

RCC 2: Citizenship and/in Literature: Diasporic Subjects, Insurgent Identities, Postcoloniality

Submitted by Sophie McCall

Participants: Barbara Godard (discussant), Warren Cariou, Wendy Pearson, Bev Curran

Participants: Hiromi Goto, Farah Moosa, Wendy Stewart, June Scudeler, Lily Cho, Lisa Chalykoff, and others.

Summary of Discussions

We discussed the terms in the title of our research cell, Aboriginality and Citizenship, and the difficulties of articulating their interrelationship. While recognizing the instability of these terms, we identified some paradoxes that they produce when they are "up against" each other. The historical shift that we traced was a movement from exclusion—Aboriginal people became enfranchised in 1960 in Canada—to enforced participation. Another way of putting this trajectory is from exclusion to interpollation. This insight enabled our discussion to focus on the economic underpinnings of any concept of citizenship. As Warren Cariou argued, there is a shift in the notion of citizenship from a political category to one of economic affiliation, that is from more "classical" citizenship to capitalist entrepreneurialism. In both cases, the Canadian State evades sharing its economic resources with First Nations and Metis peoples. A key term that complicated the dyad, Aboriginality and Citizenship, was sexuality. We examined the material consequences of how the double-focus on Aboriginality and Citizenship makes queer bodies disappear. In other words, in dominant representations, 'queer' and 'Aboriginal' force the disappearance of one or the

other identity formation despite the reality of multiple overlappings. One clear illustration is the translation and production of Tomson Highway's *The Rez Sisters* in Japan. According to Bev Curran's analysis of a Japanese production, the lesbian narrative took precedence over the 'res' narrative, effecting the excision or downplay of the Cree/Ojibway parts of the script.

Recommendations

1. Engagement with the question, "Why citizenship now?" could provide a critical tool for addressing the institutionally reinforced divisions between the social sciences and the humanities.
2. "Collaboration" could be thought of as "affiliation building" for institutional change.
3. Academics, activists, legal professionals, artists and others should mark the year 2006, the 10-year anniversary of the release of the Report on the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP), by organizing panels, discussions, workshops or symposia at Congress 2006 at York University
4. We identified the need for nonfiction activist publishing, including analyses of institutionally enforced changes, like those occurring at SSHRC.
5. We also identified the need for encouraging collaborations between scholarly and artistic communities.
6. We thought that Canadian citizenship, because it doesn't seem to be worth much, should be rewritten in some way.
7. We wondered how to bring about or facilitate redress and / or material redistribution.
8. For Phase 2 of TransCanada, we thought that more Aboriginal scholars and artists needed to be included.
9. More multidisciplinary participants are also needed, not just for the sake of including more people, but in the particular context of our research cell, "Aboriginality and Citizenship." This recommendation relates to point

number 9.

10. We recommended greater involvement of artists and writers in Phase 2 of TransCanada
11. Research cells should not be assigned but rather should be more finely articulated problematics. Delegates should choose which research cell they wish to participate in. Research cells should have more focused, follow-up tasks.
12. Research cells (or small group discussions of some kind) should meet earlier on in the conference program.
13. While some of us thought the TransCanada website could enable the sharing of longer papers, others warned against over-technologizing of our TransCanada collaborations, thereby over-burdening our work-loads.

Detailed [but not complete] Notes on our Meeting

Barbara Godard (BG) asked whether presenters identified 'citizenship' as a key issue in their work, or have they been assigned this topic? The disjunctive relationships of 'citizenship' become particularly fraught when placed alongside 'Aboriginality.' Maracle's presentation, for example, seemed to suggest that Aboriginality + Citizen + Canada becomes an incommensurable equation.

[Following BG's introduction, Warren Cariou (WC), Margery Fee (MF), Wendy Pearson (WP) and Bev Curran (BC) presented their research projects, which I will not attempt to summarize. Instead, interested presenters could send written versions of their presentations to the group.]

Warren Cariou (WC), "Aboriginals and / as Corporate Citizens"

Margery Fee (MF), "Getting out of the fort: Citizens Minus and 'Landed' Citizenship"

Wendy Pearson (WP), "Multiplying Belongings: Questions of Indigeneity,

Citizenship and Sexuality"

Bev Curran, "Linguistic Camouflage: The Translator Embedded in Canadian Fiction and International War Zones"

BG: In response to the papers, BG identified 3 shifts, or migrations, that might help frame our ensuing discussion:

1. Link between authenticity and Aboriginality in lived culture and cultural production
2. Enlargement or manipulation of citizenship away from the state and moving towards a field of capital. Economic relations underpinning any notion of citizenship
3. Sexuality intersection: complexities of sexuality multiplied in communities differently marginalized.

