

## **RCL 5: Canadian Literature and Transnationalism**

Submitted by kit Dobson

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### **Summary**

The discussion in the fifth Research Cell on Literatures, ostensibly themed around Canadian literature and transnationalism was, I think, very fruitful. Primarily, however, we found ourselves working around Steven Slemon's directive towards "problem finding" rather than "problem solving," so the recommendations that our panel came up with consist much more of questions than answers.

To summarize briefly, our panel began with the presentation of the five speakers' current research, which I will not get into in depth, as they are available on the website. We did, however, generate strong and productive questions about the projects, which generated for us a series of methodological problems that we attempted to phrase in terms of collaborative work. We found that our focus very quickly and easily slipped from a focus on the transnational to one on diaspora, as a number of us expressed more comfort with that term than the transnational, which was seen as an often vague term. Diaspora, however, presented us with a series of problems itself, as the varying terrain of the research projects demonstrated that diaspora is an open-ended term in much critical discourse and usage, reminding us of the need for vigilant awareness of the methodologies that we employ as scholars.

Thinking about diaspora and its connection to racialization led us to a series of

questions relating to issues of collaborative work. Recognizing that diasporic studies encompasses a broad range of approaches, we discussed possibilities for creating work to which various scholars could contribute based on their individual strengths. In discussion, however, we found that such work leads towards objectivist and scientifist methods that posit research and knowledge as something that is limitable and knowable. Creating collaborative research in which individual scholars simply fill in the gaps in each others' knowledge, then, presented us with difficulties and we suggested that such an approach did not seem terribly viable.

Instead, much of the discussion focused upon collaborative approaches that dealt specifically with methodologies. In thinking about these issues we were particularly guided by questions about what we hope to achieve through collaboration. One obvious point was that through creating intellectual networks we are able to access more and different resources, including financial ones. We discussed the potential for taking on more research across the borders of nation-states, which struck the group as productive in a time in which we want to constantly challenge nationalist imperialism. We also discussed the SSHRC transformation process, and wondered whether or not some of the more coercive aspects of these shifts should push us towards seeking other avenues of funding and what the consequences of such actions would be. Collaborative approaches towards working with American archives of Canadian materials as well as European institutions that take on Canadian work were both discussed.

Given the limitations of funding structures, we further wondered what avenues might be open to reforming how academic work is valued in order to foster collaborative approaches. Literary scholars seem to be awfully attached to their own writing! It is noteworthy that despite an often-articulated desire to challenge the rapacious individualism into which we are interpolated by late capitalism, workers in the humanities continue to produce single-authored papers as almost

our sole means of publishing, which in turn has consequences for the evaluation of academic performance. Seriously challenging how work is evaluated in, for example, tenure review committees and hiring processes is necessary for collaborative approaches to become not only the norm, but even a possibility for more than the occasional piece of writing.

In asking what our goals are for collaborative work and in thinking about how this work might, in fact, be done, we finally came around to an acknowledgement that this conference itself is, of course, a part of this process. Sessions have variously frustrated and compelled the participants in this research cell on literatures, making us look forward to the ongoing work of TransCanada, in which so much is at stake.

### **Detailed Notes on Research Projects**

#### **Starting off: John P. Corr: "Mapping Diasporic Sexualities in Canadian Fiction"**

Beginning with a recent Globe & Mail article on Mexican queer sexuality and the denial of refugee status in Canada. Refugee claim denied because claimant was not visibly effeminate enough to be harassed in Mexico. Sexual prejudice in Canada is thus based upon stereotypical notions of gendered performance in Canada. John is working on novels that pressure the dominant white centre of queer subjectivity. *Funny Boy*, *Jade Peony*, *In Another Place*, *Not Here*, *Cereus Blooms at Night* are all included. All are queer novels that do not name same-sex gendered acts according to dominant scripts ("gay," "lesbian," "bisexual," etc.). Insufficiency of the closet and dominant frameworks of naming is made apparent in these narrative performances. A sense of discovery and becoming is used to characterize these novels, following Butler's performativity. Performativity is read

here as one means of circumventing Foucault's repressive hypothesis via open-endedness. The project is pushing for interventions at moments where a lack of clarity relative to dominant terms undoes gender – contesting the institutionally privileged models of naming and commodification of gendered difference. What are those terms? What are their limits? In a racialized and diasporic context, how do they change? Unevenness of queerness and non-homogeneity of difference becomes evident when asking these questions. Texts such as *Diasporas* and *Global Diaspora* offer a slipperiness of terms, but adequate recognition of the differences within diaspora, when made singular, is frequently erased (as "the Chinese diaspora," etc.). Sexuality is one aspect that is erased in discussions of diaspora. These texts present challenges to non-Anglo/Franco diasporic cultures within official multiculturalism.

