



Annual General Meeting

Friday 26th June 2020, online

AGENDA

Reports:

1. Chair's Report (Philip Leonard)
2. Membership Report (Mike Witcombe)
3. Finance Report (Andy Tate)
4. Postgraduate Representatives Report (Caroline Wintersgill)

Announcements:

5. BACLS prizes update: Monograph Prize, Edited Collection Prize, Postgraduate Essay Prize (Philip Leonard)
6. 2021 BACLS-WHN Conference update (James Peacock)
7. BACLS-supported Events for 2020-21 (James Peacock)

Matters for approval:

8. Results of vote for executive committee positions: 3 Graduate Student Representatives, Publicity Officer (Philip Leonard)
9. Constitutional Changes for Approval (Philip Leonard). The Executive Committee seeks approval from Members to remove point 3.6, which notes that the Chair shall be elected in the year before they become Chair.

Matters for discussion:

10. Anti-casualisation – how can BACLS further support ECRs/ECAs? (Rose Harris-Birtill)
11. Equality, diversity and inclusion – how can BACLS further promote this? (James Peacock)
12. COVID-19 and beyond – how can BACLS develop online events and resources to support members and enhance engagement? (Phil Leonard)

Concluding business:

13. 2021 AGM to be held at a BACLS event next year (Philip Leonard)
14. AOB

Reports:

1. Chair's Report (Philip Leonard)

Welcome and thanks to members for attending the first online BACLS AGM.

2019-20 has been a transitional year for BACLS, with a new Chair, Treasurer, Conference Organizer, Communications and Website Administrator, Publicity Officer, and 3 Ordinary Members:

- Chair: Phil Leonard
- Treasurer: Andy Tate
- Communications & Website Administrator: Jade Hinchcliffe
- Conference Organizer: James Peacock
- Publicity Officer: Mattia Ravasi / Rachel Sykes
- OM: Jenny Bavidge, Yugin Teo, Victoria Williams,

The association's new website was launched in the summer of 2019. We had some teething problems with the membership renewal tool but hopefully these are now solved. The plan has always been to develop the website with new sections and content. This will be particularly important because we'll all be continuing for some time to work much more substantially online and this kind of support is now even more vital.

We started the year expecting to have a substantial presence at the English: Shared Futures (E:SF) conference that was due to take place this weekend in Manchester. Members' plans included:

- *Alluvium* and *C21 Literature* journal panels
- Open Access panel
- Contemporary Conversations panel – a new BACLS development for E:SF 2020

We were very disappointed when E:SF had to be rescheduled. When it became clear that remote and online working arrangements will be continuing for some time, we held an extraordinary Executive Committee meeting in April, and one key decision was to organize a conference to support members. James Peacock will also provide an update on BACLS-sponsored events, as well as on current planning relating to the 2021 What Happens Next conference.

The Executive Committee has considered how we might develop our support for Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion. A one-day event was being planned for September, but this has been postponed because of the continued uncertainty about how academic and related events will be delivered over the next year. We'll review what options we have with reworking this event and will organize an alternative event if possible. Also on the matter of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, the Executive Committee has agreed that we need to review our elections processes, with new measures introduced if appropriate to ensure that the EC is representative and includes diverse perspectives and experience.

BACLS' journal *Alluvium* has had another excellent year. Our Graduate Student Representatives will say more about this shortly, but I want to congratulate them on publishing the latest issue in May, despite the current challenging conditions.

The BACLS-affiliated journal *C21 Literature* has published successful issues in 2019 and 2020. Production of the next issue has paused briefly as a result of COVID-19, to provide contributors and peer-reviewers more time.

Plans to enhance our international connections have continued, though partnerships haven't yet been formalized. Discussions have continued with an organization that former Chair Sarah Dillon was working with – the Société d'Études Anglaises Contemporaine (SEAC) – and these will continue in the coming months.

Other activities this year:

Following the REF team's announcement that it is seeking further nominations for sub-panel members and output assessors, BACLS is in the process of submitting 3 nominations. The 2017 process to identify candidates has been followed for the current round of nominations.

BACLS' previous chair Sarah Dillon alerted the Executive Committee to the Nobel committee's invitation to university professors of literature and/or modern languages to nominate candidates for the Nobel Prize in Literature. BACLS professoriate identified and voted on candidates, with Marilynne Robinson being our nomination for the prize. The winner of this is due to be announced in October.

