterized by the collapsing of human and natural histories. Working from the example of the life sciences, Baucom proposed that the humanities must engage a new ontological imperative centred on the notion that the "self is neuronal": personhood must be seen to result from genetic determination. Baucom then employed J.M. Coetzee's *The Life and Times of Michael K.* as a frame from which to examine what he called "deep time," a combination of geological and hybrid time with the potential to usher in a new form of humanism. Coetzee's novel, Baucom posited, highlights the idea of yielding, of being "poor in the world" and of neglecting the self as an allegory of social progress. Baucom argued that if life and time form the basis of species, as they do in Chakrabarty's argument, then species life exists as an alternative allegory, a counter political position in which one cannot distinguish between civil and natural history. Moving away from a state of preservation (a love of self in the Hobbesian mode) Baucom urged scholars in the humanities to take more seriously questions rooted in scientific ontology, choosing to rethink the contemporary in relation to a "blank future."

The afternoon two-paper session called “On Edge(s)” took-up the topics of ecological degradation and xenophobia. John Ball’s paper explored the question of risk in Tim Winton’s surfing novel *Breath*, arguing that surfing balances an illusion of control over one’s environment (the wave) against a recognition of limits and dangers to human control. Winton’s representation of adolescent surfing and other “edgework” activities prompts an ecocritical reading that emphasizes respect for environmental forces and the perils of climate change. Susie O’Brien’s paper showed how Mohsin Hamid’s *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* operates within a post-9/11 culture framed by a xenophobic focus on duty and honour. Employing several guiding foci including emphasis on fundamentals, the relationship between finance and cultural imperialism, and the ways in which hospitality informs modern culture, O’Brien suggested that Hamid’s novel proposes a redistribution of power in which those guiding foci, all informed by risk, ask readers to collaborate with text in the production of meaning.

El Jones’s engaging spoken word performance closed the first day of sessions. As a member of Halifax’s *Word Iz Bond*, a spoken word artist’s collective, Jones characterized spoken word as the political arm of hip-hop. Spoken word provides a forum for truthful, current observations and bold statements about contemporary culture. Jones’s poems deal primarily with racial and gender violence and challenge her audience to consider the realities of specific social concerns.

The morning of the second day opened with the inaugural “Graduate Student Presentation Prize Panel.” Jesse Arsenault’s “Animal Movements and Postcolonial Geographies,” winner of the competition, argued that scholars devote copious amounts of time to studying animality but fail to look at animals themselves. Arsenault suggested that animals disrupt the smooth transitions between enlightenment ideals and contemporary culture, existing outside the grip of imperial control. By paying closer attention to animals and the modes in which they exist – as livestock, carriers of pathogens, and as potential food sources, among other realities – Arsenault’s paper echoed Ian Baucom’s urging for a new understanding of humanism in which the history of animals unfolds alongside the experiences of humans. Jessie Forsythe’s paper examined the intersections between speculation and economic systems of exchange in Oludah

Equiano's *Interesting Narrative*. Forsythe considered what she named Equiano's "qualified freedom" – a term that hinges upon Equiano's tenuous relationship to "home." Forsythe argued convincingly that the text's detailing of how Equiano's "subjectivity is violently rendered questionable" is best characterized through the roots of the term *interest*, broken down as "inter" and "est" and defined respectively as "between" and "being." Amanda Perry's paper explored the way in which a recorded oral performance of Kamau Brathwaite's *Rights of Passage* alters perception of his writing of plantation life. Braithwaite's poem combines the traditions of calypso, spoken word, and other forms of oral performance, embodied in the spirit of nation language, in order to comment on what Braithwaite terms "folk commercialized beyond anger." Perry argued that Braithwaite's movement between singing and speaking forces listeners to become aware of the subtleties of his work, particularly as the playful vocal sounds often clash with their semantic content and thus echo "the calypso's tradition of dissimulation and indirection."

The second morning session was given over to the Eleventh Annual Aboriginal Roundtable and focused on how religion and spirituality figure in Indigenous literatures and academic classrooms. The panel opened with statements from Andrea Bear Nicholas, Margery Fee, and Armand Ruffo, but the discussion quickly included a wide variety of voices and concerns. While discussing the role of religion/spirituality, Nicholas, Fee, and Ruffo, along with other roundtable participants, stressed the importance of language and land and their relationship to Aboriginal spirituality. Ruffo suggested that what is most needed is financial resources and political will, and Nichols argued passionately for a commitment to preserve and teach Aboriginal languages. Along with land and spirituality, language forms the basis of community, providing a rooted sense of self. Similarly, the panel criticized Canadian universities' failure to support Aboriginal initiatives to preserve languages and to recognize the significance of land.

