
EACLALS

*European Association for
Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies*

EACLALS Newsletter January 2006

Executive Committee:

Geoffrey V. Davis, University of Aachen (Chair)
Marc Delrez, University of Liège (Secretary)
Bénédicte Ledent, University of Liège (Treasurer)

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1. The Chair's Report from Malta

(Participation in the Commonwealth People's Forum at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, Malta, 21–25 November 2005)

At the end of last year, Ranjini Mendis, the international chair of ACLALS, and I, in my capacity as Chair of European ACLALS, attended the Commonwealth People's Forum in Malta. This event

precedes CHOGM, the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, which takes place every two years in a Commonwealth country¹ and it brings together the civil society organisations which are accredited to the Commonwealth. The long list of participants included groups working in fields as varied as community radio broadcasting, ecology, education, gender issues, HIV/AIDS research, human rights, and trade unionism. The overall theme on this occasion was 'Networking Commonwealth People'.

The venue was the Mediterranean Conference Centre, a magnificent structure originally built as La Sacra Infermeria of the Knights of St. John in 1574 and overlooking the Grand Harbour of Valletta. In one of its most impressive halls, formerly the principal ward of the hospital and at 155 metres apparently the longest room in Europe, the various organisations present at the Forum set up booths to exhibit aspects of their work. Since so many heads of state, including the Queen, were to attend the Malta CHOGM one was allowed even at the People's Forum to savour the full impact of security measures. Moored below the conference venue in the Grand Harbour was a British aircraft carrier; circling constantly overhead was a navy helicopter; outside the main door were posted bomb disposal units; and inside the entrance to the building were the kind of passenger checking installations one normally only finds in airports. It is hardly surprising that some observers thought that the modest attendance figures at the civil society exhibition were due to the intimidating security overkill.

For me, the CHOGM meeting provided a welcome opportunity to return to Malta where our last triennial conference had taken place and to renew contact both with our then local organiser Stella Borg-Barthet and her husband Victor, and with Daniel Massa, who ran the first European ACLALS

conference there in 1978. Stella and her ever-resourceful husband Victor were particularly instrumental in helping to set up the ACLALS stand which showcased the literature of the Commonwealth. (Since the Triennial Stella has been invited to become one of the judges for the Commonwealth Writers Prize and is currently ensconced in the reading of around one hundred new novels!)

For those wishing to gain some idea of the work of the Commonwealth, of the Commonwealth Foundation and of the affiliated civil society organisations, the CHOGM is a most useful event and quite a learning experience. It offers a unique opportunity for networking, allowing those attending to meet a great variety of people from other civil society organisations, to locate themselves within a wide spectrum of related activities, to gain some insight into the problems of the very diverse societies that make up the Commonwealth, and to hear a good deal of often highly critical debate on issues of global importance such as poverty reduction, debt write-off, fair trade, the activities of the World Bank and the IMF, and climate change.

Among the more rewarding sessions were, for example, a meeting on the theme of economic justice addressed by Charles Abugre, Head of Policy and Advocacy at Christian Aid and by Don McKinnon, Secretary-General of the Commonwealth; an address by President Museveni of Uganda on the question 'Can Africa trade its way out of poverty?'; and a session hosted by the Commonwealth Foundation itself designed to give some account of its function and work, especially on its core themes of Cultural Diversity, Sustainable Development, and Governance and Democracy. Charles Abugre's speech took the form of a refreshingly forthright attack on morally unacceptable economic policies which serve only to increase inequality and to entrench poverty. Highlighting the plight of the many countries which are actually falling back

¹ The next two meetings are scheduled for 2007 in Uganda and for 2009 in Trinidad and Tobago.

economically, he challenged the notion that the solution lies in the liberalisation of trade and questioned the policies of the World Bank and the IMF. Don McKinnon demonstrated that globalisation was hardly benefiting developing countries and called for greater attention to be paid to explaining to tax payers in developing countries why development aid is necessary. President Museveni proved more sceptical about the impact of aid, however. What he wanted rather to see was a comprehensive revision of the terms of trade between the developing and the developed world accompanied by a change of priorities in Africa itself with a view to creating better trading conditions. In what proved quite a witty speech, he portrayed Uganda as a donor nation which annually contributes millions of dollars to the economy of the UK. This, he calculated, takes the form of the enormous profit the adverse terms of trade allow the UK to earn from raw materials such as cotton and coffee it imports from Uganda at rock bottom prices and then processes and markets as finished products which, he suggested, is what Uganda should be doing itself.