### **Jennifer Delisle: "Newfoundland Expatriate Literature: Nationalism and Diaspora"**

Jennifer is focusing on shifting the concept of transnationalism by viewing Newfoundland as a national category. She is thus examining how Newfoundland constructs a nationalism and how Newfoundland writers have married the concept of nationalism to the idea of diaspora (which is self-consciously loaded in this context). Newfoundland is recognized as a formerly separate dominion, still contested at the cultural level. Its place within Canada affects identity formations – federal control of fisheries and oil continues to provide a source of irritation and contestation. Confederation is thus a major theme in the literature. Wayne Johnston's writing equates confederation with death, as does Joan Clark's. Confederation meant a demise of the country of Newfoundland in this context. Stan Dragland, on the other hand, is seeing it as future-oriented discourse. Not as a failed nation, but as a work-in-progress. Literature and nationalism becomes interdependent in Newfoundland. The texts studied thus express a cultural nationalist tendency, through stereotypical or recurrent images (fisheries, etc.).

It is a "Country of no country" (Johnston's Baltimore's Mansion) or an imagined nation (Anderson). Newfoundland ethnicity builds nation and diaspora, through a constructed homeland. Its literature of diaspora constitutes the place from an external perspective. 50 000 Newfoundlanders were in the US and Canada by 1931, constituting a substantial portion of the population. E.J. Pratt is seen as the first significant literary figure of this diaspora. How to read him in this context? What is an authentic Newfoundlander? These questions are read through publications such as *Atlantic Guardian*, an expatriate magazine from Montreal. The literature of exile presents an artificial nostalgia, presenting a frozen Newfoundland. Writers in exile are thus producing nostalgia: Patrick Cavanaugh, Morrissey, etc. Gordon Pincent, David French, etc., writing about migration itself. David McFarland, in *The Danger Tree*, shows a continuation of themes into second generation emigrants. The diasporic dimension of this shift is, however, generally unnoticed in criticism.

### **Heike Härting "Global War and the Politics of Corpses in Canadian Narratives of the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda"**

Heike presented strands of where her research is going and where it is coming from. Her current focus is on Canadian policy-making, while she ended with recommendations for TransCanada coming out of her policy engagements. She is involved with the project from MCRI in Globalization and Autonomy at McMaster. In this work, she notes the absence of a theoretical approach that links global warfare and postcolonial theory. Postcolonialists have been retooling selves in the face of globalization to become transnational scholars (cf. Timothy Brennan). This is part of a larger historical project. What postcolonial studies needs to bring to the global is an analysis of how competing narratives of warfare are produced and a recognition of the racialization of global war. Global capitalism is read as

producing identities and militarizing national and global relationships. Canadian studies always implies postcolonial studies, and therefore these issues are inextricable from work situated in Canada. How does Canadian "peacekeeping" contribute to a de-racialized global imaginary? Through the discourse of "white civility" (Dan Coleman), for one. Hegemonic narratives, from federal policies to Roméo Dallaire's autobiography of Canadian self-imagining as good global citizen, override recognitions of Canada's complicity in global war. These dominant narratives deny the connection between nationalism, race, and war. See Achille Mbembe's "Necropolitics" in *Public Culture*. Necropolitics is read there as a form of biopolitics that extends Foucault's biopolitics to a politics of controlling death. This is read as a part of the project of historicizing war and racialization. Narratives deny relationships, while emphasizing rupture and chaos, instead of continuity as driving force of globalization. Mass amnesia is thus afoot. Heike works with a Foucauldian terminology – looking at Foucault's lectures from 1975–76, collected in *Society Must Be Defended*. Foucault addresses the relationship of war and racism in his final lecture. Racism is seen there as a precondition that allows murder and killing. Neither Foucault nor recent critics have looked at war and racism through imperialist history, leading to a dehistoricized sense of Canadian history. Meanwhile, the right wing is hijacking the rhetoric of diaspora to shore up the borders and the nation, and needs to be contested. The project involves a reading of *Shake Hands with the Devil* and Canadian policy documents. See Donna Pennee, for whom capitalism is projected as a quality and cultural value in dominant narratives. The specific policy under investigation focuses on building global capitalism through concepts of citizenship. The war in Rwanda, similarly, is viewed as an aspect of global developments in Dallaire rather than part of racialized history. Paul Martin suggests that Canada is simultaneously "doing well" and "doing good" in the global – enlarging "defence" budget through rhetoric of peacekeeping (against "failed states" as breeding-grounds for terrorism), while profiteering throughout the process. Fragile states