One of two afternoon sessions took as its topic "Troubling Borders and Boundaries." Joshua Prescott's paper explored the connections between black consciousness and national self-imagining in Dionne Brand's *Land to Light On*. Working from Brand's concept of the "door of no

return,” Prescott argued that the black consciousness in Brand’s work must learn to navigate the divide between the Old World and the New World through the figurative mapping of one’s sense of self-identification. Sharlee Reimer’s paper considered the relationship between gender and nation in four Canadian novels. Reimer focused on the way in which gender and nation are produced and policed, paying particular attention to how her chosen texts spotlight gender non-normativity. Finally, Sarah Brophy looked at the representation of queer culture and Thatcher conservatism in Alan Hollinghurst’s *The Line of Beauty*. Brophy considered the relationship between nostalgia and necessity in the novel, arguing that it critiques two prevalent discourses: gay men’s complicity with 1980s conservatism, which is marked by tenuous connections between homosexuality and multiculturalism, and also the way in which the acute pull of nostalgia highlights the crossing of normative family boundaries.

The afternoon sessions preceded a reading by Michael Crummey, a celebrated novelist, short story writer, and poet from Newfoundland whose latest novel, *Galore* (2009), won the 2010 Commonwealth Writer’s Prize for best book from the Canada and Caribbean region. After his reading, Crummey mused in an entertaining conversation with Cynthia Sugars about *Galore*’s beginnings as a novel, about his literary influences, and about his interest in writing about “everyday Newfoundland.” Crummey suggested that he is most interested in questions of inheritance, history, family, and the way in which stories can create people. He proposed that it is not facts that are relevant, but that the value of stories depends upon whether or not the people who tell the stories believe them. He referred to the folk as the “cultural DNA” and suggested that the history of Newfoundland does not rely on big moments; rather, Newfoundland’s history is constructed by the families, resources, and work that shape everyday life.

The morning of the third day began with a session entitled “On the Grounds of Gender and Race.” Alison Toron’s paper considered what she named “the slippery nature of humour” and the way in which Suzette Mayr’s *Moon Honey* challenges established discourses of race and gender. Toron proposed that the laughter produced by Mayr’s text provides new, unlikely

possibilities for feminist resistance through humour as the novel muses upon the potential impermanence of categorical definitions of race and gender. Alicia Robinet's paper looked at the relationship between home children and nation building. By viewing child immigrants as productive settlers, Robinet suggested that Canada is removed from a position of culpability. Conversely, she argued that Canada should recognize the home children project for what it was: the mass exploitation of child indentured labourers, used primarily to justify the promotion of the nation as white. Max Haiven examined the racial divisions of labour and how those separations play out in the pursuit of creative work. By arguing that creative work has never before been as prevalent, as important, and as remunerative, Haiven proposed that an unjust chain of global economics highly depends upon what he named the "everyday creativity of race making."

Victor Li offered the final keynote address of the conference. Li's talk, "Making the World Disappear: Globalization as Allegory," considered globalization's investment in its own allegory and troubled the extent to which globalization has been and should be accepted as an uncontested reality. In a world in which globalization is accepted, the world is objectified, represented, and capitalized. In this scenario, the world itself becomes second to a worldview – the world actively represented and grasped. Li cited Jean Luc Nancy's suggestion that it is necessary to invent and create the world now, arguing that globalization presents a crisis of representation: one loses the complexity of globalization in its representation. Allegory provides an opportunity to represent globalization, as demonstrated by Li's example of an RBC map of economic flows that claims, "This is the real world." But the RBC map that allegorizes globalization by focusing on monetary concentration differs greatly from a map focusing on global disease and poverty, for instance. In response to these two examples, Li argued in favour of what he called "interruptive allegories." By using Mark Lombardi's narrative maps as an example, Li suggested that interruptive allegories offer a kind of "flattened ontology," an understanding of two positions: that allegory, as interruption rather than as totalizing narrative, can be a lens to the "truth," and also that through aesthetics, allegories draw attention to what

may be the inevitable scaling up and down of narrative processes that must always be questioned and troubled.