Lily Cho (LC) suggested that academics, activists, legal professionals, and others should mark 2006, the 10-year anniversary of the release of the Report on the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP), by organizing panels, discussions, workshops or symposia at Congress 2006 at York University. She also questioned **BC's** broad generalizations about the reception of translated Canadian cultural productions in Japan. **BC** responded that the Japanese audience is not singular and that her own positioning in Japan is partial, situated and particular. **MF** mentioned that Tomson Highway's article in *Prairie Fire* expresses deep disappointment in "political correctness" debates, which have made it impossible to stage his plays in Canada [due to an alleged lack of available Native actors]. **MF** added that in her opinion, people sometimes get frozen in debates over the appropriation of voice. **WP** mentioned that the collaborator she is working with, a 60-year-old Aboriginal man [didn't get his name], can't get

anyone to perform his plays in Australia because they are written in dialect. Ironically, one of his plays has been staged in the US, performed by African Americans. **MF** found this highly problematic. **BG** said that in light of **WC's** presentation it seems that Native people rejected citizenship under the nation-state, but now are facing new interpollations in the late-capitalist, global economy. The historical trajectory might be characterized as a movement from exclusion to interpollation. **MF** agreed, adding that citizenship for Aboriginal peoples could be characterized as enforced inclusion. Even though this inclusion also includes the enforced acceptance of \$, the bureaucrats still end up saving money. **WC** said that citizenship is predicated on economics. \$ is given to Aboriginal groups as a way of covering up how something else is being taken away [ie, sovereignty, land, title, etc]. **MF** raised the question of the so-called "casino tribes" in the US. Ironically, this \$ enables the maintenance of family structures and makes possible cultural continuance. Tourist economies can contribute to the maintenance of community. **Lisa Chalykoff (LC)** agreed, citing as an example the "tourist trap" of the Dead Dog Café in Green Grass Running Water. **MF** reminded the group of the artist Ron Hamilton, who refused to participate in the commodification of his own 'authenticity' and walked out of the elite art gallery market economy. **BG** asked if, alongside these questions of economic compensation, there were other horizons to consider? Other forms of belonging? **MF** asserted that the work of envisioning a future, or articulating forms of belonging, was something Native peoples need to work out themselves. She said that "we" [referring to non-Aboriginal academics] need to concentrate on "our" side of the equation—which is dealing with the legacy of genocide. She contended that otherwise, it's not a conversation. **June Scudeler (JS)**, in response to **BG's** question, cited Taiaiake Alfred, who has argued that decolonization movements and the promise of revolutionary social change often get bogged down in mountains of paper work. She cited RCAP as an example. **MF** said that she doesn't buy revolution anymore—running around with guns. **Lily**

Cho said that "sui generis citizenship," as articulated by Sakej Henderson, might offer a way of thinking about Aboriginal citizenship. **MF** wondered if Taiaiake Alfred might also help, but wasn't sure if he addressed citizenship specifically. **BC** asked **WP** about Australian Aboriginal Englishes. **WP** said that Australia is now trying to "recognize" Aboriginal Australian history on the continent by renaming places with Aboriginal names. Road signs offer translations of these names. But the way in which these translations are conceptualized and worded [ie, "In Aboriginal, X means..."] serves to erase 100s of Aboriginal languages. **WP** asked **BC** how, in stagings of *The Rez Sisters* in Japan, the Cree parts were represented. **BC** said that generally the Cree parts were removed. **Wendy Stewart (WS)** said that the term "First Nations" likewise erases languages. **MF** said that "First Nations" perpetuates a very status-oriented conception of Aboriginal identity—as in the "Assembly of First Nations." **BG** countered that "First Nations" is a strategic assertion of Aboriginal presence in relation to the so-called "founding nations" of Quebec and Canada. **MF** said that in any case, the vast array of terminology pertaining to Aboriginal identities points to the tight control the federal government has maintained over Aboriginal individuals and communities. Even band-specific and nation-specific names for Aboriginal communities are interpollated by the government. **BG** asked if there were other ways of thinking Aboriginal identity and its relation to place and community. Ie, geographical? Regional? Treaty-based? **WC** said that each treaty has its way of naming, and ensuring the ongoing control of the federal government. He wondered if, in West-coastal First Nations, there is the possibility of greater autonomy. He added that he is more familiar with Metis identity which doesn't readily associate with "First Nations" authenticity. **JS** said that "Metis" itself is not singular; there exists divisions between Metis who assert their belonging to the historic homeland of the Red River Nation and those who identify with mixed race identities. **MF** said that this is another example of "divide and conquer." **BG** countered that citizenship categories work through precisely these kinds of

