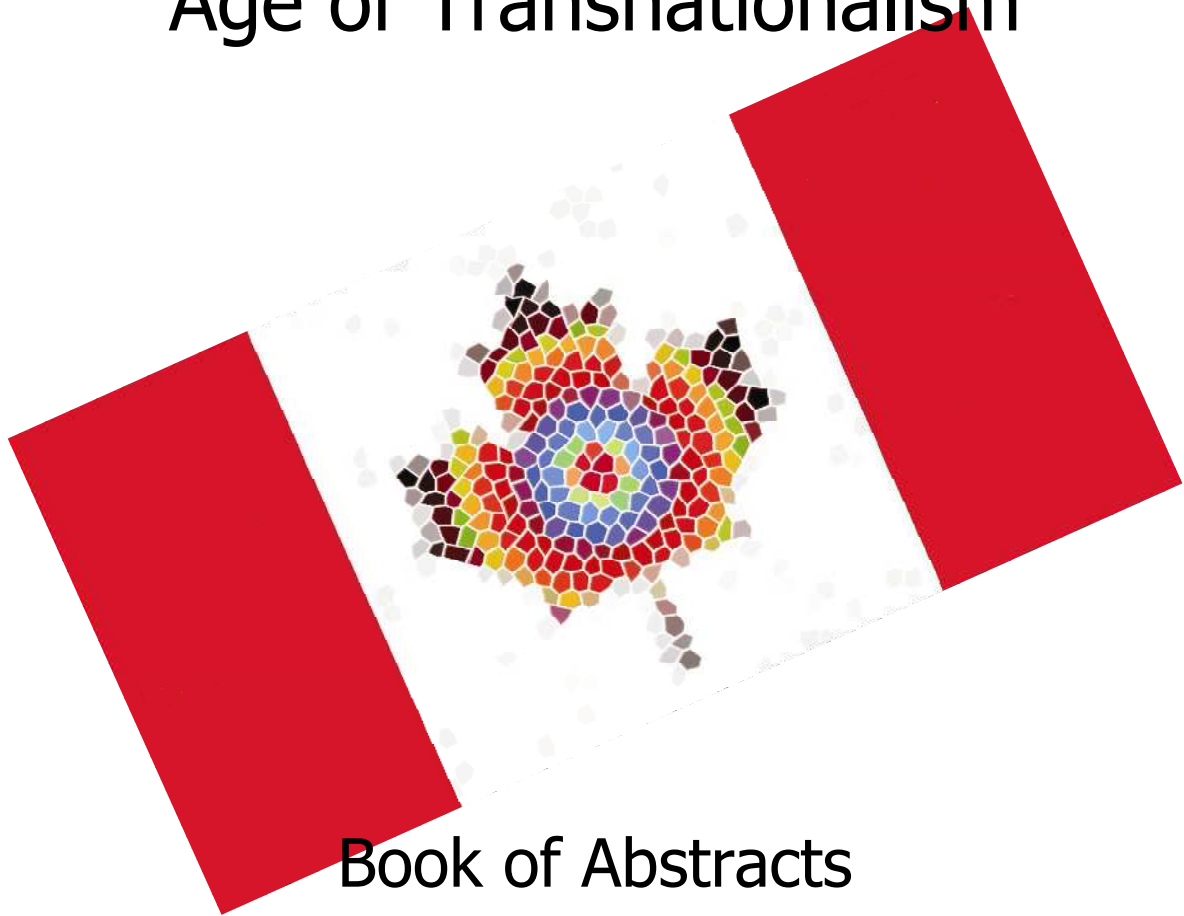


The Canadian Mosaic in the Age of Transnationalism



Book of Abstracts

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Keynote Address

**George Elliott Clarke
(Toronto)**

Canada – The Invisible Empire

That Canada is a nation born of imperial rivalry between England and France is a truism that is practically a platitude. Also certain is the difficulty Canada has currently in defining a separate cultural space within the larger American imperial orbit that it is virtually a satellite within. Yet, there are acute anomalies in this depiction of Canada. Though we think of it as an ex-British, ex-French colony (or group of colonies), we neglect to account for the expansion of Canada in the last two centuries – despite the occasionally aggressive superpower on its border; nor do we consider that said expansion frustrated the American (imperialist) doctrine of Manifest Destiny. In short, seldom do we think of Canada, not as an ex-colonial entity seeking to establish its identity, but as a “failed” empire, constructed by Britain to keep the U.S. at bay. To buttress this point, a variety of materials will be consulted, mainly literary, to bid us all see the map of Canada afresh and differently.

Georgiana Banita (Konstanz)

Neil Bissoondath and the Ambivalent Novel of Terror

Loosely based on Sri Lanka, Neil Bissoondath's most recent novel *The Unyielding Clamor of the Night* (2006) closely follows a young man's transformation and shift from a life of privilege to a life of purpose, as he travels to a poor, war-torn city in South Asia to become a teacher. After an uphill struggle to gain the acceptance of the local community, he becomes enmeshed with the rebel groups who organize terrorist attacks against the population, and begins to teach and befriend soldiers at local camps. By the end of the book, not only do we get a sympathetic glimpse of the lives of terrorists, but it eventually transpires that in this violent community no one's hands are clean and no one character can be considered morally superior to any other.