In the afternoon, CACLALS members celebrated the launch of several new texts – John Ball’s edited collection the *Encyclopedia of Twentieth-Century Fiction: Twentieth-Century World Fiction*, Jennifer Andrews’s *In the Belly of a Laughing God: Humour and Irony in Native Women’s Poetry*, and Sophie McCall’s *First Person Plural: Aboriginal Storytelling and the Ethics of Collaborative Authorship*. Members also marked the 35th anniversary of the journal *Studies in Canadian Literature/Études en littérature canadienne*.

On the evening of the last day CACLALS Congress attendees were invited to a special introduction and screening of Armand Garnet Ruffo’s film *A Windigo Tale*, which was followed by a Q&A with Ruffo.

BOOK REVIEWS AND NOTICES

Maria Caridad Casas. *Multimodality in Canadian Black Feminist Writing: Orality and the Body in the Work of Harris, Philip, Allen, and Brand*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009. 247 pp.

Review by Jaclyn Rea, University of British Columbia

This book, a timely reconsideration of the politics of language use in literary contexts, is a social semiotic analysis of the ways Caribbean-Canadian poets Claire Harris, M. NourbeSe Philip, Lillian Allen, and Dionne Brand negotiate the technical and cultural tensions that emerge when these writers attempt to open up the discourses of language, race, gender, and sexuality with which their work engages. In this theoretical examination of the practices and positionings of these Caribbean English Creole speakers, Casas focuses primarily on the complex connections between language use and identity, developing, as she does, a theory of multimodality (the use of a variety of modes in a single text) that usefully interrogates a number of technical and cultural binaries: speech and writing, orality and literacy, language and dialect, standard and non-standard spelling – binaries which, Casas implies, serve the interests of the standard literary language and its assumed colonial identities. Casas' aim is to offer an interdisciplinary account of the embodying oral modes found in these writers' texts. Her broader objective, however, is not so much to argue for particular readings, but to better understand *how* to read texts that have been, because of their technical and cultural strategies of representation, "resistant to explication" (199). In the process, she reconsiders and challenges traditional linguistic theory and literary stylistics, offering in their place a multimodal theory of meaning-making that seeks to explain, in this case, the presence and related politics of an embodying, situated orality.

In her attempt to suggest alternate methods of reading "orality-oriented poetry" (191), Casas makes a number of contributions to the fields of linguistics, literary stylistics, and perhaps more importantly to social semiotics, in particular to Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen's theory of semiotic modes. Her most provocative contribution, however, is to current debates about

the tie of language to identity. Each of her chapters, in fact, builds on and elaborates, in some way, important theoretical questions about this tie. Her elaboration begins with a re-examination of Derrida's theory of the sign; she argues that Derrida's critique of the problematic relation between speech and writing, of sound to letter, usefully disrupts the historically and ideologically encouraged meanings afforded to these relations, meanings that have been treated as transparent, as having an *a priori* existence. While Casas agrees with Derrida that there is no transparent meaning located in the sound-letter relation, she argues that his insistence on the autonomy of speech and writing, of sound and letter – on their continuously deferred and evasive meaning relations – does not account for the ways meanings about language and its use may be generated and challenged on historical and political planes of social interaction. Casas notes, for example, that Lillian Allen's choice, in "Riddim An' Hardtimes," to use non-standard spellings to represent the sounds, or signifiers, of oral Jamaican English Creole (JEC) alongside standard English spellings signifies a contemporary JEC perspective and identity in dialectical interaction with standard and standardizing perspectives and identities. Allen's spelling choices "partake of the 'play of signifying references' *within particular times and places*" (75; emphasis in original), that is, they reference linguistic practices and positions which have local, temporal meaning-functions in larger socio-cultural systems of signification.

