

1979

## Conferences

Anna Rutherford  
*University of Aarhus, Denmark*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ro.uow.edu.au/kunapipi>



Part of the [Arts and Humanities Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Rutherford, Anna, Conferences, *Kunapipi*, 1(2), 1979.  
Available at: <https://ro.uow.edu.au/kunapipi/vol1/iss2/22>

---

## Conferences

### Abstract

### Conferences

# Conferences

---

## The Ibadan Workshop on Radical Perspectives of African Literature and Society, University of Ibadan, 18-22 December 1977.

The creation in 1975 of *The Association of African Critics* seems to have given new impetus to the restless endeavours of West African intellectuals. This is particularly true of Nigerian academic circles which have been, as it were, engulfed in intense activity since that historical event.

Of the major literary events that have taken place in Nigeria since 1975, *The Ibadan Workshop on Radical Perspectives of African Literature and Society* held in 1977 has particular significance for the future of African literature and politics. Owing to its exclusive focus on the centrality of radicalism in both the critical appraisal of African literature and the evaluation of the achievements of contemporary African societies, this Workshop has indeed pointed the way to a new nexus between literature and politics.

The Workshop was held in The Conference Centre of the University of Ibadan under the joint auspices and chairmanship of left-wing intellectuals who were soon identified as 'The Ibadan-Ife Group'. They were

From the University of Ibadan:

Omolara Ogundipe-Leslie, G. G. Darah, Odia Ofeinum, Femi Osofisan

From the University of Ife:

Biodun Jeyifo, Yemi Ogunbiyi, Kole Omotoso, John Ohiorhuenna.

Predictably, the majority of participants came either from the University of Ibadan or the University of Ife, although other major Nigerian universities, Nsukka, Benin-City, Calabar, Zaria, were also represented. In addition, about one hundred delegates including sociologists, critics, journalists, historians, writers, workers and students from all over Africa and the world attended this important literary event.

The first day was devoted to general theories of criticism, the main issue of the discussions being Marxist criticism and its relevance to African literature. The second day dealt with the analysis of works by particular authors. On the third day, the discussions centred on History, Philosophy and the Social Sci-

ences.

In order to grasp the underlying implication of the idea that generated The Ibadan Workshop, it is necessary to gain some insight into the new role which 'the people in academia' are prepared to assume in present-day Nigeria and in Africa in general. What they challenged was the concept of the ivory tower so often associated with academic life. This Workshop gave an opportunity for progressive academics to come together and deliberate on current vital issues of African literature and society. In her statement to the press, Mrs Ogundipe-Leslie, on behalf of 'The Ibadan-Ife Group', pointed out that 'devotion to meaningful social change should be the measure of our intellectual endeavours ... Literature, like other forms of art can be an instrument of social change'.

The genesis of this Workshop therefore lies in the awareness that literature being contiguous to politics, the intelligentsia cannot afford to seclude themselves in their 'enviable sanctuary', but on the contrary the universities must be 'the avant-garde of progressive development ideologies'. In this light, The Ibadan Workshop can be seen as a call from progressive Nigerian intellectuals to their indifferent counterparts in Nigeria, Africa, The Third World and elsewhere, to side with the masses in their struggle to achieve genuine and meaningful liberation. Like The Ibadan First Annual Conference of African Literature which was held in July 1976, this Workshop devised a framework for analysing the crucial issues of African literature and society. But its major significance unquestionably lies in the furtherance of the radical options stated by the former Conference, and in its unsurpassed power of articulation.

As evidenced from its very title and from the inspiring and thoughtful inaugural address presented by Professor Ikenna Nzimiro, the renowned Marxist Sociologist from the University of Nsukka, the initiators of The Ibadan Workshop, all left-wing intellectuals, opted for a markedly Marxist stance. However, they made provisions for the 'pro status quo' camp to be heard as well and this only testifies to their high level of maturity and self-confidence. The usual polarisation between Marxist academics who insist that African literature should perform such functions that are relevant to the African past, present and future, on the one hand, and the liberal humanists who favour less emphasis on commitment in writing, on the other hand, surfaced in the passionate debate that followed the presentation of Dr Omafume Onoge's paper on 'Reflections on Capitalism and the Cultural Question in Africa' and Dr Dan Izevbaye's on 'Notes on Religion, Myth and Marxism'.