Bissoondath's equivocating ethical choices thus shed new light on the concept of terrorism – ultimately a meaningless term that can be attached to whatever person or group counts as the enemy, an entity to be fought and destroyed. Only partly a departure from his earlier fictions on Canadian exile and the immigrant identity, the novel ponders the turmoil in a poverty-stricken third-world whose daily battles finally have an impact on the world at large and involve even the most innocent of bystanders. Bissoondath's protagonist Arun finds for example that seemingly unrelated events and relationships turn out to connect his present and past life, as he comes to empathize with the insurgents even though his own parents were killed in a terrorist attack. This results in a profound indecision as to what evil stands for in the context of the contemporary, ethically-motivated war on terror, and by extrapolation how the conventions of fiction – implying a distribution between good and evil as well as the presence of a figure the reader can "root for" – can keep up with the political derangement of terrorism.

Especially from his perspective as a renowned Canadian author of ethnic background and one who has actively engaged with the Canadian

policy of multiculturalism, it may seem that Bissoondath's restrained and nuanced portrayal of the motives of suicide bombers only set out to be provocative and contrarian. However, considering the extent to which multicultural societies are confronted with the danger of ethnic violence, his discussion of the lure of terror and its moral ambivalence could not have come at a more appropriate time.

Elisabeth Damböck (Wien)

'Even things that are true can be proved.' – Even They?

It is a fact that we are living in a globalized world, shaped not only by the extensive exchange of goods, but also people. Migration, in terms of a movement abroad for long time periods for varying reasons, is becoming a chapter in the life stories of increasingly large numbers of people and consequently societies, especially in urban centres, are characterized by an ever growing interaction of different cultural and geographical backgrounds. Yet, politics, markets and social interaction are – even if they attempt to acknowledge this development like the Canadian Multiculturalism Policy – more dominated by differentiating cultures than by celebrating and making use of this cultural hybridity. Even Canada, a country that welcomes its pluralistic society, at the same time, labels its population according to cultural heritage.

However, the arts, and especially literature by authors of migrant backgrounds, are very aware of and critically reflect on cultural hybridity and a transnational consciousness in Canada's society today.

In this context, it can be observed that discussions of "Canadian Identity" over the last two decades and reflections on the subject in literature reveal a turn to the individual. The collective Canadian identity that had occupied the country for a century with questions like "What, Where and Why is Here?" to "Where/What is/was there?" and "How did we get here?" because Canada lacks *one* founding myth, *one* original culture and *one* people to construct a collective identity on, has just lost its relevance. The arts, and especially transnational/transcultural writers are no longer interested in raising questions, but are narrating stories, giving individual statements, that taken together paint the picture of hybrid Canadian identities. This turn to the individual also increasingly questions labelling along the lines of "ethnicity", because it deconstructs this category as being just as imaginary and possibly just as derogatory as "race". Such a turn to the individual does, however, not imply, that writers return to a

state of storytelling disengaged from political agendas. Quite on the contrary, these stories of individual lives and experiences, rather than narrations aiming at the (de)construction of collective identities, clearly outline the diversity of society and celebrate hybridity. To be able and really understand transnationalism and hybridity, it is necessary, as Shauna Singh Baldwin pointed out in a recent interview, to try and “walk in the shoes of someone else” which is possible through fiction, because fiction offers the readers a way to “enter into somebody else’s point of view”.

In my presentation I will thus, after a brief overview on contemporary Canadian literature’s reflections on transnationalism and transculturalism, take a closer look at Shauna Singh Baldwin’s recently published collection of short stories *We are Not in Pakistan*. Furthermore, Baldwin not only interrogates such issues in her ten stories, but also her own biography – born in Montréal, raised in India, living in the US, publishing mostly in Canada – reads like the epitome of transnationalism.

Doris Eibl (Innsbruck)

Migrant Experience and "mémoire-fiction" in Régine Robin's *La Québécoise*

The French historian, sociologist and writer of Polish origin Régine Robin settled in Montreal in 1977. Her experimental novel *La Québécoise* (1983) is usually listed among those works of fiction by immigrant writers which, in the early 1980s, contributed to an ever growing diversification of Quebec literature and led to the creation of a new and widely discussed literary category: the "écriture migrante". Launched by the linguist and poet Robert Berrouët-Oriol in the transcultural magazine *Vice-versa* in 1986 the notion of "écriture migrante" describes various writing practices that reflect the dialogic and creative potential of migration experience and its transcultural dynamics.

What is subsumed under the heading "écriture migrante" is in fact extremely varied, depending on the authors' past and their specific strategies to deal with traumatic elements. Most often migration itself turns out to be the central traumatic element. However, just as frequently the traumatic moment is to be found in the past and thus determines the way in which migration is experienced and finally symbolised. *La Québécoise* reveals the crucial impact of the historical experience of Jewishness and the heritage of the Shoah on Régine Robin's fiction. The very structure of the novel, its generic hybridity and the dissolution of fixed identity patterns reflect the author's critical analysis of national and ethnic identities and their legitimation through historiographic discourses. My paper mainly focuses on Régine Robin's experimentation on the "possibles ou les non-possibles identitaires" ("possibilities and impossibilities of identity") in *La Québécoise* and on how the author succeeds in fictionalising the insuperable tension that results from the protagonist's desire to be at the same time "dedans et dehors" ("inside and outside"), to keep alive a being "in between": in between affiliation and dissociation, fact and fiction.