Drawing on Saussurean semiotics to elaborate on the meaning-making potential of symbolic systems, Casas argues that the signs that make up systems are both situated and motivated. And, if situated and motivated, then, with each instance of their use, they have the potential to challenge and/or change systems of signification. Systems, in Casas' account, are bounded, discrete; they are socially constructed codes or socially perceived 'rules' (or grammars) that structure and mediate the boundaries amongst groupings of languages and social identities (Jamaican English Creole/Standard English; black, female/white, male). However, they can only ever be "constituted and reconstituted as systems," Casas claims, "in each moment of interaction" (194). Thus, their meanings (for example, the meanings we attach to standard English spelling and those associated with any violations of the 'rules' of standard English

spelling) are constituted and reconstituted in moments of interaction. An account of the socially motivated, interactive characteristics of the sign is important for Casas' analysis of the ways Caribbean-Creole-English-speaking female poets perform orality in their works. By code-switching (e.g. moving from standard written English to the oral markers of English Creoles), these poets enact the sorts of systemic interactions that a performance of orality implies in contexts where the history of colonization has structured unequal politico-linguistic relations between the literary language and illiteracy: "As oral (not written), [such signs] question the cultural centrality of writing in Europe and its ex-colonies and writing's role in maintaining the social boundaries of literature" (xxiv). Casas suggests that the critical promise of Philip's, Harris's, Allen's and Brand's work has much to do with the ways orality, as a medium of communication, functions as a mode in their poetry. As a mode with socially accrued meanings in dialectical interaction with the socially accrued meanings of other media turned modes (writing, the body), orality animates and so has the potential to intervene in and mediate discourses on orality, literacy, speech, and writing.

While Casas' critique offers an important and much needed intervention in these same discourses, her theoretical frameworks are predicated upon a number of puzzling overgeneralizations or missed opportunities that detract from the critical promise of her analysis. For instance, she introduces her work by setting up a dialectical boundary between the work she will do and the work of linguists, claiming that "linguistics is a discipline that focuses exclusively on speech" (xv) and language structure. This claim is a little startling given the focus of linguistic pragmatics on situated language use in *both* oral and written contexts, and of linguistic anthropology on power relations. Moreover, she uses traditional, formal, and mainstream linguistics interchangeably throughout her book and elides important distinctions between popular perceptions of 'correct' language and mainstream linguists' perceptions: "'Grammaticality' (correct grammar) is a fundamental in formal linguistics, where judgments of 'grammaticality' are considered solid evidence for arguments about the structure of a language" (xxii). However, linguists, such as James Milroy and Leslie Milroy, often take pains to critically distance themselves from the view of linguistic correctness Casas outlines in her

introduction and would not therefore equate 'grammaticality' with the popular views of correct usage typically associated with what others have called "the complaint tradition" (Cameron). More importantly, Casas' discussions of non-standard and standard languages could have been further nuanced with reference to linguists who have themselves questioned the methodological and ideological project of standardization (James Milroy), or who have attempted, however problematically, to delineate a Canadian Standard English (Boberg; Lochhead). Inclusion of the latter, in fact, would have situated her remarks about Standard English and Caribbean English Creoles in a more localized, thus dialectically relevant, national-linguistic context. Still, Casas' examination of multimodal textual strategies in the works of these Caribbean Creole-speaking writers offers new ways of understanding the social, political and cultural functions of our linguistic choices.

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Roger Norman Buckley. *Congo Jack*. Mt. Kisco, NY: Pinto, 1997. \$22.95 USD

Reviewed by Angelika Maeser Lemieux, Vanier College

Congo Jack is the first volume in the historical fiction trilogy by Roger Norman Buckley, *Accommodation and Resistance: Three Chose Rebellion*. Other books have flowed steadily from this historian's pen since he finished the trilogy—most recently *Helga und Harpreet: A Novel of the Indian Legion of World War Two* (2011 unpublished). The subject matter, the literary treatment of significant historical events, the ongoing investigations into the topics of imperialism, trans-Atlantic slavery, Caribbean, South-East Asian and Irish national struggles, intercultural conflicts, political and gender relations make the trilogy well worth reading and considering for courses concerned with these areas of study.

Buckley teaches history at the University of Connecticut and has produced several scholarly books on the British Army. He is interested in the interconnections between society and the military; recently, after having stepped down from his position as founding Director of the Asian American Studies Institute, he has focused on history and fiction and the problematized relationship among various narratives in the recording, writing, telling, and legitimization of history. What becomes “official” or orthodox, and what is omitted or discredited? Many years spent in the archives of European libraries and in the British Army records offices led him to question the representation of the subalterns and the many marginalized voices that never had an opportunity to tell their side of events. This trilogy is an attempt to give form and voice to the individuals he found recorded only as names within the larger history-making narratives of significant events such as the slave trade and mutinies in the Caribbean and in India.