In terms of its cultural diversity the People's Forum certainly practiced what it preaches. This was a real opportunity to experience something of the culture of Commonwealth countries as well as of Malta itself. Each day's events and many of the social gatherings were accompanied by a feast of performances by groups from all over the Commonwealth, who also appeared at shows in Valletta. There were the Maori Ngati Ranana group from New Zealand, the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force Steel Orchestra, the Koo Nimo folklore musicians from Ghana, the Cantores Sancti Juliani school choir from Malta, the performance poet Zena Edwards from Britain, and many more. The actual opening ceremony of the CHOGM in the presence of the Queen and most other Commonwealth heads of state took the form of a history of Malta through dance.

So what was the benefit of it all for ACLALS? This was the first occasion we have been represented at the People's Forum and CHOGM. We had (on Ranjini's initiative) only recently been accredited to the Commonwealth, which rather surprised me in view of the fact that we have been partly funded by the Commonwealth Foundation for years. Late accreditation had deprived us of the opportunity to propose a workshop for incorporation in the general programme but largely due to the efforts of Ranjini burning the midnight oil we were able to present to the meeting a Statement on Networking on the Commonwealth for Development calling for support and funding for open access publishing. With the aid of our Maltese colleagues, we were also able to mount an exhibition of Commonwealth writing at our booth, as mentioned above.

The meeting enabled us to pursue discussions with staff of the Commonwealth Foundation both on funding matters and on a possible input for the next ACLALS Triennial in Vancouver. It gave us the time and the opportunity to exchange ideas with members of other civil society organisations. It allowed Ranjini and me to put in a good deal of work and discussion relating to ACLALS and the next Triennial.

In the rhetoric of the official speeches and elsewhere there was much talk of ways in which the civil society organisations might collectively contribute to the realisation of their shared goals. Whether ACLALS should now involve itself in activities such as these, and if so, to what extent, was a question which much exercised my mind during the meeting. At the very least it would seem a viable proposal for us to envisage by way of an experiment mounting a workshop on cultural diversity and literature at the next CHOGM People's Forum in Africa. That would enable us to ascertain how much interest there is on the part of other organisations in our work or, as the Queen put it in her speech, 'to test our ideas with like-minded colleagues', as well

as to make a real contribution to an event which seems to me thoroughly worthwhile.

Geoffrey V. Davis, 5 January 2006

2. About the EACLALS Committee

The professional situation of Bénédicte Ledent being less critical than it was a year ago, she kindly offered to resume her service of EACLALS in her capacity as Treasurer of the Association. If there are no objections from our members she will reintegrate into the Committee as of 2006. Hena Maes-Jelinek, who was officially elected as Treasurer in 2005, would then remain on the board and attend meetings in an advisory capacity.

3. How to Contact Us

Please note that we are happy to receive material for inclusion in the newsletter or for posting on our website. Our contact details are as follows:

Geoffrey V. Davis: Institut für Anglistik, RWTH Aachen, 52056 Aachen, Germany. Tel. +49 241 8096105 (office); +49 241 37977 (home). E-mail: davis@anglistik1.rwth-aachen.de

Marc Delrez: Department of English, University of Liège, Place Cockerill 3 (Building A2), B-4000 Liège, Belgium. Tel. +32 4 3665460 (office). Fax +32 4 3665721. E-mail: marc.delrez@ulg.ac.be

Bénédicte Ledent: Department of English, University of Liège, Place Cockerill 3 (Building A2), B-4000 Liège, Belgium. Tel. +32 4 3665439 (office). Fax +32 4 3665721. E-mail: B.Ledent@ulg.ac.be

All enquiries welcome.

4. Membership Renewal

Our rates for 2006 are unchanged. See the enclosed. Please note that the first issue of *Kunapipi* for 2005

is due off the press about this time and should reach EACLALS members very soon; the next issue will appear a month later. If you are not paid up for 2005, you can still send your dues for that year and thereby ensure that you get the two forthcoming issues of *Kunapipi* (see below).

5. Recent Publications

The following publications have come to our attention:

Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, & Helen Tiffin (ed), *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*; 2nd edition (London: Routledge, 2005). PB: 0-415-34565; HB: 0-415-34564

Boehmer, Elleke, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*; revised and expanded edition (Oxford: OUP, 2005)

Boehmer, Elleke, *Stories of Women: Gender and Narrative in the Postcolonial Nation* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2005)

Donnell, Alison, *Twentieth-Century Caribbean Literature: Critical Moments in Anglophone Literary History* (London/New York: Routledge, 2006). ISBN: 0-415-26200-3

Gaile, Andreas (ed), *Fabulating Beauty: Perspectives on the Fiction of Peter Carey* (Amsterdam/New York: Rodopi, 2005; Cross/Cultures 78)

Lim, David C. L., *The Infinite Longing for Home: Desire and the Nation in Selected Writings of Ben Okri* (Amsterdam/ New York: Rodopi, 2005; Cross/Cultures 80).

