

Message from Co-Founder/Outgoing Associate Editor

With much pleasure at its success—and inevitable sadness at leaving this project I carried for ten years—I end my work in *Postcolonial Text* with this issue. It has been gratifying to see the journal develop from its inception when John Willinsky, a promoter of open-access publishing and the Director of the Public Knowledge Project, and I were able to offer this born-digital open-access journal to you, from Canada.

This journal began in a conversation in 2002, when I remarked to John that I had attended a literary event in Sri Lanka where some well-known and emerging writers read from their new work. Their exceptional talent inspired me, and I felt it would be wonderful if their voices had a larger and more accessible platform. Students and scholars in materially more privileged parts of the world who research and write about such writers were not privy to most of their publications or, at best, could find new work published only by major publishers, distributed on a very limited basis. A more pressing concern was the reality of university students in places such as Sri Lanka, who did not have easy access to new research published elsewhere, again due to financial constraints besetting universities and restricted print-runs of commercial publishers.

In answer to these concerns, John, who was developing a publishing system in Vancouver at the time, offered to set up a fully online journal for postcolonial studies, with software and technical assistance free of charge. In consultation with the Executive Committee of the Canadian Association for Commonwealth Studies (of which I was President at the time), I began the process of setting up this fully online journal, beginning with the Editorial Board, Section Editors, and the editing team.

It was exciting to see the journal take shape, with scholars from various countries responding favourably to my invitation to join the team. Yasmine Gooneratne, who was one of the readers at the Sri Lanka meeting I mentioned above, wrote in response to my invitation to participate in this project, “[t]his would be wonderful from the point of view of many Sri Lankan writers. As you perceived, it is very difficult for them at present to get their names and work known outside the island and even within it.” That same year, Arun Mukherjee in Toronto spoke at a conference panel about the problems she was experiencing of not being able to obtain texts from South Asia and other areas for her courses easily, resulting in a lamentable paucity of research materials for her students.

Meanwhile, John was finalizing work on the Open Journal System. “We only have 78 bugs left to fix to get it ready for you and the world,” he wrote in September 2002. With Heike Harting, who was a graduate

student at the time, we formulated the policies of the journal, and I sent out the notice to various listservs and associations, inviting submissions. “Here they come,” John exclaimed, as the first articles appeared not long after—and the journal was on its way.

The first issue of *Postcolonial Text* was published in the summer of 2004 from Vancouver. That same year, at the triennial conference of the Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies (ACLALS) in Hyderabad, the journal was launched, and the international Chair, Meenakshi Mukherjee, accepted it as a formally recognized journal of the association.

It has given me a great deal of pleasure to see the journal establish itself as widely-cited and well-indexed. Through the years, it became a highly reputable quarterly publication, evidenced in part by the prestigious Open Humanities Press inviting the journal to affiliate with them in 2008.

Running a fully online journal has been an adventure: intensely engaging, sometimes challenging, mostly pleasant, but always interesting. It has also given me the opportunity to draw on the associations I have served—the international Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies and its Canadian branch—and, through a widening network, it has brought me into personal contact with wonderful scholars and creative writers who have contributed to the journal.

One such connection led to the invited article in this issue by Bill Ashcroft, with whom I worked on *Literature for Our Times* (Rodopi 2012). Another instance is Graham Mort’s interview of Ugandan writers, commissioned by Lindsey Moore (Interviews Editor), which afforded me contact with Graham. He, in turn, re-connected me with the Ugandan Women Writers Association (FEMRITE), whom I had met at a Writers’ Workshop in Kampala, when ACLALS participated in a People’s Forum during the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in 2007. I am so pleased that this issue features some FEMRITE authors, and that the cover image is a photograph by Graham Mort.

While the Editorial Board unanimously renewed my term as Associate Editor for a further 4 years in December 2012, I feel that having travelled with the journal thus far, it is time for me to chart a different course. I leave the journal on the eve of another ACLALS conference, its 16th Triennial in August 2013, in St. Lucia.

In bidding farewell, I warmly acknowledge those who have helped me to keep the journal running so smoothly. From the outset, John Willinsky was a great support, encouraging and guiding me through the Open Journal System, as I began to learn and customize it to fit our needs. We collaborated on all aspects of running the journal, rejoicing at its success. (An account of our early years in open-access publishing can be found in “Open Access on a Zero Budget,” <http://informationr.net/ir/12-3/paper308.html>). Moreover, he funded the costs of the technical assistance and journal hosting through a Canadian Foundation of Innovation grant among others, at Simon Fraser University Library in Vancouver, from 2003. After the publication of this issue, the journal

moves to Paris 13 for hosting and technical assistance. Meanwhile, to the Public Knowledge Project team in Vancouver who assisted me all these years, I say, what a superb team you were!

It has been a wonderful experience working with so many enthusiastic and generous people: our authors and prospective authors who have engaged in interesting conversations with me about their work; Section Editors past and present; the large number of Peer Reviewers; and our Editing Team: Copyeditors, Layout Editors, and Proofreaders who have given their time and expertise gladly, even at their busiest times. They all gracefully responded to my urgent reminders and requests, understanding the pressures of a quarterly publishing schedule. Last, but certainly not least, it has been a privilege to work with Heike Harting, who served as Editor from 2008-2010, and Chantal Zabus, 2010-present.

Special mention must be made of those who contributed to the journal but who were not within academic ranks to receive due credit. The early volumes, which you see in html, were formatted by a friend of the journal, David Maulsby, whose exquisite work added quality to their presentation. We also received help from Kumaran Nadesan in Toronto and James Millard in Vancouver, who was too afraid to say “no” to his future mother-in-law when I was frantically searching for another Layout Editor. James’s timeliness and efficiency enabled us to move towards a quarterly publishing schedule, and when he finally summoned up courage to relinquish this task in 2006, Sharanya Jayawickrama, who was a graduate student at the time and coordinating our creative writing submissions, became our Layout Editor, to the journal’s good fortune.

Much as I would like to acknowledge each person who worked with me during the past ten years by name, I am appending below a listing of the current Editorial Team as it appears on our Masthead, with grateful recognition of all—including earlier Editorial Teams and unnamed Peer Reviewers—who gave unstinting service to this and past volumes.

To Rumina Sethi, Mariam Pirbhai, and Sharmalene Millard: my heartfelt gratitude to you for stepping up willingly to help me with the final checking and edits to publish this issue. And for their support in granting me a one-course time release in 2004, 2005, and 2007 to work on the journal, I extend my appreciation to Kwantlen Polytechnic University.

Our cover images, a distinctive feature in our journal, have been remarked upon appreciatively by many readers, and I am deeply grateful to the artists and photographers who contributed their work so readily, without remuneration. The cover image of Vol. 1 No. 1 (2004)—a painting by Professor Ashley Halpé titled “Pasan,” a lamentation for the blood-letting in the early 1970’s that preceded the civil war in Sri Lanka—takes me back to the beginning of the project.

In the Preface to that first issue, John and I expressed our hope that this open-access journal would serve as a vehicle for those who are often unable to access new scholarship or publish their work where persistent inequities are a hindrance to knowledge sharing and dissemination. I leave

with that same hope, that this vision will guide the journal in its future direction.

I wish *Postcolonial Text* continued success.

Ranjini Mendis

Co-Founder & Principal Contact (2003-2013)

Managing Editor (2003-2008)/ Associate Editor (2008-2013)

July 26, 2013

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