Renate Eigenbrod (Winnipeg)

Canada: Land vs. Country

As the first people of North America, the Indigenous or Aboriginal people of Canada and the United States have a relationship with the land that is different from both, descendants of immigrants from generations ago and new immigrants. Beth Brant, a Mohawk author whose territory crosses the U.S.-Canada border, states in one of her essays in *Writing as Witness* (1994): "... what we may have 'forgotten' is still in our blood. Salmon's desire to go home is our desire also. Blue Heron's desire to fly long distances to make a home is ours also. Corn's desire to grow is ours also. For we are parts of them and they are parts of us. This is why we are Indigenous."

My presentation argues that in spite of the many forms of colonial displacement, Aboriginal peoples take their worldviews and values from the land as is reflected in their literature. This relationship with the land often overrides or questions their relationship with the political entity, the country Canada as is shown, for example, in their resistance against the recognition of the U.S.-Canada border (Thomas King's short story "Borders") while, at the same time, they fight for land as a treaty right. Since land as resource and the notion of Indigenous *difference* and rights as grounded in the close link with the land have become contentious issues in Canada, two recent works by Anishnabe (Ojibway) author Richard Wagamese address misunderstandings regarding the land and, in a conciliatory gesture, invite people of different ethnic and national groups to participate in the Indigenous appreciation of land. In *For Joshua* (2002), the author does not only teach his son (as the subtitle of the book suggests) but all his readers about a land-based philosophy in which all may partake. In his novel *Dream Wheels* (2006), he takes this theme further by constructing a story which brings Aboriginal people from various ethnic backgrounds (U.S as well as Canada) together with Euro- and Afro-Canadians. Re-visioning the "Cowboy and Indian" trope, Wagamese creates a multi-

cultural community in a fictional place in Canada which overcomes tragedies and solves challenges by resorting to the land and traditions built on the land and with the land. In this way, the novel models a Canadian society based on Indigenous values and is reminiscent of early contact times when European settlers relied on the teachings of Aboriginal people for their survival. Wagamese's work is not an isolated literary event but reflects a shift in the construction of Canadian identity which acknowledges Aboriginal contributions (as illustrated in the 2005 publication *Hidden in Plain Sight*) and understands the Indigenous components in artistic and other developments as making Canada truly Canadian, that is expressing the land, especially in the face of globalization.

H. D. Forbes (Toronto)

Recognition/Authenticity: Charles Taylor and Canadian Multiculturalism

Immigration to prosperous modern societies such as Canada is creating unprecedented challenges for their governments. How should these challenges be understood? What kind of politics do we now have?

Charles Taylor, an eminent philosopher, is currently involved as an adviser to the government of Quebec on questions of “reasonable accommodation” of cultural minorities (the Bouchard-Taylor Commission). My presentation will examine the recommendations made in the report of the commission in the light of Taylor’s previous writings about the distinctive challenges and characteristic conflicts of culturally diverse societies, particularly his seminal 1992 lecture on multiculturalism, “The Politics of Recognition”.

My presentation will begin with a synopsis of this lecture, outlining a “positive” rather than the usual “normative” reading of it and briefly relating it to some of Taylor’s earlier writings about nationalism in Quebec and Canada. In other words, the focus will be on what Taylor has said about how our new political circumstances should be *described*. Only secondarily will my analysis deal with what Taylor seems to be saying about what we ought to do, from the moral point of view, about increasing ethno-cultural diversity and the demands for recognition and protection that are associated with this increasing diversity. Admittedly, description may be inseparable from prescription – all descriptions may imply recommendations – but in this case there are good reasons (which can be supported by reference to Taylor’s early work on the philosophy of social science) for emphasizing the descriptive purpose of his analysis and restraining the tendency to assume that any “philosophical” writing about multiculturalism must be primarily normative or prescriptive.

In fact, Taylor has previously been very cautious about offering practical advice about how to deal with multicultural diversity (by contrast, for

example, with Will Kymlicka). He has been more outspoken on questions relating to English and French Canada. But as a member – and perhaps the dominant member – of the two-person advisory commission mentioned above, he is going to be required to speak more plainly and practically in the report that is expected this spring. My presentation will briefly explain the specific problems the commission confronted, summarize its major recommendations, and comment on their relation to Taylor's analysis of the politics of recognition.

The presentation will conclude with some general remarks on how Canada's multicultural experiment should be understood.

Patrick Imbert (Ottawa)

The Valorization of Geographic, Cultural and Economic Displacements in the Literary World of Canada

More than the superficial appearance of the presence of ethnicity and of thematic linked to other regions or ethnic groups, Canadians have mixed their traditional values within new discourses and new contexts.

This means that the territorial logic linked to the belief that life is a zero-sum game (when one wins, the other one loses) and that there is a finite sum of wealth, while still important, is displaced by the belief that life is a non-zero sum game and that it is possible to create an infinite amount of wealth. This new dominant belief is well connected with a knowledge-based society such as Canada, as well as with its multicultural programs and its transcultural literary perspectives.