Maes-Jelinek, Hena, *The Labyrinth of Universality: Wilson Harris's Visionary Art of Fiction* (Amsterdam/New York: Rodopi, 2006); forthcoming.

Reichl, Susanne, & Mark Stein (ed), *Cheeky Fictions: Laughter and the Postcolonial* (Amsterdam/New York: Rodopi, 2005). ISBN: 90-420-1995-6

Stiebel, Lindy, & Liz Gunner (ed), *Still Beating the Drum: Critical Perspectives on Lewis Nkosi* (Amsterdam/New York: Rodopi, 2005; Cross/Cultures 81).

Kunapipi is happy to announce that the journal's website has been updated and can be consulted at <http://www.kunapipi.com/>

Two special issues are upcoming, one on 'Cooking' for December 2006 (deadline: end of July 2006) and another on 'Birds' for 2007. Articles should be sent to Anne Collett acollett@uow.edu.au

The Journal of the School of Language, Literature and Culture Studies (JSL), Jawaharlal Nehru University, is proud to provide an interdisciplinary forum for discussion of all issues related to language, literature, and other aspects of culture. It is published twice a year. The deadline for *JSL* 6 (Autumn 2006) is January 30, 2006. This issue will focus on contemporary theatre/performance. Mail subscriptions to the Editor, GJV Prasad, Centre of Linguistics and English, School of Language, Literature and Culture Studies, JNU, New Delhi 110067, India.

Vol. 2, No.1 (2006) of *Postcolonial Text* has now been published online at:

www.pkp.ubc.ca/pocol/viewissue.php?id=3

You are invited to submit articles, poems, short stories, or interviews to the journal and join the editorial team as reviewers, copyeditors, or proofreaders, thereby contributing to a worthwhile scholarly endeavour. Please contact Ranjini Mendis ranjini.mendis@kwantlen.ca if you are interested.

6. Forthcoming Conferences

Australian, Indian, and Austral-Indian Cross-Cultural Studies

Calcutta University, Kolkata, India

7-9 February, 2006

'Globalisation and Postcolonial Writing: An Australia-India Exchange'

Organised by:

Centre for Postcolonial Writing, Monash University, Australia, and Department of English, Calcutta University, India

E-mail: Jenny Strauss

jenny.strauss@arts.monash.edu.au

Or: Sanjukta Dasgupta sdg81@cal2.vsnl.net.in

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Two-Day Seminar

Vidyasagar University, Kaptari, Midnapore, India

21-22 February, 2006

'Australian Literature: Identity, Representation and Belonging'

Contact: Jaydeep Sarangi sarangij@rediffmail.com

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Derek Walcott: International Colloquium & Seminar
University Paris 3 / Sorbonne nouvelle

With the participation of the author

17-18 March, 2006

Send registration form, to be downloaded from www.saesfrance.org, to Marta Dvorak, Institut du Monde Anglophone, Université Paris III/ Sorbonne Nouvelle, 5 rue de l'Ecole de Médecine, 75006 Paris,

France, by 1 March 2006 (foreign residents) or 1 February 2006 (French residents)

E-mail: dvorakmarta@aol.com

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International Conference on Post-Colonial Cultures
Hosted by the research centre Cultures Anglo-
Saxonnes
University Toulouse-le-Mirail, France
16-18 March, 2006
'Divergences and Convergences'
Contact: Xavier Pons pons@univ-tlse2.fr

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XLVIth SAES Conference
University of Nantes, France
12-14 May, 2006
Website: www.saesfrance.org
For the workshop on the new literatures, contact
Philip Whyte philip.whyte@wanadoo.fr

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International Cross-Disciplinary Conference
University of Leeds, UK
15-17 May, 2006
'Racism, Postcolonialism, Europe'
Convenors: Graham Huggan and Ian Law
Webpage:
[http://www.leeds.ac.uk/english/activities/conferences
/conferences.php?file=forthconf](http://www.leeds.ac.uk/english/activities/conferences/conferences.php?file=forthconf)
Deadline extended to: 3 March, 2006
Send 250-word abstracts to: racismconf@leeds.ac.uk

