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Notes of Contributors, Helen and Friends, Notes on Editorial Advisors

Anne Collett

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Abstract
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NOTES FROM CONTRIBUTORS

BILL ASHCROFT (University of New South Wales, Australia)
I first met Helen at a SPACLALS conference at University of Queensland in 1978, the conference, incidentally, at which ASAL was conceived. In the early 1980s at an AULLA conference at Macquarie University I met with Gareth and Helen and the glimmering idea of a book on postcolonial/ New Literatures/ post-European writing took shape. The subsequent years in which The Empire Writes Back was written proved to be some of the most stimulating and exciting of my career. This present chapter acknowledges Helen’s consistent passion for animal rights and their implication in colonial and postcolonial discourse.

ERNA BRODBER
Helen lived on the other side of creation but she seemed so near! This sense of ‘nearness’ struck me first as she gave a paper at a seminar in the Department of Literatures in English at the University of the West Indies, Mona. In her paper Helen quoted a verse of a song, apparently popular in my mother’s youth and which as children we heard her singing at her work. Helen so easily identified the common thread: ‘It is the Irish’, she said, so coolly and quietly, a connection which Paul Robeson, the great African American singer later verified for me. Helen’s response opened my eye to the place of the so-called ‘secondary whites’ in the culture of the social geographic area which has my intellectual interest: the descendants of Africans enslaved in the New World. Helen, the so-accessible Helen, thus set me off on research that has taken up quite a bit of my life and which has found outlet in my fiction as well as my social history.

VICTOR CHANG (University of the West Indies, Jamaica)
I first met Helen in 1971 when we were graduate students at Queen’s University in Canada, both working on Commonwealth Literature, with Helen doing her thesis on the work of V.S. Naipaul. We became fast friends and have maintained contact over the years and over several countries as we continued to meet at the triennial ACLALS conferences in India, Malaysia, Australia, Cyprus and Jamaica.

ANNE COLLETT (University of Wollongong, Australia)
I will let my editorial speak for me.

LEIGH DALE (University of Wollongong, Australia)
I met Helen when I went to the University of Queensland as a postgraduate student in 1986, to do a masters degree in South African and Australian poetry. At our first meeting, she stunned me by chiding me gently for not telling her I was coming, so that I could have been picked up at the airport. It was clear Queensland was going to be different. I considered deserting for a PhD in Education (with Helen kindly vetting my potential supervisors at the University of London), but common sense prevailed and I went back and did a PhD, again with Helen, that became
the book *The English Men*. Throughout the years of study, and the work which has followed, Helen has been an amazing support in every way — intellectual, emotional, and practical. If I’m an academic, it’s mainly her fault.

**MARGARET DAYMOND (University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa)**

I first encountered Helen Tiffin in the pages of that invaluable, landmark work *The Empire Writes Back*. For several years it was prescribed for Honours students (4th year) in the Postcolonial Writing course at The University of KwaZulu-Natal. Then I met Helen in person at conferences — the first was, I think, the ACLALS conference in 1992 in Kingston, Jamaica. After which we met regularly at ACLALS and EACLALS conferences, most recently in Istanbul in 2011. In 2010 Helen visited South Africa and I had the pleasure, with Margaret Lenta, of taking her to the Hluhluwe Game Reserve. Helen was thrilled to see the elephants, but, to our delight, she was equally pleased by the flowering trees, the chattering monkeys (thieving too if one leaves a chalet window open) and the resolute dung beetles.

**HELEN GILBERT (Royal Holloway, University of London, UK)**

I have variously been a student, colleague, collaborator, yacht skipper, friend, admirer and fellow traveller of Helen Tiffin’s over some 25 years since we first met in 1989. Despite having a professed dislike of theatre, she did a stint as supervisor for my PhD and almost convinced me that those on stage are the only ones ever having fun. Most recently, we have been long-distance comrades in arms, a pair of recalcitrant Helens working against formidable odds to complete *The Wild Man From Borneo: A Cultural History of the Orangutan*, which has sometimes played out in its own way as a farce.

