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AMRC Newsletter

Alexandro Malaspina Research Centre, Vancouver Island University, Nanaimo, BC, Canada

Visiting Scholar Arrives from Finland

The Centre is most delighted to welcome Ms. Reetta Niemi to a visiting scholar internship for the rest of the summer.

Reetta has just completed her MA in Cultural History at the University of Turku, and is now preparing a topic for her PhD.

Her thesis *Noble savages or warriors? James Cook's definition of the Maori of New Zealand in light of the instructions of the Royal Society in 1769-1770* explored concepts of indigenous people held by Enlightenment Europeans, and,

appealing to the "theory of the Other," related these to the colonial intentions of Cook's political masters.

During her time at the Centre Reetta will take advantage of our special collection of materials about Cook, as well as consider whether there are interesting comparisons to be made between English and Spanish representations of indigenous peoples. Of special relevance will be contact between such Europeans and the peoples of these North Pacific coasts.



As well as writing and reading in the library, Reetta will visit sites of contact such as Yuquot, and also pursue her independent interest in folk music.

Associate's Project Completed

Quite a number of the ongoing projects of the Centre have come to completion in recent weeks.

Associated Research Scholar Erik Liddell, of the Foreign Languages and Humanities Department at the University of Eastern Kentucky, has finalised his translation of Alexandro Malaspina's *Critical Letter on Don Quixote*, previously available only in its original Spanish and an Italian translation by Dario Manfredi. Like the *Meditation on Beauty in Nature*, translated by Oscar

Clemotte and John Black and published in 2007, this essay was written while the author was in prison in the fortress of San Antón at La Coruña, and indeed in the same notebook, now held at the Centro di Studi Malaspiniani in Mulazzo, Italy.

The essay is a contribution to the literary analysis of the great novel by Miguel de Cervantes. It will be of the greatest interest to Malaspina scholars who do not read Spanish or Italian to find out more about the insights the essay may contain, and to round out our understanding of

the navigator-thinker's broad intellect.

Erik will be submitting the work for print publication, along with a set of annotations which draw on those provided by Dario in his original edition and Italian translation.

The project stands as a fine example of what can be achieved through the close international cooperation in research which it has always been the Centre's intention to promote.

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Director's Sabbatical Bears Fruit



John Black, seen here with Oscar Clemotte Silvero, co-translator of the Meditation on Beauty in Nature.

John Black was on sabbatical for the first six months of 2011, and reports the completion of numerous projects.

The year began with an article submitted to the Malaspina 2010 Project. "Malaspina's *Meditation on Beauty in Nature*" analyses and evaluates the main arguments of Malaspina's essay, suggesting that, although it is not a major contribution to philosophical aesthetics, it does contain some novel approaches and constitutes an interesting window into the debates of his time.

That was followed by the first full translation into English of Malaspina's *Political Axioms regarding America*, his attempt to summarise the social and economic conditions of the Spanish colonies in the Pacific for the benefit of the imperial government. Although the text,

first edited in the modern era by Manuel Lucena Giraldo and Juan Pimentel Igea, is itself incomplete, it enables us to see how accurate a prophet Malaspina was of the impending revolutions of the colonies, which began within months of the navigator's death.

The article and the translation are now accessible on the Centre's website, under "Research."

The remainder of the leave was spent in continued work on the translation of Malaspina-related newspaper items and letters from Italian to English, the results again being added to the website.

The sabbatical came to an abrupt end in June when John was appointed to a new position at the university, as Interim Dean of Social Sciences.

Centre Plans Review of Purpose

After thirteen years in existence it is time for the AMRC to take a good look at its achievements and continuing purpose, says Director John Black.

To this end a meeting of researchers and associates will be called in late August at the Nanaimo campus of Vancouver Island University.

Until now the Centre's own projects have focused on the writings of Alexandro Malaspina and on other records of the 18th-century attempts by European intellectuals to come to terms with the expanding horizons of their cultural world.

Because the records related to Malaspina have emerged from the exploits of the Real Armada, maritime history has provided a natural extension of the field of interest of the Centre. This can be seen most obviously in the collection of research papers, covering the expeditions of Cook, Mulovsky and others, posted on the Centre's website.

Malaspina's lively mind, though, covered a much broader area, and the Centre has honoured this fact, for example by running its Biosphere Conversations on ecology and philosophy, the fourth of which is coming up in October.

The meeting in August will set out to formalise future directions for research in the Centre, and establish a steering committee to continue this task.

Options for expanding the fields covered in the Centre's purview are legion: the areas of Contact Studies, Intercultural Studies and 18th-Century Studies are all possibilities to be considered.

Since Malaspina could himself be regarded as a contributor to the first two fields, in their early stages, and a suitable subject of the third, these directions of expansion would also preserve the existing focus on his work.

Alongside the extension of topics of research, the Centre expects to draw in a broader range of faculty. The invitation to attend the planning meeting will go to a number of VIU faculty previously uninvolved, including some in the Departments of History and Liberal Studies.

At the instigation of David Witty, VIU's Vice-President Academic and Provost, the Centre expects to launch a fundraising drive before the end of the year, and it is felt that the expansions under consideration will capture the interest of a greater number of potential donors.