For instance, one can think of the capacity to criticize the territorial logic by the Franco-Canadian writer Yann Martel who published *Life of Pi* in English (and got the most prestigious literary prize of the Anglophone world, the Booker Prize). In his narrative P. Patel, an immigrant to Canada, is lost at sea on a raft with a very territorial animal: a tiger. He is able to save himself as well as the tiger (non-zero sum game situation). This demonstrates that now change and adaptability to different contexts are valorised. This is coupled by the fact that geographical as well as symbolic displacements are seen as positive in manifold fictions (which no longer rest on a nostalgia of roots and/or the past) such as in *La passion des nomades* or *Un café dans le Sud* by Daniel Castillo Durante. This writer was born in Argentina and is now a Canadian living in Ontario. In 2007, he got the Franco-Ontarian Trillium Book Prize to honour a Franco-Ontarian writer. As we can see the institutions no longer link prizes to authors or books who would be necessarily rooted within a territory defined by a traditional heritage. Identities are now transformed in multiple images of the self. The metaphor of the roots is displaced by that of the chameleon.

Susan Ingram (Toronto)

The Reverse Diversity of FT Fashion Television: Canadian Culture's Global Positioning System

This presentation examines the contributions of FT Fashion Television to changing constructions of Canada's increasingly ethnically diverse and globally oriented identity. Since its launch in 1985 on Citytv in Toronto, the show has become immensely popular. It now airs across the nation on all stations owned by Citytv's owner, CHUM Limited, is broadcast in syndication around the world and in 2001 spawned FashionTelevision-Channel, a special interest cable channel. Host Jeanne Beker has become a recognizable Canadian fixture on the world fashion scene and has come to serve as a role model for many young Canadians, helping to shape both their identities and how they relate to and understand what it means to be Canadian in this age of mobility and globalization. In identifying the key factors that have contributed to FT's success, the presentation will also seek to establish in how far the growth of fashion itself has played a role in the changing Canadian identity.

Sabine Kim (Toronto)

Border Crossings and Customs Trouble in Fred Wah's *Diamond Grill*

In his avant-garde assemblage of poetic narrative segments entitled *Diamond Grill* (published 1996 and revised 2006), Canadian poet and critic Fred Wah writes what he calls a "biotext" in order to enable a type of border crossing between autobiographical acts and the writing of fiction. Wah contends that he needed the mediating presence of what he calls "a hedge" between "ready-made generic expectations" that may surround life writing, and what he creates in his deliberately hybridized (auto)biography-fiction—"clips and anecdotes out of nostalgia and memory". Biotexts are texts written simultaneously from, about and *in-between* categories such as literary genres, "racial" identities, and national boundaries. My presentation examines the complex interactions and intertextual practices of Wah's texts, where one text self-consciously recalls, reiterates and/or reworks another, arguing that this intertextuality forms the basis of a poetics that joins ethics and ethnics, bios and graphos, insisting that one must be read through the other.

Diamond Grill tells the story of Wah's family on his father's side, going back several generations to the grandfather who emigrated from China to work on the nation-building project of the Canadian Pacific Railway in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The text however mainly concentrates on the father, who was born in Canada but grew up in China before moving back to Canada in his early 20s to eventually open a Chinese café, the Diamond Grill. Wah himself tries "to become as white as I can, which, considering I'm mostly Scandanavian, is pretty easy for me", but all the same Wah's prose segments refer to the dislocations and displacements of being subjected to racializing – experienced most sharply by Wah's father: "My father, being of mixed race, was undoubtedly more familiar with the instability – the shifting – of racial identity, as he was racially slurred in China and in Canada. I'm sure he desired a more stable

racial space (don't we all?) but had witnessed the destabilization of sure identities throughout his life, particularly in the descriptive containment of the Chinese in Canada".

Wah's writing practice emerges from a contact zone of colonial encounters, as Pratt puts it: "the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict". Pratt's postcolonial theories emphasize an exchange and mutual influence which is "not (...) separateness or apartheid, but (...) copresence, interaction, interlocking understandings and practices" that are "often within" unequal power relations. Similarly, Wah's biotexts are a critical practice that remains in the discomfort of uncertainty and vulnerability, yet produces something generative and self-reflective. As the *Diamond Grill* epigraph contends, "When you're not 'pure', you make it up".

Till Kinzel (Berlin)

Transcending Multiculturalism and Transnationalism? – Neil Bissoondath, M. G. Vassanji, and Canadian Identity

After the demise of the “cult of multiculturalism” (Bissoondath) – most conspicuously in the wake of 9/11 and the new questions about (dis)integration visible in various parts of Canada as well as other Western countries – attempts to theorize the current situation of so-called multicultural societies need to be highly attentive to the ways in which conflicts can and will most likely arise. It is open to serious doubt whether this can be done properly within the currently fashionable theoretical framework of concepts such as transculturalism or the “individualistic design of the hybridity concept” (Fludernik). These may not provide the politically viable option recent critics of conventional or mainstream multiculturalism believe them to be. For diasporic identities (on which these theorems seem to rest), by definition, cannot be universalized.

Drawing on Chantal Mouffe’s recognition of the inevitably antagonistic character of the political, this insight within the context of hard-headed realism has to be confronted with Czech novelist Milan Kundera’s emphasis on the “fundamental difference between the ways philosophers and novelists think”. Whereas the political by its very nature necessitates some kind of reduction of complexity, by abstracting from the individual case and taking account of a non-individual, i.e. *collective situation*, the “novel’s spirit is the spirit of complexity”, i.e. it is more akin to liberalism’s focus on individuality. I suggest that taking a closer look at some aspects of the fiction of Neil Bissoondath and M. G. Vassanji may provide an important contribution to a sophisticated and integrated account of what migration means politically and culturally in the Canadian context (and, perhaps, beyond it).