are now blamed for the world's ills. These "failed states" are euphemisms for postcolonial nation-states, and are thus part of racialized histories. This discourse connects to Derrida's Rogues – envisioning democracy within globalization. Global war as a question of policing, that is, of "stabilizing states" through foreign policy. Peace-building becomes a way of celebrating "ethical intervention" and waging war against the poor. See that Canadian government document called "A New Multilateralism" (contrasting to US unilateralism). Multilateralism is surfacing as a new term to replace multiculturalism, with consequences for creating new waves of historical amnesia.

Andrea Medeovarski, "Un/Settling Migrations: Citizenship, Kinship and the Second Generation in Post-Immigrant Black Canadian and Black British Women's Texts" Andrea is investigating the representation of migration. Hers is an attempt to gender diaspora, away from masculinist imagings of diaspora (scattering the seed, etc.). Many people surface in her in work, although they are not in the process of migrating – she is instead examining a post-migration rhetoric. What We All Long For, Out of My Skin, White Teeth, and Small Island, all appear. These texts feature second-generation children of migrants. Questions of settlement and negotiating new space are key concerns, in which there is less emphasis on "back home" and more on "right here." They are thus glocalized texts. Andrea's UK texts depict migrations, but are set in London. Brand's are set entirely in Toronto, while others are similarly limited to localities. These texts articulate a shift in recent writing. Why is this shift marked by women writers? How are writers depicting processes of occupying space and remaking national spaces of Canada and the UK? Here they can invoke home, but there is no return. There is a shift in tone – less focus on loss and trauma, more on a persistent effort to inhabit the nation. Radhakrishnan's "Ethnicity in an Age of Diaspora," tracing the difference between the Indian self as emigrant and Indian-American son, provides one avenue into this investigation. Hyphenations remake the nation there and in post-immigrant discourse. Hyphenation thus informs the term "post-

immigrant" itself. Lillian Allen: first and second generations are seen as post-immigrated. Immigrants and children are shaped by the histories, but negotiate the spaces. The Narratives dismantle false binaries around assimilation and ethno-nationalism as a reductive paradigm. They thus call into question the idea that place and rootedness are opposed to migration and routedness. Settled and unsettled therefore becomes a false binary. Theories of space and spatialization are derived from Henry LeFebvre, Edward Soja, in which spaces are reinscribed and altered. Andrea's work is further informed by Michel de Certeau's notion of resistance in everyday life as she traced shifts in Brand's corpus and shifts in concepts of space over time. Toronto becomes less frightening, from the generation of parents to children, from *In Another Place* to *The full and Change of the Moon* to *What We All Long For*. *Out of My Skin*, similarly, is read as a narrative of adoption and incest. Black / white binaries as disrupted therein. The text's protagonist is left with no choice but to lay claim to the current space, which is occupied first nations' land. How does one occupy space ethically? How to negotiate the complexities of living in the Americas? Diaspora is read as a rejection of a correlation between identity and place. Transnationalism is seen as problematic, as a means of containing the rhetoric of economics. Andrea is actively questioning the rhetoric of globalization are one of inevitable nomadism, working with the analyses of the need to migrate in *Globalization: The Human Consequences*.

### **Karina Vernon, "Black History on the Prairies"**

Karina aims to construct a dense archive of black prairie writing and orature from mid-nineteenth century until the present in her dissertation. This archive is situated in the context of black history on the prairies, which is often erased. Her governing pun is that this history is a "Black Atlantis" – an erased space. She is thus examining the repression of black history against prairie regional criticism.



