

Tribute to Geoff Davis

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Abstract: A tribute to Geoff Davis

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I first met Geoffrey Davis at the Toronto MLA in 1993. I was at a dinner with Robert Ross, my predecessor as editor of *Antipodes* (and the journal's founder). We fell into a discussion about Sarah Gertrude Millin, how postcolonial criticism was not taking stock of her, and her anomalous role as both a Jewish critic of Nazism and a racist whose attitude towards Africans was unconscionable. I got from Geoffrey a deep sense of engagement with South Africa as well as a sense of urbane, if grainy and engaged, cosmopolitanism. This was in the period of what I might term high postcolonial criticism, and Geoffrey's work was truly postcolonial, embracing both settler and imperial colonialism, and at home equally with Indian, Australian, and New Zealand writers as well of course as South African fiction and drama. But he was not one of those who simply saw the common denominator of these places as the residue of British colonialism. A scholar not only in Germany but in and of the German language, his scholarship crossed linguistic boundaries and thus was able to see that colonialism is not just about a specifically British administrative practice, but about larger patterns of domination, exploitation, and hegemony. His perspective looked forward to the critical approaches of the 21st Century, and indeed he mentored many of the critics active in the study of the Global South today. His dedication to ACLALS and his engagement in the institutional structure of an emerging field was evident in our conversations, and I know how much ACLALS will miss his participation and enthusiasm. Geoffrey Davis was a learned, compassionate, and kind man, who loved good writing and hated racism and any kind of cruelty. His loss a huge gap in the field that he would want and encourage emerging scholars to fill.

Bionote: Nicholas Birns teaches at New York University and edited the journey *Antipodes* from 2000 to 2018. He is the author of *Contemporary Australian Literature: A World Not Yet Dead* (Sydney University Press, 2015) and is currently coediting *The Cambridge Companion to the Australian Novel*.