

## **RCL 2: Canadian Literature and the Politics of Representation Today**

Submitted by Heather Latimer

Participants: Christopher Lee, Glen Lowry, Lydia Roupakia, Leslie Sanders, Frances Sprout.

### **Summary:**

The title of the research cell I reported for was "Canadian Literature and the Politics of Representation Today" and most of the discussion concentrated on the second half of that title. After Christian Book, Christopher Lee, Glen Lowry, Lydia Roupakia, Leslie Sanders and Frances Sprout gave their papers, the discussion revolved around connections between the creative and the critical, aesthetics and politics, privilege and responsibility, and between what texts can do in the world versus how they are produced. Following a major thread of the conference itself, Susan Rudy, the discussant, asked those in the room to consider what the status of their work was in relation to the category of the research cell itself and to explore the tension between the desire for representation and our constant questioning of the whole possibility of representation. Some of the key points that came out of this discussion were; first, a continued desire to understand how the humanities can get to a point where we are able to affect public policy and social change; second, an understanding of where identity politics has left us/ got us/ is situated in our work today and how that connects both nationally and internationally to the politics of representation as well as to the production of artistic work; and third, an interrogation of the connections between aesthetics and politics and a critical examination of both the form and content of the texts that are privileged in our classrooms and by the general public.

**Recommendations:**

Two recommendations made for the next Transcanada conference were that there should be research cells on the first day so that people can work in smaller groups and get to know each other better earlier on, and that there should be more than one set of research cells so that participants can sit in on several discussions and presenters can go to cells other than their own. As well, there were suggestions made for online discussion boards and links from the Transcanada webpage to participants email addresses and research projects so that collaboration could potentially begin before the conference.

The cell talked so extensively about the politics of representation that there was not much time left for talk of collaboration, but three main points were brought up by Larissa Lai in the final section of the discussion. First, that the productive collaboration being done in our fields does not work off the SSHRC model and we should acknowledge that fact. Second, people need to figure out a way to take advantage of the money out there anyway if possible and learn how to "fake it" basically. Last, if the SSHRC model is unworkable, people need to be having conversations about how to restructure models of collaboration so that we can approach funding sources with models that work better for the humanities. Also, Susan Rudy and Leslie Sanders have agreed to investigate the possibility of putting together a collaborative project based on this research cell and its concerns about the representation, aesthetics, politics and production of Canadian Literature.