Bissoondath’s various fictions from *Digging Up the Mountains* (1985), *A Casual Brutality* (1988), *On the Eve of Uncertain Tomorrows* (1990), especially the short stories “Insecurity,” “Security,” and “On the Eve of

Uncertain Tomorrows,” and especially *The Innocence of Age* (1992), to his highly controversial essay-cum-memoir *Selling Illusions* (1994) as well as M. G. Vassanji’s novels *No New Land* (1991) and *The Assassin’s Song* (2007) can be fruitfully read in conjunction with the guiding question of political philosophy – what is the good life for the individual *and* the political community – so as to gain a better understanding of how identities are forged in the Canadian political sphere. The subtlety of literary accounts of this phenomenon – literature may indeed be the best diagnostic instrument for studying a society – can shed new light on the conditions of politically relevant Canadian identity formations.

Pico Iyer’s recent question, “How to fashion a sense of self or home when all the traditional coordinates are gone?”, is surely highly relevant here. But it is still posed from the angle of the “uprooted” individual, insufficiently taking into account what Bissoondath and Vassanji, e.g. in their fictionalizations of the migrant experience, problematize.

Martin Kuester (Marburg)

Region/Gender/Nation:

Mennonite Women Writing Themselves into the Mosaic

In this presentation, I will have a look at the construction of community and identity in works by contemporary women writers of Mennonite origin, mostly from the Prairies. Mennonite writing is often characterized by traces of the multilingual history of the Mennonite community, but as important as such linguistic and stylistic aspects is the religious and ideological background of this pacifist Christian community, the influence of which extends beyond the traditional Mennonite community even to those who have left (or had to leave it) behind. How does a group that often defines itself in terms of separation from the mainstream community or of non-participation in civic duties keep its identity, whether national, non-national or supranational? What role does the regional context – often that of the Prairies – play here? How does such a group fit into and respond to the post-national arguments that critics such as Frank Davey see at work in Canadian literature? And is there a special gender aspect to this question? Among the writers analyzed in this context are poets such as Di Brandt and Audrey Poetker and novelists such as Sandra Birdsell, whose *The Russländer* is of special interest, and Miriam Toews, whose *A Complicated Kindness* won the Governor General's Award in 2005.

Maria Moss (Hamburg)

Canada's Mosaic Reconsidered: Postcolonial or Not?

Much of the fiction written, read, and studied in Canada over the past two decades asks questions and challenges assumptions about the nature of Canada's relationship with others: with their direct neighbours (most specifically, the United States), with their native populations, and with recent immigrants. The presentation seeks to answer the following questions: 1. In how far does the former settler colony qualify – at least in part – as a postcolonial country (as argued by many critics – for instance, Linda Hutcheon, who calls the *First Nations* the resisting, postcolonial voice of Canada)? 2. Will Canada ever overcome its postcolonial status (vehemently denied by some native writers, i.e. Thomas King and Taiaiake Alfred, who argue not only that Canada still engages in postcolonial practice, but view postcolonial theory as just one more European invention, denying the native population any existence prior to contact)? 3. How does recent fiction by immigrant writers (who themselves often left a postcolonial existence behind) negotiate the question of identity? And 4. In how far are these questions irrelevant since Canada qualifies merely as a satellite of U.S. American influence, dominated by rampant neoimperialism (as argued by the Afro-Canadian writer George Elliott Clarke)? The presentation focuses on the differences between Canadian fiction written from a native point of view (i.e. Thomas King, Lee Maracle, Tomson Highway) and by authors originally from Asia, Africa, or the Caribbean (i.e. Dionne Brand, Filippo Salvatore, Rohinton Mistry). The presentation will explore the ways in which contemporary writers of fiction – established ones as well as newcomers to the literary scene – describe Canada's pursuit of a specifically "Canadian" identity in light of postcolonial and transnational theory. This includes a concern with issues including cultural imperialism, emergent nationalisms within a nation and between nations, as well as the process of decolonization.

Markus M. Müller (Trier)

En route to 'Africadia': Black North American History and Culture in George Elliott Clarke's Nova Scotia

This presentation focuses on George Elliott Clarke's literary creation of African-Canadian communities in Nova Scotia. As a seventh-generation Canadian of African-American and M'ikmaq origins, Clarke (born 1960) grew up in Halifax, where early brushes with racism made him understand "that, to be black, at least in Nova Scotia, was to insist on a separate and proud identity" – at the same time as "[n]othing in the province reflected me or mine". While African Americans have a tangible sense of collective identity and belonging, Clarke argues that sense is missing in Canada where people "are abysmally ignorant about African-Canadian history". Trying to put African Canadians (back) on the map of the Maritimes, he struggles against their being silenced and even erased from major discourses. Hence, Clarke's ongoing, poetic-political project of revising Black North American history and culture: "Africadia". As a complex term, it blends Africa, the site of origin for the author's ancestors that were uprooted and then enslaved in America, and Acadia, the Atlantic Provinces of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, where, from 1783 onward, many United Empire Loyalists and, after 1812, Black Refugees were seeking freedom in what they envisioned as a New World Eden.

