



European Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies

Chairperson
Hena Maes-Jelinek

Secretary
Geoffrey V. Davis

Treasurer
Bénédicte Ledent

EACLALS NEWSLETTER - October 1997

Dear member,

We are pleased to announce the forthcoming ACLALS and EACLALS conferences.

1. ACLALS

The 1998 ACLALS Triennial conference will take place at the University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 1-6 December 1998.

The overall theme is « Sharing a Commonwealth » •

The Call for papers has just been issued by the new ACLALS chairperson, Professor Chee Seng LIM.

Please, send you abstract as soon as possible to the following address :

Department of English, Faculty of Arts, University of Malaya,
50603 KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia

Further information may be obtained from the same address ;

We hope to be able to provide you with practical information in our next newsletter.

After announcing that the next ACLALS conference would take place in Malaysia, we received the following letter from one of our members, Dr. T. Wignesan, who lives in Paris :

February 25, 1997

Dear Professor Maes-Jelinek,

→ Thank you very much for the EACLALS committee circular, dated February first, on the matter of the acceptance of the Malaysian committee as the organizer of the next triennial ACLALS conference and as the International Chair.

→ I am well aware that as a Stateless Person (having been expelled/forced out of Malaysia, the country of my birth and residence until my twenty-first year in 1962) my lone voice of protest is of no moment whatsoever, but I feel I should not let this opportunity go by - in the interests of the rights of man - without registering my dissent.

→ Malaysia is probably the only remaining 'apartheid' country in the world whose laws of racial/ethnic discrimination are written into the Constitution and where a no-trial detention law (maintained also by the Republic of Singapore) is still used to muffle any dissenter - and often without just cause : see my article on Malaysian literature in *Komparatistische Hefte*, vol.7, Bayreuth 1983 - of the regimes on either side of the Johore Straits.

→ To give you just an example of the discrimination practised by even the MACLALS members, ever since the publication of the above-mentioned article, no work of mine is ever cited in the bibliography section of the *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, and this despite the fact that I drew the attention of the respective editors to this wilful act. The correspondence I have on the matters speaks for itself.

→ I am not bothered in the least about what Malaysian or Singaporeans may do to me or to themselves in the process, but I do think that what I have to say in this letter about the country should not go without a response, unless the EACLALS committee too wishes to back an apartheid regime in every sense of the word. With every good wish, Yours sincerely, T. Wignesan.

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The chairperson responded to this by stating that we would bring his letter to the attention of our members. Having familiarised ourselves with the 1996 Amnesty International report on Malaysia, however, the committee, while sympathising with Dr. Wignesan's experience, does not itself feel that the present situation in that country is such as to warrant a boycott of the conference (as it would have been in the case of Nigeria, for example). Members who feel otherwise may like to contact Dr Wignesan at his address : 35, rue M. Ténine, B.P.53, 94268 Fresnes/Paris Cedex, France. Tel/fax : 33.1.42.37.15.93. E-mail : wignesan@classic.msn.com

2. EACLALS

As announced in our previous newsletter, the next EACLALS Triennial conference will take place at the University of Tübingen, organized by Gerhard Stilz. The committee has now met with Professor Stilz and viewed various proposed venues for conference events. The University of Tübingen is located in a lovely medieval town in Baden-Württemberg, about half an hour by train from Stuttgart. We are now able to pass on the following information :

- the conference will be held from 6 to 11 April 1999.
- the conference will be organised in association with GNEL (the German Association for the Study of the New Literatures in English).
- the topic has been defined as : « Colonies, Missions, Cultures in the English-speaking world : Dependence, Independence and Interdependence at the Threshold of the Twenty-First Century » e

The conference will concentrate on theoretical and practical collusions of colony and culture and on the interplay between missions - in a wide religious *and* secular sense - and colonialism. Contributions will be invited to relate (at least) to one of the following three directions :

- a.- Discuss correlations between the prime impulses of colonialism - beyond 18th- and 19th- century economic, political and military power imbalances - and their related religious and secularized missionary notions.
- b.- Address the colonial structures and processes of sub-mission and resistance in the colonies shaped or transformed by the British Empire.
- c.- Assess the cultural and political dialectics of missions and colonizations through British colonial history, the ~~ear~~ of liberation and independence, and into a post-colonial future of cosmopolitan interdependence.

All contributions should highlight phenomena and examples from the English-speaking world, while the three problematic core concepts of 'colony', 'mission' and 'culture' should be subject to fundamental conceptual analysis, anthropological scrutiny and historically diversified as well as regionally comparative literary and linguistic research.

It may be of interest to members that the following writers have already expressed interest in attending : David Malouf, Timothy Findley, Njabulo Ndebele, Nuruddin Farah, Fred D'Aguiar, Caryl Phillips, Zakes Mda, Homi Bhabha, Patricia Grace, Vincent O'Sullivan and Witi Ihimaera.