Congo Jack takes place on the island of Dominica in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century where a mutiny of the British Eighth West India Regiment occurred in 1802, the rapid

upshot of which was the execution of seven accused Black soldiers. The court martial was hastily concluded, but several days later, evidence arose that placed the event in a more complicated light. Through the brief life of the protagonist, an abducted Nigerian youth subsequently named Congo Jack upon his induction into the British army as a “raw African” directly after arrival at Portsmouth, Buckley examines the contested policy of the British government and army of raising Black African regiments to defend their lucrative commercial interests in the Caribbean during the time of the Napoleonic War. Buckley dramatically configures conflicts between local civil administrations and the military, divisive debates about the status of the African soldier—freeman or slave?—the barbarity of slave societies based upon exploitation, and the aspirations of the dispossessed for human dignity and equality as promised by the French Revolution, whose Jacobin agents infiltrated disgruntled slave enclaves. The personal is not lost within the maelstrom of the political, however, as Buckley’s characters fight for their freedom as strenuously as Michelangelo’s slaves struggle to free themselves from the weight of marble. In this first installment of the trilogy, the gender, class, and racial relationships are astutely drawn. Whether exploring colonial space in the Caribbean or in India, Buckley’s sure grasp of geography, history, and socio-political and military details makes these narratives relevant for today’s interrogation of these issues.

(Note: Pinto Press has ceased publication; *Congo Jack* can be purchased from Hanuman Distributors, 12 Gardner Tavern Road, Coventry, CT 06238; the other two volumes are *I, Hanuman* 2003. Calcutta: Writers Workshop/Anjana, 2004, \$15 US; and *The Death and Life of an Irish Soldier*. New Orleans: UP of the South, 2007, \$25 US).

The Timbuktu Chronicles, 1493-1599. English translation of the original works in Arabic by Al Hajj Mahmud Kati in Ta'rikh al Fattash. Ed. Christopher Wise; trans. Christopher Wise and Hala Abu Taleb. Trenton, NJ: Africa World, 2011.

Reviewed by Stephen Ney, University of the Gambia

The Timbuktu Chronicles, which provides fascinating cultural, religious, and political history of the Songhay Empire that flourished in Mali in the sixteenth century, has a fascinating textual history of its own. Editor Christopher Wise explains that the translation he and Hala Abu Taleb have made is in large part based on a French edition from a century ago that translated three Arabic manuscripts that surfaced during French rule in Mali.

The narrator himself, who at several points speaks in the voice of the sixteenth-century scribe al hajj Mahmud Kati (al hajj because he himself accompanied the askiya Muhammad, founder of the Songhay dynasty, to Mecca) and at several other points in the voice of Kati's son or grandson, explains that the account he is writing is itself a compilation of many oral and written sources. As Wise points out in his Introduction, this volume is a good site for an examination into non-Western or non-modern notions of textuality and truth. Sometimes the narrator admits that his sources are at odds, and he is forced to adjudicate among them; sometimes they are indecipherable or opaque and require his conjectural interpretation; but at all times the narrator's account is subject to his humble confession that only God knows the complete truth, and subordinate to his opening prayer that God would be praised by the propagation of the story of the Songhay dynasty, and particularly of the story of its most virtuous prince (askiya), Muhammad.

I think it is helpful to think of the text's genre as theological history, adorned with very few poetic devices. The text's most obvious goal is to give an account of why, before God, the Songhay empire rose and fell. It rose principally because of the quality of its leading men, who kept their promises and were faithful in their religious observances, showed lavish compassion

to the poor and generosity to their friends; and it fell because of a later generation of leaders' treachery, family dissension, and flagrant violation of a vow made by Muhammad. The cast of characters is so large and the narrative so lengthy that this volume is not always a page-turner, but scattered through it are colourful stories that illuminate, for instance, practices of hospitality, master-slave relations, or the work of religious professionals in the Western Sudan. The editor rightly draws attention to several exciting episodes in which the religious practice of the characters clearly deviates from Islamic orthodoxy: there are djinns and a mythical fish-king and fortune-telling sorcerers. Thus *The Timbuktu Chronicles* chronicles the forging of what Wise calls a dynamic and syncretistic new faith; but it is certainly an Islamic faith above all, and the animistic influences should not be overplayed. This edition could have benefited from maps (since so many of the textual annotations address historical geography), a greater number of historico-cultural annotations (e.g. on tombs as a place where petitioners' prayers are answered, or on food in the Songhay Empire), and an acknowledgement of which annotations are Wise's and which are translated from the French.