Generally speaking, however, the organizers and the majority of the delegates invariably advocated a historical materialist approach in the appraisal of critical and creative writing in Africa. Their common view clearly vindicated Ezékiel Mphahlele's comment that 'every writer is committed to something beyond his art, to a statement of values not purely aesthetic, to a "criticism of life"'. In other words, since literature is a comment on, and a reflection of, the

general trends of a given society, the act of writing, the products thereof and their critical assessment, must be committed politically and particularly so in the case of an emergent class society like Africa. As Olabiyi O. Yai, one of the participants, aptly put it, 'there is no such thing as an ideologically neutral discipline'. The majority of the delegates therefore unanimously exposed what they termed 'the apolitism fallacy' as being a pure abstraction. It was pointed out that the advocacy of the 'art-for-art' type of criticism and its pretention to a mythic universality have for a long time befogged the criticism of African literature which as a consequence has been riddled with problems of self-definition and direction. This situation, together with the ambivalent attitudes of African critics towards Western values only reflected the state of confusion of African society at large.

African writers and critics were therefore urged to put forward an art that will guide Africa towards real emancipation. The call to African writers was particularly apt because of their critical position in society as 'the voice of vision of their time' as Soyinka would put it. And the appeal to African critics was made in view of their central role as 'the aesthetic torch-bearers' who in their mediation between artists and audience, should set the positive values which are the foundation stones of African society.

The proceedings of The Ibadan Workshop are being prepared for publication.

J. N. Dingomé

## Australian Arts and Literature Festival, Aarhus, Denmark, 17-24 April 1978.

The festival of Australian Arts and Literature held at Aarhus in the Spring of 1978 was one of the most comprehensive and wide-ranging exhibitions of Australian culture ever held in Europe. Aarhus had already established for itself an enviable reputation as a centre for Commonwealth studies, as many of the delegates fortunate enough to have attended earlier conferences there already knew. The recent festival, like the many other events concerning the literature and arts of the Commonwealth over the last decade, owed its conception and energetic execution to Anna Rutherford, ably assisted at the time by Kirsten Holst Petersen. Anna Rutherford has put her distinctive stamp of energy,

hospitality and sound judgement on many things connected with Commonwealth studies in the time she has been at Aarhus, but the Australian Arts and Literature Festival was special even by her own high standards.

Delegates, speakers and visitors were greeted with warmth and kindness. The Danish hosts from the Institut for Engelsk Filologi were continually offering kindnesses, large and small, from car rides to meals in their homes. This generosity was matched by the municipality of Aarhus, whose banquet-like 'open table' at the famous Aarhus Town Hall was quite overwhelming. Those who attended felt genuinely grateful to all the organisations, governmental and local, who had supported the occasion.

Perhaps the single most exciting feature of the Festival was its 'openness'. Instead of it being a series of events in some one venue, shut away from the normal public life of the town, it consisted of a wide variety of exhibitions, displays, film programmes and lectures which embraced many of the main permanent cultural institutions in the area including the world-famous museum at Moesgård, the Aarhus Kunstmuseum, the Musikkonservatorium and the Aarhus Hovedbibliotek. Anyone who has helped to organise a large conference with even one or two venues will appreciate the amazing amount of hard work and excellent organisation which this must have entailed. The events happened punctually, and during the week nothing was cancelled or delayed. Indeed, many of the exhibitions, for example the exhibition of Australian Aboriginal Art at Moesgård and that of Sidney Nolan's work at the Aarhus Kunstmuseum, were already open before the Festival.

This fact emphasises another important aspect of the Conference, that it was not designed only to be an internal affair, but looked outwards from the artists and delegates present to the population of Aarhus as a whole. Many people in the area were able, as a result of the Festival, to discover the culture of Australia or to deepen their interests in a wide range of arts by seeing the contribution made in various fields by Australian artists and craftsmen.

In a week that was so packed it is difficult to pick out individual items without prejudice. The choice must be personal. In my own mind the Australian Film Festival stands out clearly as a unique opportunity to compare and contrast a wide range of films made in Australia in the last decade or so. In addition the superb exhibition of early Australian maps, collected and mounted by the Australian writer, Randolph Stow, was a personal highlight. However, in a week which embraced lectures on Australian literature and art, films, music recitals, art exhibitions, exhibitions of books, and demonstrations of crafts the taste and interests of the vast majority of the community were excited and satisfied.

