

## Plenary Speakers

### Moving Cultures, Shifting Identities Conference, Flinders University, 3-6 December 2007

**Malathi de Alwis** is a Senior Research Fellow at the International Centre for Ethnic Studies, Colombo and a member of the Faculty of Graduate Studies, University of Colombo. She received her PhD in Socio-Cultural Anthropology from the University of Chicago and is the co-author, with Kumari Jayawardena, of *Casting Pearls: The Women's Franchise Movement in Sri Lanka* (Colombo: Social Scientists' Association, 2001) and co-author, with Jennifer Hyndman, of *Capacity Building in Conflict Zones: A Feminist Analysis of Humanitarian Assistance in Sri Lanka* (Colombo: ICES, 2002). She is the co-editor, with Kumari Jayawardena, of *Embodied Violence: Communalising Women's Sexuality in South Asia* (Delhi: Kali for Women/London: Zed Press, 1996) and co-editor, with Wenona Giles et al, of *Feminists Under Fire: Exchanges Across War Zones* (Toronto: Between the Lines Press, 2003). Many of her articles which focus on feminist and peace movements in South Asia as well as on issues of gender, nationalism, humanitarianism, displacement, and grief have been published in various parts of the globe both in English and in translation. She is a founder-member of the National Women's NGO Forum and the Women's Coalition for Peace, Sri Lanka and was a regular contributor to "Cat's Eye"—a feminist column on contemporary issues—in the English daily, *The Island*.

#### **Landscapes of Loss: Post-Tsunami Reflections on Death, Destruction & Displacement**

Building on my previous work which sought to understand how chronic mourners for the disappeared reinhabit the world in the face of continuously deferring loss and atrocity, I will explore, in this paper, how survivors of the tsunami contend with not only the non-availability of bodies but also the loss of familiar spaces and faces, and deeds and certificates and photos which substantiated and legitimised those relationships. How do you claim tenancy rights when habitation can no longer be proven? How do you re-negotiate old relationships now contaminated with bitterness and enmity over unfair distribution of tsunami aid? How do you keep alive the memory of your dead daughter when you no longer have any mementoes of her?

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**Diana Brydon**, Canada Research Chair in Globalization and Cultural Studies at the University of Manitoba, has published books on Christina Stead, Timothy Findley and Decolonising Fictions (with Helen Tiffin), edited *Postcolonialism: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies* and co-edited *Shakespeare in Canada* (with Irena Makaryk). Current research includes co-edited books on *Renegotiating Community: Interdisciplinary Perspectives in Global Contexts* (with W.D. Coleman), *Culturalisms* (with Mark Williams and James Meffan) and research investigating Global Imaginaries and Canadian Culture.

## **Canadian Writers Negotiating Home Within Global Imaginaries**

This paper considers the ways in which contemporary writing in Canada is resituating Canadian place within new types of global imaginaries. I address three of the conference sub-themes, putting them in dialogue with one another: asking can multicultures and multi-ethnicities produce one nation? How does the settler colony condition complicate such a question? And how does it relate to contemporary theorizations of cosmopolitanism and global frictions? I consider the ways in which racialized relations to home are being complicated in a range of texts. This will be an overview paper selecting key scenes for analysis from several texts, including Neil Bissoondath's *The Worlds Within Her*, Dionne Brand's *What We All Long For*, Ramabai Espinet's *The Swinging Bridge*, Larissa Lai's *Saltfish Girl*, Suzette Mayr's *Moon Honey*, and Tessa McWatt's *This Body* and *There's No Place Like....* I will not assume prior familiarity with these texts in my examination of how assumptions about identity, belonging and place are questioned in these texts and how they imagine new modes for living together in response to global changes on both intimate and planetary scales. I am especially interested in the ways in which some of these texts turn to popular genres (family romance, chicklit, historical fiction, children's literature and cinema, for example) through which to explore these questions. To frame my consideration of the function of genre in negotiating global imaginaries, the paper will begin and conclude with reference to Dionne Brand's long poem, *Inventory*.