How does Canadian postcoloniality neglect black history on the prairies? A regional focus looks to the dominant centre, rather than analyzing how the region itself represses difference. By looking at the disappearance of the prairies in black criticism, it is possible to see how regional discourses continually construct the prairies as an undisrupted microcosm, leaving black writing out of anthologies, etc. Claire Harris, for example, is frequently unacknowledged as a prairie writer. The current centennial projects of Alberta and Saskatchewan demonstrate, with shocking forthrightness, the racist exclusions of prairie space. Can we begin to think about the prairies as a black space? Blacks in Canada, Deemed Unsuitable, and Thompson's Blacks in Deep Snow are all key works that allow blackness to be seen as far from a new or recent prairie phenomenon. Karina's history thus starts in 1795, when the first black fur trader comes to the prairies in the employ of the Hudson's Bay Company. HBC frequently used black interpreters, who were thought to have more facility in indigenous languages. Karina thus explores the origins of migration, examining patterns of settlement in Amber Valley, Keystone, and near Swan River, which led to government fears of a black racialization of the prairies and a forbidding of black immigration. Black immigration started again after 1955, when restrictions on immigration were relaxed. In the 1996 census, it was found that Alberta has a larger black population than Nova Scotia, and Edmonton and Halifax have equivalent-sized black populations. The archive thus brings together writers and orators from the 19th century to the present. It is unique in that much material beyond the literary is used. It consists of taped interviews, census results from black families, amateur essays, and archival letters. It fills a crucial lack, as, for example, George Elliott Clarke's bibliography omits most prairie materials. The archive here is a space of racially-inflected memory, which is otherwise erased. It is not closed or self-contained: the black prairie archive is interconnected to other cultural exchanges and communities. Suzette Mayr is now often claimed as diasporic German author, but can be read as prairie black writer as well. Claire

Harris gets reclaimed to the local as prairie spaces become radically hybridized. Karina focuses on the rhizomatic network of the archive, which is here regional, questioning national motives and notions of the writer as citizen.

### **Notes on Discussion**

EDB (refer to list of attendees for full names): Eva sought connections between the presentations. Panel should perhaps be "literature and diaspora" rather than "transnationalism." But the "trans" emphasizes the idea of movement implicit in diaspora. Diaspora is thus the connecting thread between the five projects, illustrating a commitment to the past connected to history of displacement and oppression. An idea of the spatialization of identity emerged as a shared value. Identity is seen as the body in space, or in movement. For John: there remains an assumption that an intersection of same-sex desire and diaspora is unique and should be addressed interactively. Canadian fiction is seen as an ideal site – why? For Jennifer: applying the notion of diaspora to Newfoundland is controversial, recasting the diaspora as intranational, affecting the notion of nationalism as regional, coinciding with the imagined community. The thesis that Newfoundlanders are diasporic because of nostalgia and distance is problematic, as is idea that they provide literary sensibility. For Heike: if diaspora is about a connection to the past, how does the project look to that? It seems to look to the continuity of violence in the present, looking from the outside of Canada in. For Andrea and Karina: there is a clear connection between presentations. For Andrea: the interaction between race and gender needs development. The project starting from the assumption that race and gender are constantly interacting to produce identity and experience; this could use firmer justification: how and why? The idea that a post-immigrant sensibility involves a rejection or displacement of race is troubling. How does race connect to the new ways of belonging in the local? For Karina: the project reconceptualizes prairie literature,

writing back to Kroetsch, van Herk, and Laurence's concept of the prairies as an empty space. Could you connect the feminization of land in prairie writing to the issue of racialization in the project? Historiographic work going on at the same time. All projects connect in particular to the issue of diaspora, upon which we might focus now.

JPC: diasporas don't exist alone. Identities are crossed and improvised.

Compromises are made in diaspora.

AM: it is about diaspora and more than diaspora. The ways in which diaspora hijacked as an identity politics is an interesting issue. It is a bothering process: it goes from a counter-discourse of nation to a discourse of nation in the mainstream. The idea that post-immigrant writing transcends race is too limited or simple. In Gilroy's *Postcolonial Melancholia*, diaspora / race is questioned as a grounds for automatic solidarity. Should we be working within or moving beyond diaspora? Wanting to move to a beyond.

EDB: moving beyond comes in conflict with Karina's project, however, which seeks to recuperate racialized histories of diaspora.