Whenever a large group of people are assembled the possibilities of discord can never be discounted. This is especially so when many of the people are

artists or critics, two groups noted for their disputatiousness and volatile tempers. Anyone who, like myself, has been involved in conferences as participant and organiser for many years is agreeably surprised when such disputes are kept to a minimum, without being replaced by a false bonhomie and a lack of stimulating cut and thrust in debate. The organisers of the Aarhus Festival are to be congratulated for achieving a balance of this kind – a feat I have only known achieved on two previous occasions.

One point of particular value was the varied scale of the events – from large exhibitions to private dinners and parties – which had been organised, making both public debates and private exchanges between individuals possible and effective. Particularly pleasing were the opportunities for meetings and discussions between the delegates and artists and members of the general public. A certain insularity sometimes characterises Australian conferences abroad, but this was not so on this occasion. The writers and artists mingled freely, and a general atmosphere of approachability was felt by all.

Most of the people who attended the conference with whom I have spoken since last year share my memory of it as a well-organised and fruitful week, which they were pleased to have attended. The whole thing must have done a great deal to make Denmark aware of the vigour and range of Australian arts.

GARETH GRIFFITHS

## FESTIVAL PROGRAMME

### Exhibitions:

- Aboriginal Art – Moesgård Museum.

Films on the Australian aborigines were shown in conjunction with this exhibition.

- Sidney Nolan – Aarhus Kunstmuseum (Kelly, Dust, Miner and Explorer Series).

Donald Bowen, curator of the Commonwealth Galleries, London, gave a series of illustrated lectures on Australian art in conjunction with this exhibition. The film *Nolan at Sixty* was shown on Danish television in the week prior to the conference.

- The weavings of Florence Higgs.

Several of these weavings, including a quite outstanding work of art entitled

'Bees of the Dreamtime', were based on aboriginal motifs. Florence Higgs was present and gave demonstrations of her craft to weavers who came from all over Jutland.

- Australian Children's Books - Aarhus Hovedbibliotek.

This exhibition was organised by Rosemary Wighton who was present at the Festival and who gave an illustrated lecture on Australian children's literature. The film *Storm Boy*, which had been dubbed into Danish, was shown each day at the library's cinema during the Festival.

- Terra Australis Incognita - City Hall.

This was a map exhibition organised by Randolph Stow. There were eighty-six exhibits starting with 'the Globe of Krates of Mallos, ca. 150 B.C.' in a mediaeval copy and concluding with 'Kaart over Australien, 1818. The map complete, after the voyages of Bass, Flinders and Baudin in 1797-1803'. Material for this exhibition was obtained from Algemeen Rijksarchief, The Hague; The Royal Library, The Hague; The London Library; Maritiem Museum 'Prins Hendrik', Rotterdam; National Library of Australia; Universiteitsbibliotheek, Leiden; and the Royal Library, Copenhagen. The four maps from the Royal Library in Copenhagen were alone insured for 1,500,000 kroner (A\$300,000). Also on display at this exhibition were the drawings of Ferdinand Bauer, 'Australian Flowers'. Bauer was the botanist with Flinders on the 1801 expedition. The book has been reprinted by Basilisk Press in a limited number of copies. There is an illustrated catalogue from this exhibition available from Anna Rutherford, price A\$2.

- An exhibition at the State and University Library of books about Australia written by Danes. This exhibition was organised by Vibeke Stenderup, Senior Research Librarian.

- A book exhibition of Australian literature, history and culture at the University Bookshop.

Australian Film Festival.

Aarhus University Film Club in conjunction with the Danish Film Museum. John Heyer was present for the world premiere of his film *The Reef*. During the week of the Festival Danish television showed three Australian films.

Film Programme:

*The Cars that Ate Paris* (Peter Weir)

*Picnic at Hanging Rock* (Peter Weir)



*The Devil's Playground* (Fred Schepisi)  
*The Picture Show Man* (John Power)  
*Break of Day* (Ken Hannam)  
*Caddie* (Donald Crombie)  
*F. J. Holden* (Michael Thornhill)  
*The Reef* (John Heyer)

Piano Recital by Roger Holmes – Det jyske Musikkonservatorium.  
Apart from J. S. Bach, Robert Schumann and Olivier Messiaen, Roger Holmes included the work of the Australian composers Barry McKimm and Robert Rooney.

Poetry readings by Les Murray, Mark O'Connor and Peter Porter.

