

Alexandro Malaspina Research Centre Vancouver Island University

ANNUAL REPORT 2009-10

OVERVIEW

This report covers the period from April 1, 2009 to March 31, 2010, 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, and both the Malaspina Lecture and the third Biosphere Conversation were held in the Spring. Robin Inglis, former director of the Vancouver Maritime Museum and of the North Vancouver Museum and Archives, and President of the Vancouver Spanish Pacific Historical Society, became the fourth Honorary Research Associate, and Dr. Erik Liddell of the Department of Foreign Languages and Humanities at Eastern Kentucky University joined the Centre as an Associated Scholar. Theo Holland was appointed student assistant for the academic year, and helped with the preparation of a number of events.

PERSONNEL

Director: Dr. John Black, Liberal Studies & Philosophy

Researcher: Dr. Lisa MacLean Liberal Studies

Heritage Research Group:

Dr. Stephen Davies History

Dr. Laurie Meijer-Drees First Nations Studies & History

Dr. Cheryl Krasnick Warsh History

Associated Scholars: Dr. Ana María Donat Modern Languages
Dr. Oscar Clemotte Silvero Philosophy
Dr. Erik Liddell Eastern Kentucky University

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

Student Assistant: Theo Holland

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 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 will be completed during a research leave in early 2011.

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.

Critical Letter on *Don Quixote*

Following the publication of John Black and Oscar Clemotte's translation of the *Meditation on Beauty in Nature*, Dr. Erik Liddell has begun the translation of another of the four essays written by Malaspina during his imprisonment at La Coruña. This essay forms a contribution to the literary criticism of Cervantes' famous novel, and has been published in the original Spanish and in an Italian translation by Dario Manfredi of the Centro di Studi Malaspiniani in Mulazzo, Tuscany.

RELATED PROJECTS

Translation and Web Publication of Source Documents

The project of translating, among other documents, the letters of Alexandro Malaspina and historical newspaper articles about him and his expedition, for publication on the Centre's website, continues. Some new newspaper facsimiles have been provided by Australian private scholar Robert King. The translation of the *Axiomas Políticos sobre la América* will also be completed in early 2011.

Biosphere Conversation Series

The third Conversation *Understanding Nature, Changing the World: Food and the Environment* took place in March 2010 at the Clayoquot Field Station in Tofino. The popular series centres on discussion of the rôle of philosophical discourse in helping people with diverse perspectives on environmental issues achieve a common ground for communication.

PUBLIC EVENTS AND OTHER ACTIVITY

E.J. Hughes Celebration

In June 2009 the Centre participated in the celebrations surrounding the unveiling in the Nanaimo Conference Centre of the Hughes mural, salvaged from the old Malaspina Hotel, of the fictitious event "Captain Malaspina Sketching the Galleries on Gabriola Island." John Black twice gave an illustrated talk entitled "Murals, Myths and Mariners" at the Nanaimo Museum, as part of a panel of presenters addressing various aspects of the restoration of the painting. Robin Inglis curated an exhibition of images from the Malaspina expedition which ran at the Museum during May and June, and provided the surroundings for a repeat of John Black's lecture during the Liberal Studies Department's IdeaFest, later in June.

Malaspina Lecture

In April 2010 the Centre hosted the annual Malaspina Lecturer, in this case Dr. Neil Safier from the History Department at UBC, who gave a talk entitled "Malaspina in the Torrid Zone: Tropical Passages through the Spanish Enlightenment."

INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION

In May 2009 John Black returned the visit to VIU made by Maria Teresa Malaspina in August 2008. He spent several days with Sra. Malaspina and her brother, the Marchese Obizzo Malaspina, at the family homes in and around Bobbio, Italy. A highlight of the visit was the family archive in the Palazzo Malaspina, which contains among many other documents a first edition of the 1885 publication of Malaspina's abridged journal. A viewing of the Castello di Bobbio was accompanied by visits to other Malaspina castles at Fosdinovo and Carrara.

As a result of contacts developed during 2008-9, the Centre has been accorded "associated team" status on a major Spanish project, Malaspina 2010, involving both scientific and historical research components. The Director has been invited to attend the launch in Spain of the vessels which will carry out the oceanographic components of the project, focused on climate change and its effect on the chemistry and biology of the Atlantic and Pacific oceans.

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 several 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. The recipient of the 2009 award was Christine Elliott.