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**François Burgat** is a political scientist and Arabist. A Senior Research Fellow (Directeur de recherches) at the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS), IREMAM (Institut de Recherches et d'Etudes sur le Monde Arabe et Musulman) in Aix-en-Provence, he has travelled and lectured throughout the world and lived permanently in the Middle East for over 18 years. He has been the director of the French Centre for Archaeology and Social Sciences in Sanaa (1997-2003), Research Fellow at CEDEJ, Cairo (1989-1993) and he also taught at the University of Constantine, Algeria (1973-1980). His main books include *The Islamic Movement in North Africa* (U. of Texas Press, 1997), *Face to Face with Political Islam* (IB Tauris, 2002), *L'Islamisme à l'heure d'Al Qaïda, Paris, La Découverte 2005* (U. of Texas Press, Pluto Press 2008).

## **Islam's expansion ? Or over-theologising and depoliticising the reading of world affairs ?**

An inventory of the modalities of the purported 'expansion' of 'Islam' may indeed be part and parcel of any effort to understand the rather banal dynamic of postcolonial 'balancing out' of the planet on both the political and cultural levels. In the political arenas, it is undeniable that the vocabulary (and the categories) of Muslim culture are tending to loom large as one of the main agents of challenge for those of the Western culture. Neither the recall of the means by which the 'new' European 'worlds' (in America, Africa from North to South, Asia or Oceania) were settled during the last century and a half, nor the realistic analysis of the root causes of the main ongoing conflicts in the Muslim world (From Palestine to Irak and Afghanistan) go any serious length towards substantiating the thesis of an 'expansion of Islam', lending credence more or less explicitly to the 'bloody' dimension in evidence on its borders in the famous metaphor coined by S. Huntington. In fact, the methods used by the USA in

its world oil diplomacy should probably obtain better ‘explanatory currency’ than any so-called ‘expansionism’ caused by the specificity of the innate performance skills or the endemic ‘ailments’ of Islam as a religion or a cultural matrix. The paradox is all the more self-evident that ‘Islam’ is in most cases the religion and the culture of populations which specifically are taking the brunt of the militarisation of US diplomacy increasingly enabled from 1990 onwards by the roll-back of the USSR. Culturalist or religion-focused approaches to the political dynamics or tensions concerned conceal several non-sequiturs: first and foremost that it places the blame on the so-called ‘disease’ afflicting either the culture or the religion (cf: ‘the disease of Islam’) of those who in fact intend resistance or opposition to some of the current malfunctions of the world (or regional, or national) order. This serves to occult the very mundane, mainly political conflicts of interest the Western world is having to face at a time when a long-standing hegemony partly inherited from the colonial period is ever more strongly being called into question. Such a process of ‘obfuscation’ of the mainly political root causes of tensions in today’s world is more or less consciously eventually no more than a means of legitimising a highly unbalanced distribution of responsibilities, mainly serving to delay or postpone adoption of any realistic – i.e. political – solutions, urgently required to overcome any so-called ‘religious’ or ‘cultural’ tensions currently afflicting the world.

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**Sonia Floriani** is lecturer in Sociology and assistant director of *Ossidiana*—the Observatory for the study of Cultural Processes and Everyday Life—at the University of Calabria (Italy). She has carried out researches in the United States, Canada and Great Britain. Her main interests are migration, identity and everyday life. She is author of *Identità di frontiera. Migrazione, biografie, vita quotidiana* (2004) and coeditor of *Appartenenza, globalizzazione, multiculturalismo* (2003).

### **The Homeless Self; Migrants, Space-Time and Identity Strategies**

My paper deals with the wave of Calabrian (i.e. Southern Italian) migration to Canada in the 1950s and ’60s. My sociological analysis is based on the self-narratives of men and women who were the subjects of this migratory experience.

As (inter)subjective experience, I assume migration to be *in primis* a *redefining* process of the migrant’s *space-time coordinates*. My hypothesis states that the hereelsewhere dynamics and the past-present-future sequence lose objectiveness, and become subjectified.

In the migrant’s experience, the here and the elsewhere are no longer located by the more or less closeness and tangibility, nor are inevitably in antithesis to each other. Rather, they would be perceived as two *coexistent* spaces, or as *no* spaces.

As to time, migrants would not make experience of it mainly as a sequence of distinct dimensions, but as a *circular continuum*, or as *no* time.