This presentation addresses textual manifestations of Clarke's African-Canadian "nation" and the related notions of blackness, race, exile, and belonging. With their highly intertextual and often cross-generic range, these texts present characters that contest official history by inhabiting marginal, creative, provocative positions. Rattling national myths, *Why/ah Falls* (1990) condenses a 200-year-history of Black Loyalists, with their double exile from Africa and the United States, in a fictionalised 1930s community shaken by homicide. With a stronger focus on gender and power issues, *Beatrice Chancy* (1999) also probes into the diasporic reali-

ties of racial injustice, slavery, and violence; *George & Rue* (2005), a daring psycho-sociological study and Clarke's first novel, tells the story of the author's two maternal cousins' killing of a taxi driver and the circumstances leading up to their execution in 1949.

With his writing as a *tour de force* through literary traditions and genres, historical archives and cultural memories, George Elliott Clarke seeks to secure an Africadian presence out of a temporal and spatial distance from the Nova Scotia of his ancestors and his youth. His being in (voluntary) exile can be seen as a position that keeps him being *en route* to both rediscovering and resuscitating a complexly humane Africadia.

Reingard M. Nischik (Konstanz)

"Heights and Depths I Never Guessed At": Cultural Locations of Ethnicity in Vancouver Short Fiction by First Nations and Chinese Canadian Writers

Vancouver, Canada's westernmost metropolis, has known the presence of First Nations and Chinese people as a significant part of its population right from the beginning of the settlement towards the end of the 19th century. Thus even in the early 1880s, Chinese immigration to the area was so substantial that a Head Tax, a financial restriction on Chinese immigration, was established in 1885 to be followed by the Exclusion Act in 1923. On the other hand, the establishment of Vancouver's Chinatown (today the largest of its kind in the country) as early as 1885 and the heavy immigration of Hong Kong Chinese towards the end of the 20th century were further markers of the complex history of the Chinese presence in Vancouver, the city in Canada in which the Chinese population forms the largest ethnic minority.

This paper demonstrates to what extent Vancouver fiction is also fiction by and about ethnic minorities (here focussing on Chinese Canadian and First Nations texts), how their writings reflect and are part of the socio-historical developments, and how, in particular, Vancouver fiction has incorporated specific ethnically defined spaces, borders, and border crossings into its representations of the city. Ethnic demarcations and the attempt at transcultural dissolution of ethnic boundaries in attitudes, actions, and social setups are often also externalized into what may be ambivalently called "cultural locations of ethnicity". Embedded in a (literary-)historical view of the issue, the presentation focuses on contemporary Vancouver fiction and specific spaces, borderlines, and border transgressions ethnic groups have effected to make up the multicultural phenomenon of Vancouver and Vancouver fiction. Special attention will also be given to the question of how these cultural locations of ethnicity coincide with Canada's official policy concerning a peaceful cohabitation of various

ethnic groups in a multicultural mosaic. Are locations such as Chinatown or specific "ethnic" meeting places seen as equal parts of a larger whole or are they rather characterized as "urban reserves", "colour bars", "accommodating sentinels – not people, sentinels, alone on a bridge, guarding nothing" (Lee Maracle), thereby challenging Canada's official self-conceptions? And what kinds of developments can be detected in this context by comparing earlier with recent Chinese Canadian and First Nations Vancouver stories? Authors treated include Lee Maracle and Madeleine Thien.

Gabriele Pizarz-Ramírez (Leipzig)

A Country of the Americas? – Rethinking Hemispheric Studies from Canada

In a recent issue of *Comparative American Studies*, Albert Braz has stated that at the beginning of the 21st century, Canada remains largely a country without a continent. He was echoing similar statements by writers and intellectuals throughout the Americas who have bemoaned the invisibility of Canada on the map of the Americas. While revisions of the notion of exceptionalism in American Studies have pointed out the historical interconnectedness between the various geographies of the Americas, most of these hemispheric approaches have focused on the manifold links between the United States and its Southern neighbours in Latin America, whereas Canada has been largely excluded from hemispheric studies. Canadian national narratives which have often emphasized the specificity of the Canadian nation in relation to the United States have reaffirmed this separatist position. Canada's cultural nationalism has privileged a Canadian identity based on multiculturalism, liberalism, and peacefulness.

However, as I will argue in my presentation, both the isolation of Canada in the Americas and the myth of Canadian multiculturalism have in recent years been critically addressed by Canadian ethnic writers of African-Canadian, Caribbean and Latino origin. I will focus on texts by George Elliott Clarke, Dionne Brand and Guillermo Verdecchia who have foregrounded the experience of dislocation and diaspora – a key topic in the literature of the Americas – and who have disclosed the multiple lines of connection that link Canada to the United States and other regions in the Americas. Moreover, as I will show, their texts also question the positioning of the African American and U.S. Latino experience as exclusive points of reference for black and Latino cultures in the Americas. Rather, they call for the inclusion of Black and Latino Canada as critical spaces of inquiry into the inter-American discussion and, more specifically, into the critical debate within Black and Latino Studies in the U.S.

Anca-Raluca Radu (Marburg)

Divisadero – A Reader's Novel

A reviewer of the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* situates Ondaatje's latest novel, *Divisadero* (2007), in between cultures and qualifies this position as invulnerable due to the multicultural perspective that it promotes. Notwithstanding the reviewer's ironic undertone – he entitles his review "Michael Ondaatje's exemplarily multicultural novel" – Ondaatje's multiculturalist, un-nationalist, un-essentialist perspective is a core element of the critical apparatus dedicated to his work.