JF: It is questionable how diaspora has been discussed so far. It seems to be forgetting Canada's relationship to the US. Where is NAFTA and other cross-border movements? William Faulkner in *Absolom, Absolom!* has a strong awareness of the prairies, for example. Canadian policy is closely influenced by the US too. The assumption about diaspora seems to be that it always comes from a place strongly associated with an "elsewhere."

HH: Looking at such cross-border interconnections is a major part of the project, which tries to recognize how these erasures are made.

JF: How does diaspora allow a skipping over of the Canada – US relationship?

LC: How so?

AM: Rinaldo Walcott says Canadian blackness is read through American blackness.

JF: Okay, but according to whom and on which grounds?

KV: The way in which Oklahoman blacks came across the border is frequently narrated without reference to the US. Following that narrative trajectory, the cross-border movements are erased.

EDB: Would it be more fruitful to approach projects of diaspora in terms of comparative Canada – US approaches?

JF: How does diaspora function in this context?

JPC: There is certainly no singular diaspora; instead there are complexities within diasporas. Trying to define diaspora becomes problematic as a result.

HH: Diaspora is, within Canada, a national project. Not a comparative one, but one that looks at and commodifies difference vis-à-vis the nation, if it is looked at as a constraining concept. But to be looked at also as something connected to trauma and memory, which brings us back to identity politics. There is a need to negotiate between coercive practices of diaspora and an understanding of diaspora as something beyond identity politics.

KD: How about Stuart Hall's call for looking instead at identity in difference and identifications instead of the ossifications of identity politics as such?

AM: Her own project started as themed with migrating, with US, Canada, and UK texts. Shrunk to exclude the US. Comparative work becomes too large with the US.

HH: Where is the comparative angle regarding the francophonie? Black criticism and theory is frequently francophone, but usually only appraised through an Anglophone angle. For example, the reception of Fanon is much earlier in French than in English.

AM: Then there is the Spanish black diaspora too. These issues seem to spiral out of control if we attempt to cover all of the bases.

KD: Is this an opportunity for collaboration?

HH: What do we think about collaboration? It should not be about filling the gaps, but about hashing out the important questions. It cannot be about the division of labour, but about methodological, conceptual work.

LC: Her collaborative work on Asian and black diaspora has ended up being more overlapping than initially planned. A model of filling in the gaps leads into empirical, social science paradigms, which feign objectivism.

HH: Even within the humanities, one ends up overlapping and working through differing methodologies. Moments of connection exist in terms of space.

Racializing and deracializing spaces as a methodological grounds for collaboration emerges most strongly. Space becomes a key starting point.

JF: The tendency to conflate diaspora and race is disabling; thinking about it spatially is useful. How does this work for Karina? At what point does calling something a diaspora become problematic or disabling? When does it reinforce binaries of belonging and exclusion?

KV: The project doesn't call all black people on the prairies diasporic. Various relationships differ. Some are reterritorialized.

KD: That point is very useful – deterritorialization is too often disconnected from reterritorialization. In Deleuze and Guattari's formulations, any deterritorialization is followed by a reterritorializing process; theories of the transnational often view the deterritorial out of context, neglecting the ways in which space is continually recoded and shut down.

AM: Issues of situating prairies as part of the Americas becomes key here, when we view creolization as a process in motion since 1492. "When Columbus came we became postmodern"; Stuart Hall: "for me, postmodernism began in 1492."

B: A black presence demonstrates itself in connections to indigenous cultures through creolization. There is a close connection to Cherokee cultures in specific narratives. There is a presence and legacy that connects to indigeneity.

HH: How about Toni Morrison's use of those images? Cherokee guides on the underground railroad, for example.

B: Morrison provides, as ever, a very useful rethinking of relationships of oppression.

EDB: Question of the signature – what is one allowed to say based on who he or

she is? Morrison can do it because of her blackness, Sky Lee can connect Asian and native cultures. These exclusions need to be rethought.

HH: But we might link this to Lee Maracle's comments on chronic invasion yesterday, in which white culture continually makes use of the indigenous. We need to tread carefully here.

EDB: With Jennifer's project, for example, we have an association of term diaspora and Newfoundland being reclaimed, while Native writers state that they are not diasporic. Instead we are to view their culture as invaded. Is there a risk of creating oppositions between reclaiming and rejecting?