#### SEMINAR PROGRAMME

Opening address: Professor Donald Hannah, Aarhus University.  
Lloyd Robson, 'C. M. H. Clark's History: Structure and Assumptions'.  
Rosemary Wighton, 'Australian Children's Literature'.  
Randolph Stow, 'Denmark in the Indian Ocean, 1616-1845: an introduction'.  
Les A. Murray, 'Boeotian and Athenian Art in Australia'.  
Mark O'Connor, 'The "renaissance" in Australian poetry'.  
Stephen Murray-Smith, '*Overland* and the New Nationalism'.  
Kristin Williamson, 'The History of Australian Women – a colonized sex'.  
Bruce Clunies Ross, 'The International Element in Recent Australian Short Fiction'.  
Hans Hauge, 'Something Wrong in the state of fiction? Michael Wilding's *Short Story Embassy*'.  
David Williamson, 'Recent Australian Drama'.  
Gareth Griffiths, 'Experimental Form in Some Recent Australian Dramas'.

Report from the FILLM Conference: Aix-en-Provence, 28 August  
- 2 September 1978

The theme for the 14th conference of the Fédération Internationale de Langues et Littératures Modernes, of which ACLALS is now a member, was *Society and Self in Language and Literature*. There were more than four hundred delegates from about forty countries, and nine sections offered papers at the same time.

There were so many last minute cancellations that the printed programme became more or less useless, and the organisation was so chaotic that sometimes chairmen did not turn up for their sessions or papers were read at times different from the ones announced only a couple of hours before. The number of papers on Commonwealth topics, most of which were unimpressive, was halved by the absence of expected speakers, especially from Africa and India.

In my opinion the best performances in our field were by Patrick Holland (Concordia) and John B. Beston (Kuwait). Holland based his paper on Shad-bolt's *Touch of Clay* and Laurence's *The Diviners*, two novels with artists, creators of myths by which others live, as heroes. Internationally novels like these, like so much of Commonwealth literature, may be second class, but they have a very important national role to fulfil. Holland came to the defence of stereotype and cliché since these allow identification with something like archetypes. They help build up a collective consciousness, which is important in these insecure ex-colonial societies where a recognition of themselves is so often missing. Beston, relying for the force of his argument on the transparent presentation of the material, gave a picture of Witi Ihimaera in changing New Zealand society. He opposed his sense of tribal identity and the values of mutual support and compassion shown in his novels to Pakeha society, whose basic lovelessness Beston emphasized again. In his latest publication, the volume of short stories *The New Net Goes Fishing*, Ihimaera not only leaves the rural society of his previous books, but becomes more radical.

Patricia Morley (Concordia) had another look at the influence of Puritanism on Canadian literature. In contrast to Brown she does not think of it as pernicious but as beneficial. She attributes to it the idea of divine immanence in the natural world, the sense of value and dignity of the individual and the importance of community, of which so much Canadian fiction speaks. Lorraine McMullen (Ottawa) commented on women in Canadian novels from *Wild Geese* to *The Diviners* and noted that a large number of female heroes are clearly androgynous.

Willfried Feuser (Port Harcourt) gave plot outlines of African fiction (both Anglophone and Francophone) with heroes rebelling for or against tradition. Edward P. Vargo (Fu-Jen) spoke about freedom and creativity in China and West Africa. He believes that writers working in a world dominated by totalitarian ideologies can contribute to humanizing them. Censorship was mentioned, and Vargo concluded that West African writers are still freer than their Chinese counterparts both on the mainland and in Taiwan.

The paper of K.S. Narayano Rao (Wisconsin) was entitled 'The New Harvest: Indian Writing in English, National or International?'. Once again the writer's problem raised by the need to reflect a universal outlook while remaining close to the Indian background was examined. He only dealt with Rao, Anand, Narayan and Markandaya, but isn't it time that younger writers like

Anita Desai and Arun Joshi are taken notice of? – An interesting philosophical exploration of the idea of the self and the non-self and the correlated concepts of reality and unreality underlying Raja Rao's *The Serpent and the Rope* came from R. Ramaswamy (Bangalore).

The following is a list of other papers on Commonwealth literature read at the conference: A. Brandon Conron (Western Ontario), 'A Canadian Novelist, Morley Callaghan and his Audience'; Alan L. McLeod (Rider College), 'Black Writer and White Reader: Adaptation in the Works of Claude McKay'; Theo Vincent (Lagos), 'The Writer in a Changing Society, The Case of African Literature'.