Despite its salient concern with issues of identity, *Divisadero* does not propose to address them from a Canadian, i.e. national point of view. Instead, his characters of different nationalities and ethnicities move freely between spaces in a narrative that covers parts of Canada, the United States and France.

The novel has often been reviewed unfavourably for its loose handling of plot and character and for its refusal to continue the plot line begun on its first 42 pages in a consistent and gratifying way. One reviewer remarks in *The Spectator* that "Michael Ondaatje's legion of admirers will not expect a novel constructed around a linear narrative, or even cohering in the developing consciousness of a central character." These observations lead to the central topic of my presentation which concentrates on the reader's role in creating the novel's coherence and uses the reader-response approach to determine ways of reaching an understanding of the text's narrative intricacies.

Divisadero raises a set of expectations in its first chapter which it then overthrows when the reader follows Coop to Lake Tahoe and Las Vegas, Claire on her errands as a Public Prosecutor's field assistant, and Anna to France, where she studies the life of fictional writer Lucien Segura. Finally it diverts the reader completely from the initial plotline in the third part of the novel dedicated mainly to Segura's life story. The coherence of the text is thus frequently challenged and the reader's expectations are re-

peatedly thwarted. It is, however, for the reader to hold the strings of Coop's, Claire's, and Anna's lives fast and establish the connections with the lives of Lucien Segura, Rafael and Marie-Neige. The fragmentary and loosely-knit plot is built on parallels and metaphors that the reader has to identify and unfold; or in Iser's words, the text leaves blanks or gaps that the reader has to bridge in order to start a real communication with the text: "the basic pattern of the text is formed by an interaction between the expressed and the unexpressed. The expressed itself evolves to the degree in which the reader actualises the unexpressed, and so the reading process transforms the text into a correlate in the reader's mind."

By inviting the reader to fill in its gaps in such a challenging manner, the novel demonstrates an awareness of its own artificiality. This also becomes manifest in passages of overt metafiction in which Anna, Lucien, and Rafael meditate on literature, music or the craft of clock making. In art, these characters find a common ground as, in Anna's words, "We have art, Nietzsche says, so that we shall not be destroyed by the truth".

Markus Reisenleitner (Toronto)

Gibson Country: Global City-Spaces in the North American Imaginary of *Pattern Recognition* and *Spook Country*

William Gibson, who is credited with having invented the term *cyberspace* as the description of a technologically mediated geography that has no correlation in physical space, has had his home base in Canada for the last 40 years. While his early, noir-inspired cyberpunk novels in the *Sprawl* and *Bridge* trilogies offer perceptive insight into the impact of technologies on the future, his two most recent novels, intertextually linked through protagonists, media, brand names, and lifeworlds, are set in contemporary "global cities" (London, Tokyo, and Moscow in *Pattern Recognition*; New York, Los Angeles, and Vancouver in *Spook Country*). Plot patterns revolve around the female protagonists' quests for elusive *objects*, located somewhere between cyberspace and "meatspace", experiencing world cities that are connected by multiple flows of fashion, brand names, global media stars and agencies, patterns of consumption and labeling, and the ubiquitous presence of the internet, whose bulletin boards provide the only "home" in a network of constant movement that is always just one step ahead of the jetlagged physical body.

This paper will read Gibson's global-urban imaginary as a refraction of and tacit engagement with both American and Canadian visions of a global world. In media environments that compulsively ethnicize and/or nationalize processes of identity formation, Gibson's novels highlight the absurdities and contradictions of official ideologies of home and belonging. Highly publicized in Canada, Gibson's latest novel brings his ironic take on multiculturalism in the age of virtual and material global flows home to Vancouver.

Kirsten Sandrock (Göttingen)

Carnival in Cape Breton: Multiculturalism in Ann-Marie MacDonald's *Fall on Your Knees*

If the Canadian mosaic achieves to preserve rather than "melt down" different cultural identities, then the danger of this conceptual approach lies in the promotion of a mere coexistence of apparently static constituents. Critics from the fields of cultural and gender studies increasingly challenge the mosaic for envisaging cultural communities as immobile and fragmented pieces, when really identities are being formed in an ongoing process of hybridization and interactive transformation. My presentation takes up the emphasis on crossings and exchanges, and proposes to translate the image of Canada's multicultural identity from the visual sphere of the mosaic into the verbal sphere of dialogic interaction. Going back to Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of heteroglossia, literally meaning "different-languaged-ness", the interaction between different languages and voices is able to overcome what Toni Morrison identifies as the ongoing "*ex negativo* thinking" implied in many official forms of multiculturalism. Whereas the mosaic has frequently continued to conceive of gender and race as "Other", I propose that the concept of heteroglossia allows for a hybrid understanding of personal and cultural identities along the lines of Canada's multilingual policy. It will be illustrated that the image of verbal-cultural exchanges between various ethnic and gendered voices forms what Gloria Anzaldúa calls a "synthesis [...] which is greater than the sum of its severed parts". Dialogue translates immobilized constituents into active, hybridized participants in the discourses on Canada's multicultural identity.