**STEPHEN GRAY**

Deep in my Oz file of thirty years ago I still have a snap of Helen in a striped T-shirt and shorts, hopping over a fallen gumtree on a Brisbane beach. Behind her in dark glasses is the timid writer-in-residence she welcomed to the University of Queensland in mid-1982. Ever since I’ve been following her lead whenever students back home have needed a theoretical quote re postcoloniality. I’ve even kept a postcard of hers of ten years later — from Jamaica, or was it Tulsa, Oklahoma, or Sri Lanka? Or Fiji? She saw to it that my isolated life was broadened out.

**GARETH GRIFFITHS (University of Western Australia)**

Helen and I met so long ago she seems to have always been there. In reality it was probably at a conference in Australia in the mid-eighties. Since then we have written and edited three books together, books that have gone on to several editions. Writing with Helen (and our colleague on these books, Bill Ashcroft) was probably one of the most satisfying and fun experiences of my career. From colleague to dear friend without a cross word after three books, must be some sort of record. We still meet up at odd spots, in the last few years in Italy and in
France when people were kind enough to structure conferences around our work. Helen has a raft of photos from all these occasions — one of which involves me wearing a pith helmet! What are dear friends for if not to embarrass you! It is such a pleasure to be able to celebrate her work and life in this way.

SYD HARREX (Flinders University, Australia)

It is an immense pleasure and honour to contribute to the festchrift for my colleague in post colonial studies, a loyal friend over the years, as well as dedicated supporter of her university colleagues. I acknowledge and admire Helen’s inspirational teaching which opened the eyes of many students to the truth of Australia’s place in a post colonial world. Helen is a pioneer, respecting the integrity of text, context, theory of literature, and the art of story-telling in colonised and colonial cultures. Helen knows the value of intellectual respect and endeavour and is always original and stimulating in her reflections. I remember fondly the good hearted and sometimes not so tolerant sparring over obsessions and ideas over breakfast croissants at many conferences. Helen could keep admirable balance between the serious and light hearted, and loved a joke with a healthy disrespect for charlatans and bureaucrats. Helen is a shrewd observer of life and an idealistic advocate for causes she is committed to, such as feminism and social justice in emerging societies.

BARRY HIGMAN (Australian National University)

Although Helen made several visits to the Mona campus of the University of the West Indies, we never overlapped there. Probably I first met her at the 1997 conference of the Australian Association for Caribbean Studies, held in Sydney. This was the beginning of a long scholarly dialogue on Caribbean literature, gardens, food and many other things. My most vivid memories however relate to dinners. The first was the night in Canberra when I served as an entrée kangaroo cooked in Jamaican jerk seasoning, thinking I would score a creole cooking hit — only to discover that Helen was a committed vegetarian. The second was the night Helen entertained Merle, my late wife, and me, when Helen’s pet Miss Ratty perched on her shoulder while we ate our greens.

GRAHAM HUGGAN (University of Leeds, UK)

I first met Helen in the late 1980s while doing research at the University of Queensland towards my PhD degree. This was eventually awarded in 1989 by the University of British Columbia, and Helen was my External Examiner. I then met Helen quite regularly during the 1990s and 2000s at conferences worldwide, where we exchanged ideas and generally made mischief. During the later part of the 2000s, we decided to write a book together on postcolonial ecocriticism. The division of labour was simple: Helen would work on animal rights and representation issues, and I would work on everything else! As always with Helen, there were lots of good laughs, and some prodigious disagreements, along the
way. The book was eventually published by Routledge in 2010. For the entirety of my career, Helen has been both a supportive and an inspirational figure. She is a warm-hearted and generous person with a razor-sharp intellect. I can think of no one I have learned from more, no one I have enjoyed meeting more, and no one I would rather work with, than Helen.