AM: Do we need to rethink the connection between movement and displacement? Can we talk about first Nations as displaced without movement?

JPC: Have you worked through differences between immigrants and children of immigrants vis-à-vis diaspora?

AM: Diaspora is an always-shifting and slippery term. It can't be a checklist of identity qualities and movements. Such a stance would assume an objective study. Instead, it has to be slippery.

JD: Needs to be slippery!

JPC: And yet it is problematic to not have any criteria.

AM: So it needs to be linked to specific histories, as a multi-generational phenomenon. See *Against Race* (Gilroy), ch. 2.

KD: So how do we connect diaspora and race?

LC: Intimately!

JF: One way can be through appreciating the archive. How do fictional archives connect (Compton's *Performance Bond*, Brand's *Thirsty*, Clarke's *Execution Poems*) to the historical ones?

KV: Compton made up the missing texts from the archives in his own writing, and they've now become a part of the black B.C. archive. They are now a locus of black-inflected memory. Identities have thus been created around fictitious archives.

AM: 49th Parallel Psalm speaks to that. How about regionalism? Let's connect it by thinking about Jennifer's use of diaspora. Newfoundland is seen here as a nation and ethnicity – let's talk more about them. What makes Newfoundland different? Anyone seen the film Goin' Down the Road about two guys going from rural Nova Scotia and go to Toronto? Is it diasporic? Could we have an Alberta diaspora or a B.C. diaspora?

JF: What is our relationship to the past? All of our texts are from the 1990s.

JD: She is not committing self to a position that Newfoundland is different. She feels that it is different because of the magnitude of out-migration, but that evaluation is relative. Every family in Newfoundland is affected by it. The fact that Newfoundland joined confederation very recently continues to impact. A 2003 study found that 12% of Newfoundlanders want to separate from Canada. The popular feeling is that Canada has economically colonized Newfoundland. This leads also to a further question as to what constitutes Newfoundland literature – whether it includes work from the outside. These are all ongoing concerns.

AM: She sees the exodus from Newfoundland as being primarily economic.

JF: Sure, but it also connects to trauma, making diaspora a potentially useful tool.

HH: So diaspora is connected to questions of power, and its uneven relations. Newfoundland is connected to such unevenness. Colony of Unrequited Dreams is empowering and emasculating all at once. There is a tremendous loss in terms of joining Canada in confederation. Jennifer's work pushes diaspora into spaces of whiteness, which is unusual, but uneven relations of power are definitely there.

JD: Newfoundlanders are often subject to prejudice that is erased or else accepted because of whiteness or because it is part of Canada. It is easy for power relations to be erased to be erased in this context.

LC: Is it useful to look at the specific histories of diasporas for Jennifer? Lots of unresolved issues abound here. Whiteness has histories that need excavation.

Also, diaspora is usually looked at as an urban phenomenon, but it happens outside of the metropolitan centre as well.

KV: How do we talk about regional imaginaries without reinscribing difference? Without working with problematic discourses of the region?

EDB: Let's move to a discussion more focused on issues of collaboration. How do we avoid dealing in or repeating stereotypes? Perhaps by introducing intersections between categories. Critique is implied when moving into more than one category. We likely don't imagine we can avoid repeating certain stereotypes, but we can be at least self-conscious about the dangers.

HH: For collaboration: let's be practical. How do we collaborate until next year? Is this going to be based around workshops around themes? Methodologies? Institutional projects? How do we implement these plans?

KD: It seems like discussions of methodologies are key here.

KV: How will we be reconstituted in the future?

EDB: Out of these discussions we will have a discussion tomorrow, which will lead to web publications, leading to ongoing discussion. We are not committed to anything definite yet.

HH: We need some recommendations to take to the larger organization. [SEE LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS forwarded by Heike to the TransCanada committee.] These are all specifically coming out of her own desires and current research. 1) We need to engage cultural studies in the face of war. Questions of sovereignty, legitimacy, and so forth, are needed in the context of citizenship. 2) We need an engagement with Canadian studies, looking at moments of colonial modernity and racialized violence. Linking biopolitics to the history of necropolitics is one avenue for investigation here. 3) Canadian studies needs to foster an awareness of how critical and political terms get co-opted in the national body. 4) We need an engagement with generically diverse texts (i.e. policy, etc.), while reclaiming the language of postcolonial critique. The push towards the new is always worrying in this context, as we risk losing the past.