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5th MESEA Conference
Society for Multi-Ethnic Studies: Europe and the
Americas
University of Navarra, Pamplona, Spain
18-20 May, 2006
'Ethnic Life Writing and Histories'
Contact: Yiorgos Kalogeras kalogera@enl.auth.gr

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ASNEL 2006 (Annual Conference)
University of Koblenz-Landau, Germany

24-27 May, 2006

'Word & Image'

Deadline for Abstracts: 31 January, 2006
Contact: Michael Meyer, Anglistik, Universität
Koblenz-Landau, Universitätsstrasse 1, F 118, 56070
Koblenz, Germany
E-mail: asnel2006@uni-koblenz.de
Web site: <http://www.uni-koblenz.de/asnel2006>

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International Conference
European Network for Euro-African Studies
Frankfurt University, Germany
1-3 June, 2006
'Transcultural Modernities: Narrating Africa in
Europe'
Contact: Sissy Helff helff@nelk.uni-frankfurt.de
Or Elisabeth Bekers elisabeth.bekers@ua.ac.be
Webpage: [http://web.uni-
frankfurt.de/fb10/ieas/abt/nelk/euro-afric/](http://web.uni-frankfurt.de/fb10/ieas/abt/nelk/euro-afric/)

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One-Day Seminar
Bordeaux 3 University, France
27 June, 2006
'Violence, Culture and Identity'
This is the fourth annual seminar of an informal research
group working in the field of Australian and New Zealand
studies
Send a title, an abstract of 150-250 words
and a brief autobiographical note to
Susan Barrett s.barrett@wanadoo.fr
by 31 March, 2006

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13th Annual Conference
New Zealand Studies Association
University Paris-Dauphine, France
29 June-1 July 2006

'New Zealand, France and the Pacific'
Contact: Ian Conrich ian@ianconrich.co.uk
Or: Martine Piquet martine.piquet@free.fr

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SAACLALS Conference 2006
In association with AUETSA (Association of
University English Teachers of Southern Africa) and
SAVAL (South African Society for General English
Studies)
'Forging the Local and the Global'
Stellenbosch University, South Africa
9-12 July 2006
Contact: global@sun.ac.za
Website: www.sun.ac.za/english/localglobal2006

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Esse-8
European Society for the Study of English
Senate House, London, UK
29 August - 2 September, 2006
Website: www.essenglish.org
The following panel is likely to be of interest to
EACLALS members:
'Projections of Paradise in Migrant Literature'
Convenor: Helga Ramsey-Kurz (University of
Innsbruck)
Email: helga.ramsey-kurz@uibk.ac.at
Co-convenor: Geetha Ganapathy-Doré (University of
Paris 13)
Email: geethagd@hotmail.com

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4th Conference of African Studies
University of Leon, Spain
18-21 October, 2006

'AfroEuropeans: Black Cultures and Identities in Europe'

Send 200-word abstracts (in Spanish, English or French) to Marta Sofia López by 1 March 2006

dfmmlr@unileon.es

Web page: www.afroeuropa.org

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Two-Day Conference

University of Northampton, UK

4-5 November, 2006

'Rerouting the Postcolonial'

Send 200-word abstracts by 30 July, 2006 to Janet Wilson Janet.Wilson@northampton.ac.uk and Fiona Tolan Fiona.Tolan@northampton.ac.uk

Check the UK Network for Modern Fiction Studies

website: <http://www.uk-fiction-network.org/>

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International Conference

Society for Francophone Postcolonial Studies

Winthrop-King Institute for Contemporary French and Francophone Studies

Florida State University, Tallahassee

30 November – 2 December, 2006

'Boundaries and Limits of Postcolonialism:

Anglophone, Francophone, Global'

Deadline for proposals: 1 February, 2006

Contact: Alec Hargreaves

ahargrea@MAILER.FSU.EDU

Conference web-site: www.fsu.edu/~icffs

7. ASNEL Summer School 2007

A group of students from the English Department of the Johann Wolfgang Goethe-University, Frankfurt, will host the 8th session of the Summer School of the New Literatures in English, from 3 to 7 September 2007. This event, which takes the form of a biannual conference, is organised under the auspices of the German Association for the Study of the New

English Literatures (ASNEL). An estimated 150 students and a selection of scholars and writers will get together for a series of lectures, seminars, workshops and evening readings focusing on the theme of 'Arrivals and Departures – Stories of Motion'. Anyone interested in taking part or in offering a seminar or a lecture should get in touch with the Summer School Committee at checkin@arrivals-departures.de

Regularly updated information about the Summer School can also be obtained on the following website: www.arrivals-departures.de

8. Commonwealth Literature Conference for Eastern Europe

For some years now EACLALS has envisaged holding a small-scale conference in an Eastern European country in addition to the regular Triennials. The major aims of such an interim enterprise would be to encourage scholars in such countries to embark on the study of Commonwealth literature and to include the subject in their university and school curricula, and also to facilitate attendance by scholars who would not otherwise be able to attend our meetings.