There was a large contingent of Australian delegates, but no paper on Australian literature was read. Several speakers addressed themselves to Francophone African and Canadian writing. Two papers not dealing directly with Commonwealth literature deserve to be mentioned. A fine paper on two Bengali novels was read by Meenakshi Mukherjee (Lady Shri Ram College). Critics expecting to find novels leading to a climax along the fundamental axes of time and place had attacked them for being formless. Mukherjee showed how they are structured on patterns of recurring symbols and metaphors, on the reiteration of themes, and on the cycle of the seasons. What matters in these novels is not action, but continuity. The other was by Johan Smorenburg (Besançon) who spoke about the much neglected Dutch writing coming from the West Indies.

KLAUS STUCKERT

CACLALS conference: 'The Commonwealth in Canada' – Concordia University, Montreal, 18-22 October 1978.

The first North American conference devoted entirely to Commonwealth literature was a highly successful event. It followed the now familiar pattern of Commonwealth conferences with contributions from scholars in the form of traditional academic papers, alternating with writers reading from their works and talking on the basis of their own experiences as creative artists. This was supplemented by a number of related activities such as film screenings and live theatre performances.

In the first of the academic papers G. D. Killam presented 'A Canadian View of the Commonwealth', in which he examined the implications of the three terms we use to define our discipline: 'Commonwealth', 'literary', and 'studies'.

Mulk Raj Anand was the first of the writers to speak. In his paper on 'Pigeon-Indian' he gave the delegates an interesting insight into some of the problems and rewards that are involved in working with the linguistic resources of his specific cultural milieu.

The third day of the conference opened with what I personally look back upon as the highlight of the entire event. Through a mixture of readings and cultural and historical background information, Witi Ihimaera gave a paper entitled 'Into the World of Light: The Maori Literary Tradition'. Together with Australia's Kath Walker, who read from her own poetry in the afternoon and introduced the documentary film *Shadow Sister*, he made a valuable contribution to our appreciation of the beauty and vitality of the minority cultures of the Commonwealth.

Playwright Ron Blair presented a historical survey of drama in Australia, 'An Australian Theatre: At Last'. This talk was followed by a performance of his own play *The Christian Brothers*, which got a very enthusiastic reception.

Kenneth Ramchand gave a paper on some of the problems facing the Commonwealth critic. The title of the paper was 'Critical Perspectives in West Indian Literature', but the implications were much wider. Taking the introduction to *Contexts of Canadian Criticism* as his starting point (in a way that Eli Mandel might have found somewhat puzzling had he been present himself), Dr Ramchand insisted upon the importance of an approach that relies on the literary text itself rather than seeing it in its cultural or social context. This paper triggered off one of the most heated discussions at the conference.

The last day of the conference opened with a talk by Michael Anthony on 'Aspects of Caribbean Writing'.

Sectional seminars were conducted on two afternoons, with four sessions, each consisting of three papers, running concurrently. There were papers focussing on individual writers and on the various national traditions. There were seminars on special topics, including women writers, colonialism and politics, pastoral, anti-pastoral and *Bildungsroman*. Problems of language, culture and critical approach were also dealt with.

Where G. D. Killam's paper had looked at the Commonwealth from a Canadian viewpoint, R. T. Robertson closed the conference with a paper on 'The Commonwealth View of Canada', in which he drew together some of the themes of the four days by placing them in a historical perspective.

'The Commonwealth in Canada' was realized through the efforts of a planning committee chaired by Patrick Holland.

FLEMMING BRAHMS

## SAES Conference, Strasbourg, 5-7 May 1979.

The Commonwealth Section of the SAES was one of the most lively and well attended sections of the conference. A wide variety of papers were offered as the following list will show, and at one point it was necessary to split the Commonwealth group into two sections so that all the papers offered could be given.

Papers included Marcienne Rocard, 'Margaret Laurence's Attempt at Audio-Visual Fiction'; Carol Durix, 'Maori Art'; Jacques Leclaire, 'Achebe'; J. Alvarez Pereyre, 'The South African writer, Con Mattera'; René Richard, 'The Lion and the Jewel'; M. Polet, 'Mr Gokal'; Kirsten Holst Petersen, 'Mau-Mau: fact and fiction'; Jacqueline Bardolph, 'Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Golding's *Lord of the Flies*'; A. Dommergues, 'A Fringe of Leaves'. Marcienne Rocard's paper is published in this issue of *Kunapipi*. Other papers will be published in the journal of the association, *Commonwealth Essays and Studies*.