LC: There is thus a need for a TransCanada memory. We need to be going through our discussions over and over – the website is one obvious site. How do we carry forward the conversations?

KV: The original conference looked like it would have history, but the conference has been remarkably presentist.

EDB: The focus has been very much on the 90s and 00s.

JPC: Details that are lacking have to do with people's work. His work gets into analysis of past issues, but these are difficult to engage here.

LC: There seems to be very little engagement with the issues themselves. Position paper givers didn't get much direction, so there were lots of disconnections.

AM: This open-endedness led to plenty of misreadings.

HH: Collaborative work is a ton of work, but we shouldn't fear the process.

EDB: Could we look at a methodological recommendation that states that we cannot address diaspora as an isolated category, but that it connects to multiple categories of identity?

AM: We need to come back to seeing diasporas in relation to each other.

KD: But once again we face the problem with fixed categories of identity – can we get out of that box?

B: What are the goals of collaboration? There are different types of collaboration, beyond the individual work of research papers. Institutional collaborations. What are our goals? Should we set aside some sort of objective? Something connected to diaspora? Connected to methodologies? Institutional work?

JPC: There is already a performative dimension where this isn't just a conference, but a process of working together.

KD: So we're already doing collaborative work at this conference. But what are the goals of collaboration?

JPC: Establishing networks for mentorship, peer discussion, and peer review (before the paper level) are all already goals that are in evidence here.

KV: Collaboration is very symbolic. Theorizing black Canada has been very personal. This project needs to stop being driven by individual personalities. Black Canada is bigger than any one scholar.

AM: One of the goals of collaboration would be to call into question or intervene in the insistent individualism in the academy, especially in our field. Unofficially, we can't do our projects alone, since people read our work, etc. Collaboration doesn't really get acknowledged. We're always rewarded as individuals in competition with one another. Institutional acknowledgement of collaborative work is needed.

KD: We're trained to be so protective of our own writing!

JF: We need to work also beyond Canadian borders, especially looking to the US. Let's take their money! And much Canadian material is in American archives.

B: There should be more cross-border collaboration, but US materials relevant to Canada tend to privilege the east and fugitive slave narratives. There is not much about the west.

EDB: If we're transcending nationalism, then we should get over our lack of connections to the south.

B: Americans are interested in Canada, when it gets brought up. There is funding available.

JPC: How does that work? How do we make those connections? How do we initiate?

KD: To rephrase: how do we get the money?

JF: Winfried writes about being in Canada and the Americas. People are there in the US and are networking.

EDB: In Europe there are many programs that fund people from multiple countries. There are a number of Canadian studies programs that integrate people from Canadian universities.

JPC: There is the Fulbright program.

KD: How about the SSHRC transformation and do we turn away from it? The

focus on the applicability of research and new for a for discussion seems to inform this conference already. Are we to accept the social sciences model that SSHRC is advocating in our own research? The consequences of doing so seem to push us towards collaborative work that risks taking on objectivist and empiricist models that we might want to challenge at a theoretical level. So we are being asked to conform in new ways in order to retain our funding, based upon often external perspectives about what constitutes socially "relevant" research. While the emphasis on applicability and responsibility can all be appreciated on the surface, they have ramifications that we want to think about very seriously. Alternatively, looking towards other sources of funding has potential consequences for the involvement of the humanities in SSHRC processes, and the impression is often given that many of the people who run SSHRC would love to see the humanities disappear from the body. The SSHRC transformation has been an alarming process from a humanities point of view.

AM: But a lot of it is not new. CWS / cf is 25 years old, and has substantial public crossover. Why do we have to make it new? The ongoing fetishization of newness is disturbing!

EDB: Let's sum up, as we're running out of time.

KD: How shall I present this discussion?

EDB: Concentrate on the final part.

AM: Don't summarize statements. Move onwards. Focus on diaspora – reframing our research cell towards diaspora. Use the questions, not the answers (which we don't have!) Steven Slemon's directive towards "problem finding" rather than "problem solving" is a good one here.

KD: Including Heike's suggestions.

AM: Can you phrase them in more general terms? Beyond just her work on war and militarism.

EDB: Summarize!

KV: How about breaking down the student hierarchies further – could we have

grad students giving position papers? This conference as reflecting the new SSHRC funding formulae ...