2. Membership Report (Mike Witcombe)

BACLS currently has 185 members which is significantly up on where we were six months ago, which is very positive. This includes both member renewals and new members. The new membership system on the website is working well and the trend for memberships is going well, although the current COVID-19 crisis has led to fewer sign-ups than expected, but efforts will continue to be made to promote BACLS membership over the coming year.

3. Finance Report (Andy Tate)

The BACLS finances are doing very well at present, and the increase in membership has helped with this. There have been some delays in the account transfer from the previous Executive Committee due to the current COVID-19 crisis, but this is continuing and is hoped to be resolved soon.

4. Postgraduate Representatives Report (Caroline Wintersgill)

The main activity of the Postgraduate Representatives has been relaunching the *Alluvium* journal this year, which has gone very successfully.

We have published three issues since the last BACLS AGM, and are delighted to have had so many guest editors for this; since the relaunch *Alluvium* has had a lot of interest. There was a flash paper panel planned for E:SF which was unable to go ahead as planned, but it is hoped that this will be rescheduled in future.

Announcements:

5. BACLS prizes update: Monograph Prize, Edited Collection Prize, Postgraduate Essay Prize (Philip Leonard)

Two BACLS prizes were awarded this year:

- Monograph prize: Tim Baker, *Writing Animals: Language, Suffering, and Animality in Twenty-First-Century Fiction* (Palgrave, 2019)
- Edited collection prize: Sharae Deckard & Stephen Shapiro (eds), *World Literature, Neoliberalism, and the Culture of Discontent* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2019)

The Postgraduate essay prize has been deferred until next year, due to a low number of submissions; the Executive Committee has discussed potential reasons for this, and is looking at remedies that can be put in place to encourage further submissions next year.

6. 2021 BACLS-WHN Conference update (James Peacock)

We've decided to make the 2021 BACLS-WHN conference online due to the current uncertainty due to COVID-19, and planning for the 26th June 2020 virtual conference has allowed the committee members to begin thinking about how best to move BACLS-WHN online next year. More details will be circulated to BACLS members in due course.

7. BACLS-supported Events for 2020-21 (James Peacock)

BACLS has agreed to sponsor a number of events that were postponed due to the current COVID-19 pandemic; as such, the three sponsored events and the funds allocated for these will be rolled over to next year.

Matters for approval:

8. Results of vote for executive committee positions: 3 Graduate Student Representatives, Publicity Officer (Philip Leonard)

We welcome several new members of the BACLS Executive Committee:

3 Graduate Student Representatives:

- Julia Ditter
- Martin Goodhead
- Liam Harrison

Publicity Officer

- Zoe Bulaitis

Many thanks to Chloe Ashbridge, Zoe Bulaitis, and Caroline Wintersgill who have completed their two-year terms as Graduate Student Representatives, and to Rachel Sykes as our outgoing Publicity Officer, for all their hard work.

9. Constitutional Changes for Approval (Philip Leonard). The Executive Committee seeks approval from Members to remove point 3.6, which notes that the Chair shall be elected in the year before they become Chair.

The constitutional point '3.6. The Chair shall be elected in the year before they become Chair.' proved to be unworkable last year, and this may cause problems in future years. The Executive Committee are in agreement that this should be removed, and member approval was requested for the removal of this point; there were no objections to the removal of this point.

The Executive Committee has been reviewing the constitution in relation to association resilience, so that we can meet the challenges of the current situation, or others that may arise. If further changes to the constitution are recommended then we'll be contacting members in due course.

Matters for discussion:

10. Anti-casualisation – how can BACLS further support ECRs/ECAs? (Rose Harris-Birtill)
11. Equality, diversity and inclusion – how can BACLS further promote this? (James Peacock)
12. COVID-19 and beyond – how can BACLS develop online events and resources to support members and enhance engagement? (Phil Leonard)

These matters for discussion were rolled over due to time constraints in today's meeting, but contributions to these points are invited from members via email.

Concluding business:

13. 2021 AGM to be held at a BACLS event next year (Philip Leonard)

This will likely take place online at the next BACLS conference in summer 2021, with further details to be circulated in due course.

14. AOB

This online BACLS AGM meeting was non-quorate, an issue that will be addressed by the Chair and executive committee for future meetings.