PETER HULME (UNIVERSITY OF ESSEX, UK)
I first met Helen in 1999 when she invited me over to Queensland to give the Brooks lecture and to take part in the ‘Trading Places’ conference. One of the memorable aspects of the conference is that it’s where I first met so many people I now regard as close friends, most of them colleagues or students of Helen’s, members of that extraordinary group of postcolonial scholars that Helen helped foster through the generosity of her intellect and the warmth of her personality. My essay here is based on a lecture given at the conference ‘Disunited Empires’, held at Queens University, Kingston, Ontario, in May 2006. Helen had invited me in what her friends will recognise as the ‘usual fashion’ — a late-night phone call when defences are low; but, as always when Helen calls, the occasion proved both delightful and stimulating.

DOROTHY JONES (UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG, AUSTRALIA)
I first encountered Helen as an audience member listening to the paper she gave at a SPACLALS conference in 1984. It was only at a number of later conferences that we actually met face to face and talked to one another, developing a firm friendship over the years. I admire Helen not only for her impressive scholarship but even more for her warm-heartedness and terrific sense of humour. It is great to have her as a friend.

VERONICA KELLY (UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA)
Helen and I were exact contemporaries in the English Department of the University of Queensland, where I began my degree in 1963; she taking Honours in English and me in French. Helen was always the great traveller and adventurer, deeply interested in ‘third world’ countries and cultures, as is evident in her later international eminence in postcolonial studies. During our later careers we met up again; briefly in the UK while she and Chris were touring, well, most of Europe; and again in Canada when we were all undertaking various forms of postgraduate work. When in January 1973 I returned from the UK to Brisbane, broke but happy, I was met by the Tiffins who drove across the just-flooded city to pick me up. My contribution to this publication is intended as a compliment to Helen’s intellectual accomplishments and trail-blazing adventurousness.

RUSSELL MCDougALL (UNIVERSITY OF NEW ENGLAND, AUSTRALIA)
I was a Masters student, presenting my first conference paper (at an ASAL conference in Brisbane, 1980), when I first met Helen. Soon after that we
caught up in Fiji, at the ACLALS conference, and then at Queen’s University at Kingston, Canada, where I followed in Helen’s footsteps to do my PhD and where she introduced me to the culinary arts of the curry. When I published my first book, *Australian-Canadian Literatures: Comparative Perspectives* (with Gillian Whitlock), Helen was the first person I asked to contribute, which she very kindly did. ‘Helen’s generosity is legendary; but her friendship is a gift.’ So it has been, for more than thirty years, catching up here and there around the world — more recently in Hobart or on Lord Howe Island — sharing ideas, meals, lots of laughter. I live in Armidale, which is a bit off Helen’s map, even with the special attractions of my much loved pup, Piper, and gentle Julie. Once Helen came with Miss Ratty, snoozing in a tissue box (the rat, that is, not Helen), but that was before Piper …

**SUSIE O’BRIEN (McMASTER UNIVERSITY, CANADA)**

I met Helen in 1989, when I arrived from Canada to start my MA in the English Department at the University of Queensland. The joy of the two years I spent in Brisbane (not to mention the degree I eventually received) was due in no small part to Helen’s warmth and generosity, and to her curiosity and brilliant critical intelligence, knit together by her great sense of humour. Helen is a model for the way I teach and do research today, and I appreciate her continued friendship, in spite of distance, and my irresponsible contributions to the problem of human overpopulation.

**EVELYN O’CALLAGHAN (UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES, BARBADOS)**

I met Helen through our mutual friend, Victor Chang, when I took up a junior post in English at the University of the West Indies Mona campus in the early 1980s. I remember sitting between Helen and Stephen Slemon at an ACLALS conference there and giggling uncontrollably at their inappropriate comments during a fairly turgid presentation on Walcott. And this is one thing about Helen that I so admire: she combines a dauntingly rigorous intellect with a refusal to be serious. We have visited each other’s homes (Australia and Tasmania for Helen and Barbados for me) although only Helen’s featured a pet rat, Miss Ratty! She is unfailingly generous in advising and sharing material with colleagues in the postcolonial field. Her constantly evolving scholarship is inspiring, as is her insistence that research serves ethical ends. I have swum with Helen in seas across the world, and hope we can a few more times!