The event we envisage would be devoted to presenting and discussing recent research and teaching methods in Commonwealth literary studies. We would aim to provide scholars in Eastern Europe who are beginning or wish to begin to work in the field with an overview of what is being done. We should mount a combination of regional survey lectures with small-scale seminars on particular topics within the expertise of those present. We intend to limit the number of participants to 40 to facilitate real dialogue. The event will be preceded by a postgraduate workshop led by a major scholar.

In conjunction with the University of Prešov in Slovakia, and specifically working with Dr. Jaroslav Kušnir, we now propose to go ahead with this project at a date still to be specified during 2006 or early

2007. We have held preliminary discussions as to the advisability of such a venture and Dr. Kušnir is ready to host it in conjunction with his Department. In order to finalise arrangements, the chair of EACLALS, Geoffrey Davis, has been invited to visit Prešov during May. More information about this project will be supplied in our next newsletter.

9. The Next EACLALS Conference

The first meeting between members of the Board and the hosts of the next EACLALS Triennial Conference (Universities of Padova and Venice, Italy) is to take place shortly, probably at the beginning of March. In the past such consultations have proved extremely useful in arranging all aspects of the conference, from theme and invitees to venues and publication. We should then be able to provide more definite information about the Conference in the next newsletter.

10. 14th Triennial ACLALS Conference

The next ACLALS Conference will be held at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, from 17 to 22 August, 2007.

Call for Papers: 'Literature for Our Times'

At the 2005 World Social Forum, held in Porto Alegre, Brazil, Booker Prize-winning author Arundhati Roy spoke about the function of literature for our times: 'Our strategy should be not only to confront empire, but to lay siege to it. With our art, our music, our literature – and our ability to tell our own stories.' In an article, 'The Arduous Conversation Will Continue', published in *The Guardian* on July 19, 2005, Hanif Kureishi voiced a similar opinion: 'The only patriotism possible is one that refuses the banality of taking either side, and continues the arduous conversation. That is why we have literature, the theatre, newspapers – a culture, in other words.'

Are there other roles, besides the ones suggested by Kureishi and Roy, that literature has played in the era of colonialism and continues to fulfill now in this young Twenty-First century of ours, amidst the upheavals of regime changes, wars for resources, loss of faith in elected representatives, genocide, suicide bombings, resistance struggles and environmental disasters? Is literature a force for reconciliation and cross-cultural understanding or only an instrument for aesthetic pleasure of the privileged? Does literature provide us, in the famous phrase of Kenneth Burke, with 'equipment for living', or does it only obscure reality and deflect resistance?

Papers are invited to engage with all aspects of the above theme. They could address, by referring to the literary, critical and other kinds of cultural texts, the following questions:

Literature as an institution and ideologies of 'literature'

Commonwealth versus Postcolonial versus World literature

Literature as resistance

Literature as 'arduous dialogue'

Literature as 'equipment for living'

Literature as pedagogy; pedagogy of literature

Literature of human survival (including issues of poverty and prosperity)

Literature of Human Rights (including the right to access knowledge and resources)

Literature of Apocalyptic and Utopian imaginings

Literature for promotion of Peace and Justice

Literature of real and imagined Ethnicities

Literature of cultural affiliations (Race, Gender and/or History)

Literature as a world language

Literature in a global cultural economy

Literature in translation

Literature of healing and reconciliation

Abstracts of approx. 300 words for papers of 20 minutes duration, and approx 400 words for three-paper panels (with the names of the panelists) which engage with these and other relevant questions should be e-mailed, with a short bio-note (50 words) and contact address to Dr. Paul Matthew St. Pierre stpierr@sfu.ca no later than 30 August, 2006.

11. EACLALS Tsunami Donation

Sr. Sandamali Kurera, the Principal of St. Mary's Convent School in Matara, Sri Lanka, wishes to thank all the members of EACLALS for the association's generous donation of € 1,000 which was allotted to the School's rehabilitation fund. This money will be a help towards the reconstitution of the library.