

8 September 2009

Dear Travel Study Grant Committee members,

Thank you for the Travel and Study Abroad grant which helped me attend the Narrative Society Conference in Birmingham, England this past June. I presented a paper on fictional photographs as productive interruptions to narratives of loss in Canadian Literature, a paper which was well received and which generated some useful discussion. This discussion has helped me think of ways to develop the paper into an article for submission. As well, seeing the disparate approaches taken by other presenters on the same panel to the relationship between a work's form and its content – in the work of Richard Yates and in various presentations of Quixotic characters – encouraged me to think even more about narrative structures in general, beyond the specifics of the close readings and the texts with which I have been working.

Of the other panels I was able to attend over the four-day conference, I was particularly interested in one called *Narratives of the Americas*. As sophisticated and as sensitive as these papers were, hearing European scholars theorizing narratives which to at least some degree exoticized the Americas was somewhat peculiar. I commented on this in the question period afterward, setting off a very lively discussion, during which I pointed out that I am in an analogous position when I, as a white Canadian scholar, teach First Nations Literature to a class comprising some First Nations students. Because of this comment, I had several later discussions with a Rumanian scholar who is currently teaching Canadian Literature to students at a British university, and hope to meet with her again if/when she attends an event at UBC this fall.

This last aspect of the conference, the social one, is perhaps one of the biggest benefits of attending such an event – making personal contacts with others who are working in similar fields internationally broadens one's views, not only of scholarship, but also on issues surrounding pedagogy, collegiality, academic working conditions. Again, I thank you for helping to make this possible. If you have any further questions about my experience at Birmingham this past spring, please feel free to contact me.

Yours truly,

Frances Sprout

cc. Steve Lane, Dean of Arts and Humanities

Graham Pike, Dean of International Education

Audrey Hansen, Study Abroad Manager