It was decided that for the next conference to be held in Poitiers there should be specialized texts. The texts chosen were Patrick White, *A Fringe of Leaves*; Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Petals of Blood*; and Edward Braithwaite, *Rites of Passage*. If any persons are interested in offering papers on these works they should contact Mme Nedeljkovic, Caen University (White); Mme Jacqueline Bardolph, Nice University (Ngugi wa Thiong'o); Mme Maes-Jelinek, Liège University (Braithwaite); or the co-ordinator of the Commonwealth section, Anna Rutherford, Aarhus University, Denmark.

## Third International Janheinz-Jahn Symposium, Johannes Gutenberg University, Mainz, 11-13 May 1979.

The conference commenced with the awarding of an honorary doctorate to Ulli Beier. Following the ceremony Ulli Beier gave the first paper on 'Politics and Literature in Nigeria: the example of Duro Ladipo'.

The next paper was given by Hans-Albert Walter of the University of Hamburg. The theme of the conference was 'Opposition and Exile' and Herr Walter chose to speak about the German writers exiled during the Nazi period in Germany, suggesting that parallels could be drawn between their plight and that of the African writers in exile. This was a very controversial paper and created a fierce emotional response on the part of many of the audience.

A memorable event was Camara Laye's talk about his life in Paris as a poor student and how he came to write *The African Child*.

We have come to expect something exciting and interesting from Taban lo Liyong, and he didn't disappoint us. His paper was on 'Politics and Literature

in Uganda'; he spoke about the 'big jaws' and the 'little jaws' and showed how the traditional elements in the society were not conducive to the overthrow of the ruling group. It was both informative and entertaining and, in my opinion, one of the highlights of the conference.

Other papers given were: Hans Zell (England), 'The African Writer and His Publisher'; Dieter Riemenschneider (German Federal Republic), 'The Biafra War in Nigerian Literature'; Donald Burness (USA), 'Literary Opposition in Angola, Moçambique, Cabo Verde, Guinea Bissao, Sao Tomé and Principe in Colonial Time'; Lewis Nkosi, 'South African Writers in Exile'; René Philombe (Cameroon), 'La littérature contemporaine au Camérout'; Daniel Racine (Gouadeloupe/USA), 'The Theme of Exile in the Negritude Literature'; and János Riesz (German Federal Republic), 'The Image of Home in Francophone Literature'.

The organisers Ulla Schild and Gerhard Grohs are to be congratulated on organising what all the delegates agreed was an exceedingly rewarding and stimulating conference.

ANNA RUTHERFORD

## Australian Literature Symposium, University of Augsburg, 19-22 June 1979.

For Australian delegates, like myself, only half-aware of the extent to which Australian Studies have infiltrated the curricula of European Universities, the June conference in Augsburg on *Australian Literature in the Twentieth Century* came as an experience of delight and astonishment.

Only two conferences of this kind have been held in Australia itself, and even the first of those post-dated the European conferences at Venice, Besançon, Toulouse and Aarhus.

First impressions of Augsburg were, thus, of unimagined luxury, not only in the actual physical comfort of the Aceie Haus St Ulrich and the warmth of the welcome offered by Professor Schäfer and his helpers, but in the variety and scope of the papers to be offered and the presence, contributions and readings of a distinguished trio of younger writers – David Malouf, Les Murray and Tom Shapcott.

It was, of course, a pity that the date coincided with a busy week of examining for colleagues in Britain and France. It was perhaps a pity, too, that all the papers were given by Anglophone scholars (if Dr Porteous will forgive me

classing him with the Sassenachs for want of a better terminology) but this was amply made up for by the introductory comments of the chairmen, Professors Drescher, Priessnitz, Goetsch and Mainusch and by the lively discussion that followed even the more specialized papers.

The careful thought that had gone into the selection of the papers gathered to itself the serendipity that good planning always attracts. Alexander Porteous's paper on Patrick White introduced the sessions. His argument was concerned to make distinctions between the more and less successful novels and dealt mainly with *The Eye of the Storm*. Although the critical judgments met with some stimulating disagreement, the paper provided a splendid theoretical discussion of the integration of symbolism into the fictive characterisation and social texture of the Novel in general and inspired much of the following debate.