**KIRSTEN HOLST PETERSEN (ROSKILDE UNIVERSITY, DENMARK)**

I think I first met Helen on a balmy summer Sunday in London, or more specifically Kew where Anna had invited these two Australian friends of hers, Helen and Chris for lunch. We were staying in a friend’s house; I cooked and we sat for a long, lazy afternoon in the garden, surrounded by the murmur of voices from the adjacent gardens where people were doing the same thing. This is many years
ago, probably sometime in the seventies. This is very atypical of Helen! There is nothing balmy about her — her conversation is always memorable and you had better be on your toes when you talk with her. In fact, perhaps I have got it wrong, perhaps it was on an entirely different occasion. It could have been in Kampala, where we were at a conference during Amin’s dictatorship. She had come from or via the West Indies, or perhaps it was Sweden, she had caught some disease and had an adventurous battle to get medicine, but had succeeded. That sounds more like it. Since then we have got lost in snowy mountains in Norway, driven up the York peninsula, wandered through jungle, travelled on a dog sledge and seen each other through bad patches. Helen is one of my very closest friends.

OLIVE SENIOR

Olive does not know Helen personally, but I asked her to contribute some poetry to this special issue because I know how much Helen admires her work. Although Helen is known to abscond when others are being herded toward the conference poetry reading, this doesn’t mean that she dislikes poetry. It may not be her favourite genre, but it has certainly figured, particularly in its Caribbean voice, in essays published over the course of her career; and Helen must take full responsibility for introducing me to the delights of Caribbean poetry in my undergraduate degree, and thus for what became the foundation of my academic career. Thank you Helen and thank you Olive. (Anne Collett)

ROB SELLICK

I can’t quite remember when I first met Helen — it was either at an AULLA conference in Brisbane in the mid-70s or at ACLALS conference in India, also in the mid-70s. In either case we have remained friends ever since. I have followed her movements, and visited her in each of her various locations: in Brisbane, of course, and then in Kingston, Ontario and when she decided to return to Oz, in Hobart, where I followed her as an earnest disciple along the beaches there as she practised her passion for photography. I have yet to visit her on Lord Howe Island. Perhaps this year! I also remember spending time with the triumvirate when they met in Sydney, working on the ground-breaking publication, *The Empire Writes Back*. Throughout these years we have remained great friends, although we have not always agreed and Helen, as her friends know only too well, can be a combative opponent.

PAUL SHARRAD (UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG, AUSTRALIA)

I first read Randolph Stow in an undergraduate class and found *The Merry-go Round in the Sea* a bit remote because of its landed-gentry world and 1940s West Australian setting. Later I read *Visitants*, and, having lived in Papua, was excited by its wonderful evocation of the voices of a place loaded with disturbing ideas and poetic style. Delving into commentary, I found Helen Tiffin’s work, which took me also to *Tourmaline*. I had met Helen by then at conferences, and her passion
for Commonwealth literature helped drive my own interest and indirectly led me back to the Pacific, back to Stow, and back to my own upbringing. I was raised in the Congregational church in South Australia, and our ‘cathedral’ in Adelaide was always known as ‘Stow’. Only later did I realise that it was a memorial to the first Congregational preacher in the state, Thomas Quinton Stow, and that he was Randolph’s great-great grandfather. I also spent some time working on Wilson Harris and Caribbean writing, one of Helen’s great enthusiasms, and Harris also wrote about Stow. So an assortment of unrelated places, under the impact of collegial contact and then personal friendship, becomes a meaningful network. Thanks, Helen.

STEPHEN SLEMON (UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA, CANADA)
I found my way to Helen Tiffin through Bill New, my M.A. supervisor at the University of British Columbia: my first great academic mentor. He had an unambiguous answer to give when I asked him, after a decade outside academia, where, for my PhD, I could find the future of ‘Commonwealth’ literature studies? My doctoral work at the University of Queensland, from 1985–88, happened during the time that my supervisor, Helen, was meeting regularly with Gareth Griffiths and Bill Ashcroft, talking about everything, singing joyfully late into the night, and in the intervals writing their Methuen book, The Empire Writes Back. It is not easy, now, to convey the excitement I felt in standing witness to the birth, from Commonwealth parentage, of a new scholarly subdiscipline: postcolonial studies. Nor to the quality of training I came into — from Helen, and from her globally ubiquitous circle of friends. Everything I learned in postcolonial school happened on Helen’s watch. She remains my academic counsellor. She remains my friend.