Lynda Gray, *First Nations 101*. Vancouver: Adaawx (www.firstnations101.com), 2011. \$20.00.

Book notice by Susan Gingell, University of Saskatchewan

The informal subtitle of this book is "tons of stuff you need to know about First Nations people." Thus, Tsimshian activist Lynda Gray makes immediately clear that hers is not a scholarly text, and the informal, highly accessible style (including its cute but nonetheless pointed lyndatoons), and often impassioned tone indicate that educating as many people as possible is Gray's mission. Why call this primer to the attention of CACLALS members if it is not a scholarly book? I do so because it is a useful compendium of information, statistics, and challenging but reasoned political views, which it presents in order to empower action to improve the situation of Indigenous people in Canada (she occasionally dips south of the border), and because it presents Indigenous reality from an Indigenous woman's perspective. It invites us to consider whether we should refer to Indigenous youth dropping out, or being pushed out, of schools, and whether the State's child welfare policies in relation to Indigenous

children might not more accurately be called child warfare. Gray stresses that because 60% of Indigenous people live in cities and those under 25 constitute nearly 60% of the Indigenous population, changes that would have the most far-reaching effect would be those made with these sectors in mind. However, Indigenous political leaders, who are mostly reserve-based are, she tell us, too rarely responsive to these facts. Gray's practical activism is evident in her ending with four lists of things that, respectively, everyone, First Nations people, and federal and provincial governments can do to help ameliorate the situation of Indigenous people.

The self-published book does suffer from poor proofreading, and it does rehearse the story of the British deliberately spreading disease through smallpox-infected blankets. Certainly Jeffrey Amherst, commander of British forces in North America during the Seven Years' War (1756-63) is guilty of suggesting this germ warfare would be a good tactic to use against the Indian allies of the French because he apparently did not know that smallpox is spread by person-to-person contact, not through objects. The book is not, however, one-sided, or of the Us and Them variety, acknowledging, for example, that forms of slavery, if not brutally dehumanizing chattel slavery, did exist in some Indigenous communities in pre-colonial times.

The writing of Gray's book was prompted in part by the many evidences of ignorance about Indigenous people she and others have so widely and recurrently encountered among non-Indigenous Canadians, but, also, thanks to residential and neo-colonial schooling, among Indigenous people as well. *First Nations 101* thus devotes chapters to a broad range of topics including Identity, Social Control, Community Issues, Fairness and Justice, Health and Wellness, Arts, The Road Forward, and Forging a New Path. She subdivides each chapter to clearly establish the breadth of coverage, and provides a list of resources at the end of each substantive section so that readers have guidance for continuing their learning journey. The book gives readers lots of reasons to do so, and the next time someone asks for basic information about Indigenous people or what she or he can do as an individual to aid in reconciliation, this is a book that—despite its weaknesses—you might think of recommending.

NOTE: The same readers who would find Gray's book interesting or useful might also be interested in Roger Spielmann's *Anishnaabe World: A Survival Guide for Building Bridges between Canada and First Nations* (Sudbury: yourscribener, 2009). Spielmann's credentials are having lived with his family in Pikogan, a reserve in northwest Quebec, for 11 years and teaching Native Studies at Laurentian University for 20 years. This, too, is a book aimed at a popular audience, and gets a blurb from Ovide Mercredi on the back cover. A similar resource is Indigenous Foundations at UBC, a website designed for students in First Nations Studies courses to provide important background information (information that somehow rarely gets taught in Canadian high schools). –Margery Fee

Member News and Publications

Chandrima Chakraborty (McMaster University) recently published *Masculinity, Asceticism, Hinduism: Past and Present Imaginings of India* (Permanent Black, India). The book reveals the fraught relationship of asceticism to Indian political history. It studies how, over the past century and a half, Hindu asceticism came to be re worked for cultural and political purposes in Indian nationalist discourse and in the process became a critical site for performing masculinity.

Susan Gingell (University of Saskatchewan) has published as co-editor with C. Lesley Biggs and Pamela Downe, the 2nd edition of *Gendered Intersections: Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies*. The Fernwood Books volume gives strong representation to Caribbean and Asian Canadian writers, including Lillian Allen (her "Feminism 101" and "Feminism 104" bookend the other contributions), Afua Cooper, Klyde Broox, d'bi.young.anitafrika, M. NourbeSe Philip, Shani Mootoo, and Marisa Anlin Aps; and to Indigenous Canadian writers, including Beth Brant, Gregory Scofield, Louise Halfe, and Marilyn Dumont.