Anna Rutherford's paper entitled 'A Terrible Faith: Irish Catholicism in Australia' took as its text Ron Blair's brilliant play *The Christian Brothers*, but it became an extended and outspoken introduction to a subject that has essential bearing on the way Australians perceive their own society and on the liberation of thought associated with the second Vatican Council that has brought about both an immense creative flowering and a tragic disillusion. There is no doubt that the busting-out of young Catholic and lapsed-Catholic writers in Australia offers fascinating challenges to critics and literary sociologists and Professor Rutherford made a fine preliminary skirmish into the territory. Her picture of the pluralist nature of Australian society also helped to dispel the self-congratulatory air of national consensus that tends to hover over Australian literary discussions.

Peter Holloway's paper evaluating the flourishing new modes of Australian theatre and the critical responses that have so far been made to them, then, by a happy coincidence, consolidated the discussion of the Blair play with an informative survey and some most helpful bibliographical material. Like much current theatre elsewhere, Australian drama tends to be at its most vital in improvisations, virtuoso performances and unconsolidated texts. The printed versions of plays do not always reflect their significance for audiences as they were first performed. Plays, moreover, suffer more than novels from the endemic inefficiency of overseas distribution channels for books published in Australia (as most plays are) and this informative survey was thus for many people an introduction to otherwise unavailable material.

In a paper on modern short fiction, Elizabeth Webby attacked the question of how far the commonly practised modes can be held to constitute a tradition; whether, indeed, there is a tradition of short fiction deriving from Henry Lawson and how far modern kinds can be seen as a development of it or a reaction from it. Carole Ferrier, in a discussion of the later novels of K. S. Pritchard raised interesting questions of the effect of doctrinaire political commitment on the imaginative portrayal of event, character and background in social realist

fiction.

Three major poets, Rosemary Dobson, Gwen Harwood and Judith Wright, were introduced in splendid exegetical readings by Jenny Strauss. Her plea was for a true discrimination of the qualities that may be held to distinguish women poets, while at the same time questioning the value of making such a distinction at all. Mark Macleod then wound up the paper-giving by leading us into questions of imaginative contact between the black and white races in Australia through the work of Patricia Wrightson and her extensions of Aboriginal legends.

The papers were arranged to cover not only a wide range of subject matter but a variety of critical approaches. Nevertheless there was a sense of common pursuits and interests not always to be found at international meetings and it was of interest to me, though I don't know how to interpret it, that Freudian, Marxist and Structuralist approaches were virtually absent both from the papers and from the discussion.

The political and wider academic implications of such a successful conference were obvious to all the participants. Australia is only just beginning to discover the shop-window value of her literature but on this occasion Mr Max Loveday, the Australian Ambassador, as well as being responsible for a large part of the funding, offered a reception (South Australian wines included) and Dr Thompson, an Embassy official and herself a literary scholar was able to stay to the end, attending all the later sessions. The appeals by Professors Schäfer and Priessnitz at the final session for vigorous action in helping the development in Germany of specialist Australian areas of study within the general field of New Literatures in English did not fall on deaf ears. Much has already been achieved. The University of Göttingen's acquisition of 15,000 volumes of Australiana – the collection of Professor Colin Roderick – will help to create a major research centre in Europe and specialist collections are also becoming sizeable at Wuppertal and elsewhere. The questions of exchanges of students, especially at Masters level and of guest lecturers and professors will surely be taken up with enthusiasm.

Perhaps the true value of conferences is in the personal contacts and the extra-curricular talk that transforms a Herr Professor into a Bill or a Volker to whom one can afterwards write without restraint about a problem or about a graduate student. None who was at Augsburg will forget the evening talks – or the delightful excursion through Bavaria which finally proved that even the weather had been responding exactly as planned to the controlling genius of Professor Schäfer and his organizing team.

DAVID BRADLEY



# ACLALS

---

## FIJI CONFERENCE

All members should have received registration forms for the Fifth Triennial ACLALS conference to be held at the University of the South Pacific, 3-8 January 1980. If anyone has not received a form, would they please contact Anna Rutherford, Department of English, University of Aarhus, Denmark.

## SIXTH TRIENNIAL CONFERENCE, 1983

Questions have been raised about the venue and date for this conference.

*Place.* Originally Vancouver was suggested as the site. Guelph has now also been proposed.