CHRIS TIFFIN
I was privileged to follow closely Helen’s academic and intellectual progress for a lengthy period from her early writing on Caribbean literature, through her investigation of comparative Commonwealth literatures, and then her increasingly sophisticated theorisations of postcolonial literature, often through daring applications of metaphor. Helen has always represented for me a model of the engaged, imaginative and endlessly surprising critic the direction of whose next book or article could never be reliably predicted from her previous one. Her work covers an extraordinary geographical, methodological, and philosophical range and is as inspiring as it is compelling.

ASHA VARADHARAJAN (QUEEN’S UNIVERSITY, CANADA)
Helen was a cherished and much-missed colleague at Queen’s University where she graced the Department of English with her presence as Canada Research Chair. Neither her replacement nor I have had the desire to remove the simultaneously outrageous and stringently ethical cartoons in her erstwhile office or on its door:
we need them in her absence from the staid world of Watson Hall. If I didn’t
know she’d guffaw at my pomposity and my resort to colonial cliches, I’d dub her
friend, guide, and philosopher. Contra Shirley MacLaine, Helen taught me that
our most profound relationships are with others and that collegiality is founded
in the fearless exercise of citizenship and in the commitment to the mission of
the university. But when I look forward to our increasingly rare encounters, I
anticipate instead couch potatoedom and endless British serials, the delights of
political incorrectness, shopping trips, landscapes and wildlife that are feasts for
the senses, and laments for the chronic lack of frisson in the hallowed halls of
academe. Oh and a chuckle over how we helped the Dalai Lama!
Helen and Friends
These photos of Helen and friends were drawn from many sources; but it was surprisingly hard to find photos in which Helen featured, perhaps because so often she is the eye behind the camera. We all have an idealised picture of ourselves that we would like to see, but so often do not see, reproduced in photographs. The photograph is that instant moment that is in fact rarely seen — blink of eye, quirk of mouth — an expression gone as quickly as it has appeared; and of course, we see the aging process all too clearly revealed to us in ways we would rather not admit. But what I hope these photos have achieved is to remind Helen of all the good times and good friends, and to give others a sense of her warmth, spark and joie de vivre. I would have liked everyone who contributed to this issue to appear in a photo but that was impossible to achieve. It is at this point however that I would like to express my gratitude for all those who contributed an essay or story or poem at short notice; and those who suffered the editorial knife because I wanted to include so many; and those who were not asked to contribute because I had to make hard choices. In particular I would like to thank those who acted as readers — it is increasingly hard to find academics prepared to referee papers for journals, perhaps because it is unsung and unpaid work that is thoroughly unappreciated by the institutions in which we find ourselves today. So I would like here in particular to sing the praises (sorry no pay forthcoming) of scholars who over the fifteen years of my editorship of Kunapipi have always said yes — thank you in particular to Paul Sharrad, to Dorothy Jones and in more recent years, to Leigh Dale. Thank you also to the best sub-editor and formatter an editor could hope for — Greg Ratcliffe (he has been with me through all the pain and pleasure), and thank you to my (fairly recently acquired, but much needed) proof reader, Carmel Pass. Thank you also for the work of postgraduate students who attempted to keep the God of Chaos at bay and who answered the many letters, phone calls and emails from subscribers wondering when the overdue issue was likely to appear. The publication of this final issue will bring with it a lightness of being as the weight of conscience is lifted, but I will miss very much the creative and intellectual enjoyment of putting a journal together, and the opportunity it brings to make new friends. I would also thank EACLALS and the University of Wollongong for their support. Finally, thank you to Anna Rutherford, the founding editor, who passed the mantle on to me. I hope she feels Kunapipi was left in good hands; and I hope she is not too disappointed that I felt the time had come to bring her creative vision to conclusion.

Anne Collett
February 2013
(yes, late again)
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