

ALEXANDRO MALASPINA RESEARCH CENTRE VANCOUBER ISLAND UNIVERSITY

Annual Report 2008-9

OVERVIEW

This report covers the period from April 1, 2008 to March 31, 2009, during which the Alexandro Malaspina Research Centre at Vancouver Island University has continued its activities on a number of fronts. Several research projects are ongoing, the Heritage Research Group has held its second lecture series, and plans have been formed for the continuation of the Biosphere Conversations in the Fall of 2009.

PERSONNEL

Director: Dr. John Black (Liberal Studies & Philosophy)

Researchers: Dr. Oscar Clemotte Silvero (Philosophy), Dr. Lisa MacLean (Liberal Studies)

Heritage Research Group: Dr. Stephen Davies (History), Dr. Patrick Dunae (History), Dr. Laurie Meijer-Drees (First Nations Studies & History), Dr. Cheryl Krasnick Warsh (History)

Associated Scholars: Dr. Ana María Donat (Modern Languages), Dr. David Livingstone (Liberal Studies & Political Science)

Honorary Associates: Dr. Barry Gough (Professor Emeritus, Wilfrid Laurier), Ian Johnston (Liberal Studies and English (retd.)), Dr. Russell McNeil (Liberal Studies and Physics (retd.))

Student Assistants: Lorill Ireland, María Soto de Podriske

INSTITUTIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

The Centre continues to operate independently of yet in collaboration with other research groupings at Vancouver Island University. The Director of the Centre sits on the Institute for Coastal Research Steering Committee, and this engagement has resulted in a number of useful collaborations. Of particular interest is the Biosphere Conversation Series, co-sponsored by the ICR, the Institute for Practical Philosophy and the Clayoquot Field Station in Tofino.

CENTRE RESEARCH PROJECTS

General Theses on Physics

The only work published by Alexandro Malaspina during his lifetime consists of an axiomatization in Latin of the metaphysical basis of Newtonian physics. John Black has completed about half of its translation into English with the help of time-release awarded by the Research and Scholarly Activity Committee. The project should be completed fully before the end of the year.

Pictures of an Expedition

Lisa MacLean , a printmaker and art historian in the Liberal Studies Department, joined the Centre in January 2006 to pursue a project involving the critical analysis of images made by the artists of the Malaspina expedition. Of interest are the ways in which European documentary artists depicted First Peoples, their artefacts and their customs, and the possibility that these involved distortions in the service of various political, economic or ideological ends. This project is ongoing.

RELATED PROJECTS

Translation and Web Publication of Source Documents

The ongoing project of translating the letters of Alexandro Malaspina, historical newspaper articles about him and his expedition, as well as other documents, for publication on the Centre's website, took a big step forward during the year, through the efforts of Research Assistants María Soto de Podriske and Lorill Ireland . Of the items written in Spanish, all the newspaper articles and letters have been completed. Work is well advanced on a number of longer documents, with completion expected this summer. Finally, the translation of the *Axiomas Políticos sobre la América* has been started, with completion expected in 2010.

Biosphere Conversation Series

AMRC has co-sponsored, and contributed to the organising and financing of, the first two in a series of symposia on philosophy and the environment. In April and October 2007 invited guests, drawn from a range of disciplines, stakeholder groups and walks of life, met at the Clayoquot Field Station in Tofino for discussions on the rôle of philosophical discourse in helping people with diverse perspectives on environmental issues achieve a common ground for communication. The first meeting was moderated by John Black and Robert Pepper-Smith of the Institute for Practical Philosophy, the second by John Black alone. The third Conversation will take place in September 2009.

PUBLIC EVENTS AND OTHER ACTIVITY

Public Lectures

In the Spring semester of 2009 the Centre sponsored a series of four public lectures under the heading *Sources of Identity*. The first was given by former Cambridge Professor of Modern British History Peter Clarke on □The Identity of the English-Speaking Peoples,□ which drew on his recent book on the last days of the British Empire in the aftermath of World War II. Next came Maria Tippet, also of the University of Cambridge, who explored the question of art and Canadian national identity. Sheila Rankin Zerr and Glennis Zilm from the Faculty of Nursing at the University of British Columbia spoke on □Nursing Costumes and Professional Identity□ in an evening which also included a fashion show of historical nursing uniforms. The series was closed by Charlotte Côté of the University of Washington, whose new book investigates the contribution of whaling to Makah and Nuuchah-nulth cultural identity.

INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION

John Black has been extending connections between the Centre and the Malaspina family, initially through a visit by Maria Teresa Malaspina in August 2008. This led to a return visit to Lunigiana in May 2009, details of which will be reported in the next annual report.

At the time of writing, and as a result of contacts developed during 2008-9, the Centre has applied for □associated team□ status with a major Spanish project, Malaspina 2010, involving both scientific and historical research components.

NEWSLETTER

The Centre continues to produce a short electronic newsletter. Its archive is at a new web-address: web.viu.ca/black/amrc/Newsletter/newsarchive.htm.

ALEXANDRO MALASPINA LIBERAL STUDIES AWARD

As a way of honouring Alexandro Malaspina's broad range of intellectual achievement, the Centre two years ago supplied seed funding for a student award, to go to the Liberal Studies BA major student who shows the greatest commitment to and achievement in interdisciplinary study, with need and general academic performance as tie-breaking factors. Through donations from Liberal Studies faculty, alumni and audience members at the Department's regular *Music of the World* concerts, the endowment reached the minimum for matching funds from the University College . The second recipient of the award was Lisa Kerr.

FUNDING

During 2008-9 the SSHRCC Aid to Small Universities grant used in previous years to hire the Research Assistants and support the Biosphere Conversation Series was renewed for a further three years. The Centre was successful in gaining a portion of the grant to support its current activities.