The volume of essays *Listening Up, Writing Down, and Looking Beyond: Interfaces of the Oral, Written, and Visual*, which she co-edited with Wendy Roy, is due out in the spring of 2012 from Wilfrid Laurier UP. The substantial introduction to the book provides a discussion of the key concepts used in the field of textualized orature and orality as well as situating the volume's essays in terms of the "turn to the oral" in the thought and artistic practices of the long twentieth-century. Many of the fifteen contributions had their preliminary form as conference presentations at The Oral, the Written, and Other Verbal Media: Interfaces and Audiences and the eVOCative festival, in June 2008. The second iteration of this conference will be held in Melbourne, Australia in December, 2011.

Horace I. Goddard (Former Director of Community Services with the English Montreal School Board and a Secretary-Treasurer of CACLALS when Loris Elliot was President) has kept productively busy since retirement, publishing a critical essay on Caryl Philips; a short story and a long poem in a book edited by Cyril Dabydeen called *Beyond Sangre Grande*; and a collection of poetry, *The Journey Home* (Iuniverse) in ebook and paperback formats, in January, 2011. He is working on three others, the first informed by his travels in East Africa, "Songs of Uganda" and the others by his Caribbean origins, "The Rain Dance" (Barbados) and "Voices from the Forest" (Jamaica). He is also working on a novel manuscript, "A Chosen Race: a Branded People," and a collection of short stories tentatively called "Afflictions." In 2009 Horace was honoured by the University of Montreal for outstanding academic work and community service.

David Jefferess (University of British Columbia, Okanagan) has co-edited with Zubeda Jalalzai *Globalizing Afghanistan: Terrorism, War, and the Rhetoric of Nation Building* (Duke UP). The book offers a kaleidoscopic view of Afghanistan and the global networks of power, influence, and representation in which it is immersed. The military and nation-building interventions initiated by the United States in reaction to the events of September 11, 2001, are the background and motivation for this collection, but they are not the immediate subject of the

essays. Seeking to understand the events of the past decade in a broad frame, the contributors draw on cultural and postcolonial approaches to provide new insights into this ongoing conflict. They focus on matters such as the implications of Afghanistan's lucrative opium trade, the links between the contemporary Taliban movement and major events in the Islamic world and Central Asia since the early twentieth century, and interactions between transnational feminist organizations and the Afghan women's movement. Several contributors address questions of representation. One looks at portrayals of Afghan women by the U.S. government and Western media and feminists. Another explores the surprisingly prominent role of Iranian filmmaking in the production of a global cinematic discourse about Afghanistan. A Pakistani journalist describes how coverage of Afghanistan by reporters working from Pakistan's Khyber-Pakhtoonkhwa (formerly the North West Frontier Province) has changed over the past decade. This rich panoply of perspectives on Afghanistan concludes with a reflection on how academics might produce meaningful alternative viewpoints on the exercise of American power abroad.

Gillian Roberts (University of Nottingham) announces the publication of her University of Toronto Press book *Prizing Literature: The Celebration and Circulation of National Culture*. The book is described as follows: "When Canadian authors win prestigious literary prizes, they are celebrated not only for their achievements, but also for contributing to this country's cultural capital. Discussions about culture, national identity, and citizenship are particularly complicated when the honorees are immigrants, like Michael Ondaatje, Carol Shields, or Rohinton Mistry. Then there is the case of Yann Martel, who is identified both as Canadian and as rootlessly cosmopolitan. How have these writers' identities been recalibrated in order to claim them as 'representative' Canadians? *Prizing Literature* is the first extended study of contemporary award winning Canadian literature and the ways in which we celebrate its authors. Gillian Roberts uses theories of hospitality to examine how prize-winning authors are variously received and honoured depending on their citizenship and the extent to which they represent 'Canadianness.'

John Schecter (Long Island University) has just published *The Isle of Pines, 1668: Henry Neville's Uncertain Utopia* (Ashgate). The book is both critical edition and critical study of an early modern politician's short fiction of shipwreck and discovery, and offers a new methodology for bringing postcolonial and postmodern examination strategies to bear on a seventeenth-century text. Schecter reads the book as a critique of scientific discourse, an enacting of "complicated engagements of race and gender," and a probing of the "methods and consequences of European exploration."

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