



**11th Biennial European Association for Studies on Australia (EASA)
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE – UNIVERSITY OF PREŠOV, SLOVAKIA
SEPTEMBER 12-15, 2011**

First Circular

**Crossing the Borders: Reality, desire and Imagination in Australian,
New Zealand and the Pacific lives, literatures and cultures**

In the Humanities “Reality” has become a contested term, given its dependence on widely-differing social and cultural contexts as well as on individuals’ perceptions of material and immaterial objects and phenomena. In recent times new technologies have significantly impacted upon the ways in which realities are produced, consumed and valued. From virtual, hyperreal, simulated and photoshopped realities through re-articulation of ideas of the “natural” via genetic and reproductive technologies, the instability of the concept of reality has ironically meant that its status as an ideological battleground has often emerged more clearly.

The nature and understanding of Australian, New Zealand and Pacific realities in such contexts has become multivalent and frequently ambiguous. The representation of identities in literature, arts and the media in general have oscillated between rationalistic, mimetic and more complex postmodern understandings, the latter especially in recent decades. In the case of Australia, Paul Carter argues that Australian “social and political institutions...literary and visual culture...and [the] treatment of Australia’s indigenous people, [have] been constructed mimetically” (Carter xix). But Bill Ashcroft and John Salter understand Australia as a rhizomic text and suggest that “[w]hat we understand by ‘Australia’ or Australian social reality needs to be ‘re-imagined’, which means that the imperialistic ‘borders’ which now ‘define Australia’ must come to be understood as border ‘zones’, to accommodate the ‘hybridity’ that is a defining feature of the rhizomic text” (Ashcroft and Salter 22). In

addition, Livio Dobrez, commenting on the impact of virtual reality and media on the construction of Australia adds that “Australia comes into being for us as a PR exercise, an ‘image’ of national identity, presence in the form of absence” (Dobrez 44).

With such attention focused on what was once a series of loosely-theorised assumptions, there is no going back to simple or simplistic national narratives. Nations, societies and cultures now exist multiply, necessitating the consideration of how realities are perceived, understood and represented by different constituencies. All this is well-accepted in the Humanities and the Social Sciences, but requires the factoring in of the connections between the increasingly cross-border real, imaginary and desired projections of the future generated by border-stretching media technologies and scientific discourses of the alterable and re-created self? How do these new technologies relate to the contemporary formation of Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific? Do they in fact reprise the disturbances associated with earlier technological advances or do they present entirely new challenges? How do they relate to current understandings of memory as articulated in such practices as oral storytelling, truth and reconciliation commissions, the use of visual technologies to establish entitlements or records, or even the recourse to DNA testing, means of recording or re-constructing reality and the past in different genres?

This inter-disciplinary and inter-discursive conference accordingly seeks to discuss but is not limited to issues and such themes as:

- Reality, desire, and imagination in Australian, New Zealand, and the Pacific
- National-Ethnic-Gendered-Local-Migrant perceptions of reality and the future
- Crossing the borders of Identity: how real, how imaginary?
- Crossing Reality Borders – Reality as Fiction, Fiction as Reality
- Colonial, Imperial, Colonized and Native Realities, Fantasies, Dreams and Imaginations
- Reality virtual, hyper-real, simulated and media(ted)
- Memory and storytelling – how real, how imagined?
- Real, Imagined, Dreamed and Mediated Objects and Phenomena-literature, memory, story-telling, media, technology (computers, internet, facebook, DVD, cell phones...) in contemporary culture

- Real and Imagined fears of reality and of terror (ism)
- Reality, desire and imagination across the genres (realistic-modernist-fantastic-postmodern and....?)
- Reality of the Possible and Actual Worlds- Actual, Fictional, Possible and Other Worlds in Literature and Arts
- Central and East European Vision of Australian, New Zealand and the Pacific Realities
- Unified or diverse images of contemporary and future Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific?

Bibliography

Dobrez, Livio. (ed.). *Identifying Australia in Postmodern Times*. Canberra: ANU Press, 1994.

Carter, Paul. "Baroque Identities: Migration and Mimicry". In Dobrez, 1-14.

Ashcroft, Bill & John Salter. "'Australia': A Rhizomic Text". In Dobrez, 15-24.

Dobrez, Livio. "Being Australian: Identity, Identities and Traces of Identities". In Dobrez, 25-46.

All these topics can be treated from interdisciplinary and/or interdiscursive perspectives, calling upon disciplinary areas such as Cultural, Gender, Indigenous, Sociology, Philosophy, Media and Film, History, Literary, Linguistics, Art or other relevant Studies. The conference will also host writers (to be announced) who will be reading from their work during the conference.

Postgraduate Seminar

One of the aims of the conference is to attract doctoral scholars from Central and Eastern Europe to exchange views on Australian, New Zealand, the Pacific and post-colonial studies in general, with a view to discussing further co-operation under the aegis of EASA.

As has become a tradition of this conference, there will be a meeting and a seminar for post-graduate students dealing with these fields of study. This is still provisional, and is based around lectures and reading specific texts. The seminar may be taken as part of university studies equivalent to a course with a particular number of credits, to be acknowledged by participants' institutions. Doctoral students are further encouraged to present their papers at the conference (these presentations will not coincide with the seminar programme which will be conceived as a separate activity).

BOOK PRESENTATIONS, BOOK LAUNCHES, READINGS

Writers, conference participants, or representatives of publishers will have the opportunity to present their works at the conference.

Deadlines:

Please e-mail 250-word abstracts to Jaroslav Kušnír
jkusnir@fhpv.unipo.sk by April 30, 2011.

Acceptance of papers will be announced by April 30th, 2011

(participants requiring earlier processing may send in abstracts when ready, indicating their specific needs in this respect)

1 June, 2011 Registration (at early bird fee)

15 July, 2011 Deadline for full registration

Organizing Committee:

Jaroslav Kušnír (University of Prešov, Slovakia)

Howard Wolf (State University of New York at Buffalo, USA)

Anton Pokrivčák (Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, Slovakia)

Silvia Pokrivčáková (Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, Slovakia)

Eva Pavličková (University of Prešov, Slovakia)

Magdaléna Rázusová (University of Prešov, Slovakia)

Eva Eddy (University of Prešov, Slovakia)

Anna Ritlyová (University of Prešov, Slovakia)

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Ivan Štrba (University of Prešov, Slovakia)

Michal Tatarko (University of Prešov, Slovakia)