



**UNCOMMON WEALTHS  
RICHES AND REALITIES  
14-18 APRIL 2014 INNSBRUCK**

“In the last analysis, we must produce truth as we must produce wealth, indeed we must produce truth in order to produce wealth in the first place.”

Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 1976.

In light of the natural disasters and political and economic upheavals marking the new millennium, it seems more than timely that EACLALS should use its 15<sup>th</sup> triennial conference to retrace its conceptual roots in the Commonwealth and reconsider the notions of wealth and commonality.

Postcolonial discourse has preferred to utilise poverty, subalternity and disadvantage as theoretical categories and rarely examined what Foucault calls the “abuses and arrogance of wealth” or refined wealth as a measure of advantage and disadvantage. Yet the production of wealth has been both a motivation behind colonial expansion and a justification for it. Although interventionist acts and overseas investments have consistently been masked in a liberal rhetoric of benevolent “common good,” all too often their purpose and effect have been the enrichment of a few, the accumulation of wealths *not* commonly shared.

While scholarly interest in the resultant social, political and cultural asymmetries has lent greater visibility to the exploited and marginalised, it has also eclipsed the excesses of today’s rich and super-rich. These demand our attention though, especially as the discrepancies between the wealthy and the poor are being reinforced by the global financial crisis and as protest movements against corruption and economic injustice are drawing hitherto unimagined constituencies. The Arab Spring and the Occupation of Wall Street are cases in point, demonstrating the urgent need for both a critical reassessment of such concepts as “general interest” and “public welfare” and a careful appraisal of resources that still give currency to the idea of a commonly shared wealth. Such resources include also more uncommon wealths: riches not necessarily perceived as such, if only because of their inherent resistance to commodification.

Commonwealth literatures and languages, the core of our discipline, embody such riches and at the same time re-present other cultural wealths threatened by monetisation, consumerism and affluenza. How can such a heritage, which counteracts exclusive ownership and values shared experience, sharpen our awareness of different types of wealth and poverty? How can the ‘truth-telling’ of literature undermine strategic efforts to conceal and distort economic and political realities? How does it improve our understanding of the material conditions under which we live and the metaphoric riches at our disposal? What alternative scenarios of well-being, what new visions of prosperity, what innovative approaches to affluence can writing, especially from the Commonwealth, offer to a world believing itself held hostage by market demands and the neoliberal imperative to produce capital growth? What warnings does it spell out against the fragility of certain wealths and the devastating costs of others? What future does Commonwealth literature envisage for concepts like “commonwealth” and the “common weal”?

## SUB-THEMES:

- 1. Agents of Enrichment – Enablers and Gatekeepers:**
  - Bankers, Gamblers, Investors
  - Haves and Have-Nots
  - Creditors and Debtors
  - Winners and Losers
  - Benefactors and Beneficiaries
- 2. Trajectories: Processes/Narratives of Enrichment:**
  - The Quest for Wealth
  - Wealth and Dispossession
  - Change through Growth and Accumulation
  - Exhaustion of Wealth and Resources
- 3. The Power of Wealth – Power and Wealth – Politics of Wealth:**
  - Interest and Interests, Debts and Dependencies, Shares and Sharing
  - Corruption and Control
  - Transformations through Prosperity
  - Forms of Sharing: Shareholding and Withholding
- 4. The Rhetoric of Wealth and the Wealthy:**
  - Signs of Wealth – Symbols of Status
  - (In)Visibility of Wealth: Conspicuous Consumption and Hidden Affluence
  - Justifications of Wealth
- 5. The Ethics of Wealth:**
  - The Legitimacy of Gain
  - Fair Trade – Fair Distribution
  - Philanthropy and Generosity at Large
  - The Price of Wealth: Who Pays?
- 6. Aesthetics of Wealth:**
  - The Splendour of Riches – the Ugliness of Excess
  - Profanity of Pomp
  - The Value of the Original
- 7. The Other Side of the Coin: Poverty as Cause and Consequence of Wealth:**
  - Realities: How Much Poverty Can the Rich Take?
  - Forms of Poverty
  - Hunger Feeding Affluence – The Affluent Feeding the Hungry
- 8. Geographies and Histories of Wealth:**
  - Old and New Mappings
  - Treasuring and Measuring Wealth: Accounting, Protecting, Storing
  - Redistribution of Wealth
  - Centres of Wealth
  - Heydays of Prosperity
- 9. A Wealth of Wealths:**
  - Material Wealth
  - Knowledge as Wealth
  - Natural Wealth and Wellbeing: Resourcing the Planet
  - Cultural Treasures – Heritage as Wealth and Woe
  - Spiritual/Otherworldly Wealths
- 10. Communicating Wealth:**
  - Wealth and Education: Access and Exclusion
  - The Wealth of Memory
  - The Wealth of Words: Global Language and Language Death
  - Resourcing the (Un)Common Wealth: New Technologies and Social Media
- 11. Literary Wealth and Value – the Canonical and the Popular:**
  - Performing Arts: (Un)Common Wealth?
  - A Wealth of Books: Colonial and Postcolonial Archives
  - Literary Criticism: Privilege, Luxury, Responsibility?

**We welcome proposals for both papers and panels on any of these or other aspects of UNCOMMON WEALTHS until 31 August, 2013.**

**ABSTRACTS FOR PAPERS** of 20 minutes duration should be no longer than **250 words**.

**SUBMISSIONS FOR PANELS** of 90 minutes duration should not exceed **450 words** and contain the names of all speakers.

PLEASE **SUBMIT YOUR PROPOSALS** [HERE](#)  
FOR MORE **INFORMATION** FEEL FREE TO CONTACT **Helga Ramsey-Kurz** or any of the organising team at [uncommonwealths2014@gmail.com](mailto:uncommonwealths2014@gmail.com)