*Time.* Would August 1983 be a suitable time? ACLALS conferences have been held in January since 1971, but January is a cold month in Canada. Late August rather than early has been suggested.

Decisions about both these points will be made at the executive meeting in Fiji, so if you feel strongly about it would you please tell me so I can present your point of view at the meeting.

Ken Goodwin reports that a West Indies branch of ACLALS has been formed and they were to have their first conference in September.

The Indian association has announced plans to hold a conference. A report on both conferences will appear in the next issue of *Kunapipi*.

## EACLALS

## VISITING WRITER

Six persons have contacted me to tell me that they would like Margaret Atwood to visit their institution. I am still waiting for a firm reply from Ms Atwood confirming that she is willing to accept the Fellowship. Those who have expressed interest in her visiting them will be kept informed.

## EACLALS CONFERENCE, 1981

Dieter Riemenschneider has informed me that Frankfurt will host this conference but has not yet supplied me with dates or theme.

## SHORT STORY COMPETITION

The short story competition has been won by the Australian writer Mark O'Connor with his entry 'The Black Cabaret'. Mark O'Connor has won a number of major international awards for his poetry, but this is his first award for prose fiction. The winning story plus two others entered in the competition are published in this issue of *Kunapipi*. The response to the competition was very pleasing with over sixty entries. The largest number came from Australia, New Zealand, India and Sri Lanka but most countries were represented. Several other entries will be published in the next issue of *Kunapipi*.

## COMMONWEALTH POETRY PRIZE

The annual award of the Commonwealth Poetry Prize has been shared this year between the New Zealand poet Brian Turner for his book *Ladders of Rain* and the Nigerian writer Gabriel Okara for *The Fisherman's Invocation*. A review of these two books appears in this issue.

The Commonwealth Poetry Prize of £500 is awarded annually for a first book of poetry in English published by an author from a Commonwealth country other than Britain. Manuscripts and typescripts cannot be accepted. Information can be obtained from Michael Foster, Commonwealth Institute, Kensington High Street, London W8 6NQ, England.

## RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

A group of Danish researchers has begun work on a complete bibliography of Samoa (Western Samoa as well as American Samoa). The group consists of Hans Gullestrup, Aalborg University; Jan Hjarnø, Director, Odder Museum; Inger Heyerdahl Jensen, lecturer, Danish School of Librarianship; Vibeke Stenderup, Research librarian, State and University Library, Aarhus. For further information write to Vibeke Stenderup.

## NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

*Elaine Campbell* teaches at Brandeis University, USA; *Phyllis Shand Allfrey* is a writer, editor of *The Star* newspaper and former federal minister in the West Indian Federation; *Subramani* is a creative writer who teaches at the University of the South Pacific, Fiji; *Jørgen Riber Christensen* is a graduate of the University of Aarhus; *Punyakante Wijenaiké*, Sri Lankan writer; *Angus Calder* teaches at the Open University; *Meja Mwangi* is a Kenyan novelist; *Bernth Lindfors* is editor of *Research in African Literature*; *Kofi Awoonor*, Ghanaian writer; *Ian Munro* teaches at Wahan University, China; *Sven Poulsen*, Danish author; *Mike Jenkins*, Welsh poet; *Marcienne Rocard* teaches at the University of Toulouse-Le Mirail; *Mark O'Connor*, Australian writer; *David Williamson*, Australian dramatist; *Bruce Clunies Ross*, Australian who teaches at the University of Copenhagen; *Les Murray*, Australian poet; *Kirsten Holst Petersen* teaches at the University of Aarhus; *Donald Hannah* teaches at the University of Aarhus; *Klaus Stuckert* teaches at Kantonsschule Zürcher Oberland; *Jørn Carlsen* teaches at the University of Aarhus; *Nelson Wattie*, New Zealander who teaches at Fachhochschule Köln; *Annemarie Backmann* teaches at Handelshøjskolen, Aarhus; *Anna Rutherford* teaches at the University of Aarhus; *James Wieland* teaches at the University of Wollongong, Australia; *Jeanne Dingomé* is a Cameroonian who teaches at Ibadan Polytechnic, Nigeria; *Gareth Griffiths* teaches at Macquarie University, Australia; *Flemming Brahms*, a graduate of Aarhus University, teaches at the University of Saskatchewan, Canada; *David Bradley* teaches at Monash University, Australia.