divisions and cohesions. Differences in languages for example do not always match divisions in territory, nation or culture. **BC** said that most translation theory is Eurocentric, and so much of the critical work misunderstands the relationships between groups in Native North America, whose national/cultural divisions do not match up easily with linguistic divisions. Multilingualism becomes the smothered tongue. **WC** asked how orality might connect to this discussion. Is there an "oral citizenship"? What is the relationship between orality and belonging? **Lisa Chalykoff** also asked what might be the relationship between nation, orality and place. **MF** said that this is the relationship that Chamberlin is getting at in the title of his book, "If this is your land, where are your stories?" **Sophie McCall (SM)** said that Margery Fee has written a lot about the relationship between land, language, stories and community in settler discourses. She said that Fee calls it Romantic nationalism. **MF** said that there are worrisome echoes of Romantic nationalism in eco-criticism and deep ecology discourses. Nature comes first and the people don't count. There is an implied or even explicit moral judgement in the possibility of Native people securing land title in land claims trials and then using the land in bad ways. **BG** mentioned the legal decision of Delgamuukw, which is an example of orality facing the state apparatuses. **WP** mentioned that in Australia there has been a real failure to recognize orality in land claims proceedings. In Australia there are no treaties. **Farah Moosa (FM)** asked whether, in Thomas King's story "Borders", in which the character asserts her Blackfoot identity at the Canadian/American border and refuses to identify as either Canadian or American, this was an example of an oral performance of citizenship. **BG** pointed out the oral utterance is what the character refuses. **SM** said the oral utterance is only 'heard' once it is mediated through mainstream media outlets, which points to the role of the media in any understanding of citizenship and nationality. **JS** reminded the group that Blackfoot is on both sides of the Canada/US border. **WP** said that until recently, Beth Brant [a Mohawk writer] couldn't bring her lesbian partner across the border

because the state did not recognize the common-law rights of same-sex couples. **BG** said that the time has come for the group to consider the question of "collaboration." Before we begin discussing possibilities of collaboration between us, we should consider what's at stake in the call for collaboration. What does collaboration mean? Why does SSHRC consider it the "right way" to research? For some time now FCAR in Quebec has privileged "research groups" but these groups often foreclose the possibility of longer term research. **SM** wondered if "collaboration" could be thought of as group efforts to bring about institutional change. **MF** agreed with **BG** that group research often requires a 3-year end date. For Phase 2 of TransCanada she suggested more focused research questions on Aboriginality and citizenship. **BG** said that research in the humanities tends to be more individual than in the social sciences. She also said that she has done a lot of collaborative work in the past and that now she'd like to get some of her own work done. One big issue in collaborative work is the role of technology, which can quickly compound the amount of administrative work. She asked the group about the special SSHRC grants that are designated for Aboriginal communities. These grants necessitate the participation of Aboriginal community members in designing the objectives of the research project. The outcomes of the research have to be responsible to the community. **Lisa Chalykoff** said that this well-meaning requirement can put the scholar in an awkward position. It also assigns the scholar a more bureaucratic role which the scholar may not be trained to carry out effectively. **MF** said that UBC has instituted a surprisingly successful collaboration with the Musqueam nation on Musqueam language studies. For this kind of collaboration to work, which involves partners with vastly asymmetric accesses to power, the participants need to stick to very clear protocol. Not only is it difficult to sustain the partnership between the university and the community; this project has also brought to the foreground a lot of painful, divisive discussion amongst Musqueam participants: ie, which community members are the experts; what dialect should

be used; what's the purpose of the research; what can be shared; what would be considered stolen knowledge.... **BG**: [referring to stolen knowledge]: so much for collaborative work! She added that the administration of collaborative work takes people away from the research itself. **MF** said sometimes she wonders why academics bother applying for grants. The answer is they hire students. She added that 'collaboration' doesn't have to be about grants. Collaboration includes having discussions with others and finding like-minded people. For example, reading groups. Exchange—that's collaboration. **BG** agreed and added that the lateral thinking and accidental connections that occur in non-structured face-to-face dialogues don't get online. **WP** suggested nonfictional activist publishing as a way for academics to participate as public intellectuals. She also thought that academics could facilitate/participate in artistic collaborations. **WC** wondered if there were other, or more, ways of involving artists/writers in Phase 2 of TransCanada. **MF** suggested that we need to write about the institutional contexts of our research in more explicit ways. For example, if we don't like the changes that are occurring at SSHRC, we should write about it. **BG** shared her experience in pushing for changes at Heritage Canada by writing reports on cultural policy. **Lisa Chalykoff** thought that at Phase 2 of TransCanada more Aboriginal participants should be invited. She also thought that people from other disciplines would help advance the discussion. She detected a strong hunger for transformation and political relevance amongst the delegates. **WP** also thought that TransCanada was not transDisciplinary enough. In particular, work on sexual citizenship is going on elsewhere, not in literary critical debates. **WC** said that he's cross-appointed with Native Studies at the University of Manitoba, which he finds productive but strange. **WP** suggested that the keynotes include non-literary scholars. **MF**: said that her citizenship doesn't seem to be worth much. So how could we rewrite it? It's a big project but Canada has to do it. **LC**: said that redress and material redistribution need to happen. With respect to the research cells, she suggested that delegates choose the cell they wish to be a

part of. The cells should be organized around a question.

WC: agreed.

MF: also agreed: Research cells should not be assigned, but rather should articulate a problematic that people could choose to be a part of or not.

BG: thought that the research cells could be assigned specific, focused follow-up tasks.

MF: suggested that longer papers should be posted in advance on the website.

BG: again warned of escalating labour, as well as physical strain on the eyes, when we involve increasing levels of technologized research.

At this point, due to considerable finger strain and fear of exposure in the freezing temperatures of the room, SM stood up and made a move for the door.