In order to show how this transformation of Canadian identity is slowly taking place already, the presentation discusses Ann-Marie MacDonald's novel *Fall on Your Knees* (1996). MacDonald deals very critically with the official policy of Canadian multiculturalism and exposes the multiple incongruities and discriminatory practices residing within the official

agenda by staging an intricate, highly ironic family saga in Cape Breton – a part of Canada’s cultural consciousness that has frequently been perceived as homogenous, somewhat folksy “Other”. The presentation discusses how the novel draws upon elements of historiographic metafiction to assert the historicity of multiculturalism in Cape Breton, while simultaneously exposing the instances of discrimination that have long tried to repress the region’s heterogeneity in both implicit and explicit respects. This two-fold direction in MacDonald’s treatment of the multicultural theme will subsequently also be established in her usage of foreign languages, which demonstrate that heteroglossia is not only a figurative but also a verbatim reality in the Maritimes. Images of verbal interaction and linguistic hybridization will be read as asserting the heteroglot nature of the region as much as they make plain the ongoing need to enter into active intercultural communication with each other. It will be demonstrated that the construction of the personal and cultural self is inherently related to the usage of one’s mother tongue, which also implies the possibility to share in each other’s cultural identity and actively hybridize on another in a manner that the visual sphere of the official multicultural mosaic seems to preclude.

Víctor Sevillano Canicio (Windsor)

Cultural and Religious Identity in “Migrant” Soaps of Canada (*Little Mosque on the Prairie*) and Germany (*Türkisch für Anfänger*)

Germany had maintained politically, until very recently, the dogma of not being a country of immigration even though the migrant communities, especially of the Turks – by far the largest minority in Germany – reached the level of substantial minorities in urban areas. Consequently, very little has been done to integrate them into the German society with very negative effects on their political and social integration. Since the turn of the millennium, however, and especially after the events of September 11th, the successive governments have on the one hand tightened immigration and naturalization procedures and at the same time started a controversial institutional dialogue about reasonable accommodation and religious rights.

Canada, even though traditionally much more open to immigration, has recently seen a spill-over of a similar debate from Québec where the public hearings of the Taylor-Bouchard commission have proven that multiculturalism and “reasonable accommodation” are terms that did not create unanimous consensus. The media in both countries have in the last years been reflecting the problematic sides of reasonable accommodation and religious rights especially towards Muslims, finding themselves trapped between negative stereotypes and a diffused notion of tolerance and multiculturalism. In this environment, soaps and sitcoms, written by immigrants, have appeared in the last two years in the public TV systems of both countries (CBC and ARD). These programs try to show in a humorous way the cultural and religious challenges that migrants from predominantly Muslim countries have to encounter in Western society. Both series have been overwhelmingly praised by the press and politicians, especially in Germany as if it was a panacea to overcome deep rooted animosities and prejudgments on both sides. Bloggers, however, espe-

cially those who have defined themselves as Muslims, have had a mixed view of the benefits of these series.

The presentation will focus on the analysis of the cultural and religious stereotypes in both series and their importance in their respective societies and if this kind of series really has the potential to increase awareness and understanding.

Eleanor Ty (Waterloo)

Globality, Mobility and the Everyday in Asian Canadian Narrative

Asian Canadians can be said to inhabit a global way of life since they came into existence. By definition, an Asian Canadian occupies a transnational space, a convergent social, psychic, cultural location between Asia and North America. The hyphenized subjectivity of Asian North Americans has been characterized "between worlds" (Ling), as "ambivalent Americans" (Lim) or as "exiles" (Campomanes). From this space, many authors and filmmakers who produced work about themselves focussed on themes and issues such as assimilation, survival, the struggle to fulfil the (North) American dream, the effects of racist and exclusionary practices, and the conflict between first and second generation immigrant settlers. These issues were especially prevalent in works produced before the 1990s, and are still present in Asian North American cultural production of the last decade. However, recent works have begun to take on new issues that have emerged from the more recent phenomenon of globalization.

My presentation presents a brief overview of "globalization" and looks at ways recent novels, plays, and films by Asian Canadians engage critically with what Shaw calls "globality". These authors use their novels, plays, and/or films to interrogate, critique, and sometimes, even engage playfully with the effects of globalized conditions. Their works reveal their acute awareness of the inequalities that have resulted from the globalization of markets, the overuse and misuse of the environment and natural resources, and the pleasures, as well as unfortunate consequences of the breakdown of national geographical or spatial limits.

Waldemar Zacharasiewicz (Wien)

Transatlantic Memories, Ethnic Encounters and Transculturation in Canadian Literature

The presentation investigates the prominence of "fictions of memory" in Canada, and considers the recovery of transatlantic collective memories of "new Canadians" of European descent as part of a global trend additionally fostered by the appeal of "life writings" by members of "visible minorities".

While this development is linked to the Canadian policy of multiculturalism and the willingness to recognize cultural difference, the presentation compares the different moments when erstwhile silenced members of groups in Canada's vertical mosaic (for instance, Ukrainian-, and Italian-Canadians) acknowledged their roots in memory fictions. It also illustrates the continuing burden of the (European) past in the most intimate form of encounter, that of marriage outside ethnic boundaries. It finally relates recent pleas for choices for the individual and hybrid options to the recognition of ethnic heritages, and the decreased significance of the nation state, whose defence by Canadian intellectuals against US cultural hegemony had earlier precluded the advocacy of the open concept of transculturality.