Within such redefined space-time coordinates, the migrant’s perception would be of a metaphysical deprivation of the sense of home: s/he ends up by feeling that nowhere is home. As a consequence, I hypothesize that the ways of (re)constructing his/her identity/identities amount to *strategies of (re)locating the lost sense of home*.

I have elaborated the following three types of identity strategy:

- the *no identity* strategy, which is a surrender to homelessness;

- the *par excellence identity* strategy, whose *focus* is on the construction of the identity that the migrant prefers among the many possible ones. In this strategy, the more a space-time is relevant for the identity construction, the more it can be assumed as the biographical «here and now»;
- the *coexistent identities* strategy, which consists in the coexistence of different identities and space-time coordinates. In this strategy, what can make the coexistence not chaotic is the construction of a relevant correlation between each identity and each space-time.

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**Susannah Radstone** is Reader in the School of Social Sciences, Media and Cultural Studies at the University of East London. She writes on cultural theory, particularly on psychoanalysis and memory and on contemporary film and literature. Recent publications include (ed. with C. Bainbridge et al.) *Culture and the Unconscious*, Palgrave, 2007; (ed. with Perri 6 et al.) *Public Emotions*, Palgrave 2007; *The Politics of Memory: Contested Pasts and Memory Cultures* (both ed. With Katharine Hodgkin), Transaction 2005; *Memory and Methodology* (ed.), Berg, 2000. Forthcoming books include *On Memory and Confession: The Sexual Politics of Time*, Routledge, and *Mapping Memory* (ed. with Bill Schwarz), Fordham University Press.

### **Times, Traces and Transition: Literature, Memory and the Historical Imagination**

This paper discusses two novels concerned with the forced movement of peoples: the deportation of convict settlers from the UK to Australia and the movement of children from Germany to the UK in the German *Kindertransport*. Kate Grenville's now controversial *The Secret River* describes the encounter between indigenous people and convict settlers in nineteenth century New South Wales and the German émigré author W. G. Sebald's *Austerlitz* evokes the afterlife of (forgotten) memories of one child's forced emigration.

The development of memory research across the humanities has encouraged criticism to approach novels such as these within the paradigm of cultural memory. More specifically, critical approaches to both these texts have associated them with trauma, positioning them as 'trauma fiction' or 'trauma texts'. Approaches such as these raise questions, though about whose story these novels tell as well as about their imagined readership. But these are questions that theories of trauma and cultural memory may have trouble answering, for novels such as these are complex, their narration encouraging identifications with multiple positions and evoking feelings that exceed those of shock. In this paper, I will suggest that theories of cultural memory and trauma might be extended by means of some consideration of the ways in which novels address and develop the historical imagination. Drawing on the psychoanalytic writings of Melanie Klein and Jean Laplanche, the paper will explore some facets of the historical imagination evoked in these two novels of cultural movement.

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**Christina Slade** is Dean of Humanities at Macquarie University and has taught at a number of universities including Universiteit Utrecht, where she was Professor of

Media Theory, New York University, La Universidad Ibero Americana and the ITESM, in Mexico City. In 1996-7 she was Harkness Fellow in New York. Her research interests range from issues in the philosophical foundations of communication theory, through questions relating to the changing nature of the global public sphere.

### **Summer in the city: From the beaches of South Sydney to the avenues of Paris Nord**

When ‘race riots’ between the traditional Anglo Australian surf life savers and the ‘Lebs’ broke out on Cronulla beach in the southern Sydney shire of Sutherland on Sunday December 11 2005, journalists were quick to draw the comparison with the riots in Saint Denis in Paris Nord in the European summer of that year. Just as fashions track seasonally from Paris to the southern hemisphere, so the fashion for Islamic youth rioting in the streets had, they supposed, been picked up in the south. The framing of events in the local press carried explicit and implicit resonances. Yet while there were obvious similarities—heat, hormones, religion and race—there were equally great differences in the two cases. Those differences are a consequence of very different regimes of immigration, assimilation and citizenship. Globalisation and the transnational media have laid a grid of similarity over those differences. This paper examines notions of transnational and fractured citizenship and their application taking the summer riots as a case study.